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LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Contesting Representations of Immigration

Jonathan D. Rosa

(Immigration Discussion I) The “Drop the I-Word” Campaign from the Perspective of Linguistic Anthropology

From the Editor:

This piece is the first in a series of four pieces on the vital issue of immigration from the perspective of linguistic anthropology that will appear over the course of the next week. It is also the inauguration of a new set of formalized discussions on specific issues related to language and culture. It was a real pleasure to watch the conversations between the four participants of this immigration discussion, Jonathan Rosa, Colleen Cotter, Hilary Dick, and Alejandro Paz, and to see their pieces expand and sharpen in response to the comments of their fellow participants. Please let me know if you too would like to be part of one of these discussions. Leila.Monaghan (at) gmail.com

The “Drop the I-Word Campaign”

Ongoing debates about U.S. immigration reform have sparked calls for the media and the public to refrain from using terms like “illegals,” “illegal immigrants,” “illegal aliens,” etc. to refer to unauthorized migrants. As scholars who study the ways that language constitutes culture and vice versa, it is intellectually and ethically imperative for linguistic anthropologists to contribute to this discussion.

Much of the current debate surrounding this issue focuses on whether the term “illegal” is a truthful characterization of certain people’s migration status. For example, in the explanation that accompanied a 2011 update to the Associated Press Stylebook, widely regarded as the U.S. news media industry standard, Deputy Standards Editor David Minthorn suggested that “illegal immigrant” should be the preferred term because it is “accurate and neutral for news stories.” In contrast, organizations such as the Society of Professional Journalists have described “illegal immigrant” as a “politically charged” phrase that should be reevaluated for its potential violation of the widely embraced journalistic practice of assuming innocence until guilt is proven. Others have made the related case that “illegal” is at best a misleading generalization, at worst a slur. A person diagnosed with cancer is not described as cancerous; however, “illegal” becomes a way of characterizing not just one’s migration status, but also one’s entire person. This perspective has galvanized a campaign to “Drop the I-Word.”

The “Drop the I-Word” campaign resonates with a central tenet of linguistic anthropology: language is a not merely a passive way of referring to or describing things in the world, but a crucial form of social action. Thus we need to ask: What forms of social action take place in and through popular representations of immigration?

One of the most noteworthy characteristics of immigration discourses is the naturalization of concepts such as “illegality” and the construction of immigration laws on as rigid, unchanging phenomena. Scholarship focused on this issue points out that “legal immigrant” is a redundant concept and “illegal immigrant” is oxymoronic, since the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act defines immigrants as people who have been lawfully admitted for permanent residence. The use of “migrant” throughout this statement reflects this insight. Moreover, immigration law has undergone dramatic shifts throughout U.S. history, with straightforward pathways to citizenship for some, but lengthy and laborious roads for others. The dynamic nature of this history is obscured by the notion that migrants simply opt to be legal or illegal. In fact, authorization should be understood primarily as a matter of political will rather than the individual choices of migrants themselves.

This misleading construction of illegality is tied to the circulation of troublesome stereotypes about the migration status of different ethnoracial groups. Specifically, assessments of illegality are often associated with unreliable signs of one’s migration status, such as language, religion, and physical appearance. These presumptions lead not only to law enforcers’ regular misidentification of people’s migration status based on wrongful assumptions about ethnolinguistic markers, but also to the broader public stigmatization of those markers. The popular sale of bumper stickers and t-shirts emblazoned with the words “Illegal Immigrant Hunting Permit” is just one example of the uptake of this stigmatization. The terrifying raids that are frequently carried out by Immigration and Customs Enforcement demonstrate that “illegal immigrant hunting” is an actual practice. These violent practices are patterned; many groups are the targets of hate crimes, but Latinas/os constituted 2/3 of the victims of ethnically motivated hate crimes in the FBI’s most recent annual report. Constructions of illegality are thus anything but “accurate and neutral.”

We must recognize that this debate is not merely a matter of policing language, or deciding whether one word or phrase is better than another. Nobel Peace Prize winner and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel's insistence that "no human being is illegal" is not just a claim about language. Simply replacing "illegal" with another term will not eradicate the legal connotations, historical erasures, ethnolinguistic profiling, and acts of violence described above. Only an understanding of how language functions as social action will allow us to develop new terminology that challenges anti-immigration perspectives successfully. While language change is not necessarily equivalent to social change, struggles over representations of immigration make it possible to imagine and enact an alternative politics of inclusion in this nation of immigrants.

Contextualizing and Reflecting on the "Drop the I-Word" Statement

I drafted the above statement in response to a dialogue among several fellow linguistic anthropologists and the coordinator of the "Drop the I-Word" campaign. The statement is intended to bring linguistic anthropological insights to bear on this conversation, with a broader public audience in mind. The question of audience prompted an engaging discussion regarding the framing of the statement. Some participants advocated for an explicit endorsement of an alternative term to the "I-Word," since this would likely be the most pressing concern for journalists and the broader public. For example, "undocumented" is a commonly preferred alternative to "illegal." However, Plascencia (2009) argues that the usage of "'undocumented' migrant...shares common assumptions with the term 'illegal' migrant, and thus it is also complicit in promoting the 'illegalization' that its development and deployment was seeking to negate" (2009:413). Using our disciplinary parlance, Plascencia's analysis speaks to the ways that ideologies of referentialism often miss the point in debates about terminology. In an effort to resist reproducing these referentialist perspectives, I attempted to emphasize the potential for this debate to challenge naturalized ideas about immigration and citizenship. Thus, the call to "Drop the I-Word" is a means to a much greater end.

Notwithstanding the use of new media (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v6GcPft7mqU>; see also <http://www.nohomophobes.com/#!/today/> for another fascinating project), the "Drop the I-Word" campaign is in many ways reminiscent of previous struggles over terminology pertaining to categories such as race, gender, sexuality, and (dis)ability. The effectiveness of the campaign remains to be seen, but the stakes are certainly high. Despite the rise of anti-immigrant policies and sentiments in the post-9/11 era, the increasing U.S. Latina/o population raises important questions about potential transformations of the ways that U.S. citizenship is constructed vis-à-vis Latin America. In this sense, the campaign to "Drop the I-Word" should be viewed with an eye toward future efforts to secure migration rights across the Americas.

Media Response to the "I-Word Statement"

http://abcnews.go.com/ABC_Univision/linguists-york-times-illegal-neutral-accurate/story?id=17366512#.UGoRvhwsGiw

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LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Challenging Terms of Reference

Colleen Cotter

(Immigration Discussion II) A Brief Insight Into News Language and Community Norms

My contribution to this conversation on language and immigration is intended to highlight some differences between the journalistic and academic enterprises with respect to language; and in the process to problematize our own actions and understand on a sociocultural level why it may be more difficult than we might think to effect the socially motivated language change we aim for.

I'll refer to the same topic that Jonathan Rosa raised – the use of the “i-word” or “illegal immigrant” by the Associated Press – but from the point-of-view of the news community and discuss it in relation to journalistic practice and language-standardization norms, keeping in mind that journalists operate according to the production values of their own “community of practice” (Lave and Wenger 1991). With a background in both journalism and academia, I often quip (as one would do in the social world of news practitioners) that they are “two professions divided by ... language.” This flip aphorism sums up two decades of research, teaching, and ethnographic discussion that has occupied my time since I left the newsroom for academia.

My contribution is also intended as a bridge to the commentaries by Alejandro I. Paz and Hilary Parsons Dick, which I believe provide the kind of example and evidence that could begin to cause change in the way journalists think about terms of reference for immigration, providing as they do contexts that challenge expectations of neutrality. The neutrality ideal is one of the many orientations and ideologies of mainstream journalists that are integral to their professional identity (Cotter 2010).

But back to language on the “practice” level. Journalists approach language from an instrumental angle; it is essential to the enterprise of doing journalism, and the ability to use language in a communicatively competent journalistic manner is learned and reinforced in daily practice (cf. Cotter 2010). In this sense, appropriate language use and management of news-discourse forms indexes professionalism.

Journalists also look at language in salient ways that pertain to their news writing and reporting goals. This language awareness becomes part of their everyday in-group discourse or metatalk. Reporters and editors heed prescriptive norms, which provide “correct” standardized style guidelines, and from a professional perspective provide *consistency* across domains. “Consistency,” like “accuracy” and “precision,” often comes up as a rationale for usage decisions in the Stylebook (Cotter, forthcoming). The prescriptive priority details the type of talk and metatalk about language that occurs within the news community and as a consequence of the news community’s journalistic outputs. Metatalk about language and social change also encodes explicit professional values.

Which brings us to the Stylebook. The Associated Press is a cooperative news service with 1,400 daily newspaper members and numerous broadcast members in the US. The AP Stylebook initially functioned as a usage guide for wire and copy editors, expanding in 1977 to become an essential tool in the journalistic day-to-day.

Far more than just a collection of rules, the book became part dictionary, part encyclopedia, part textbook — an eclectic source of information for writers and editors of any publication. [...] It continues to add entries that reflect the language of our fast-changing world. (AP Stylebook Online 2012)

Linguistically, the AP Stylebook is a classic tool of standardization (following Milroy and Milroy 1999). It also functions as a cultural artifact, articulating prescriptive patterns as well as detailing the relation of media language to practice. The Stylebook became available online in 2008, making more transparent these patterns and practices. It also functions as one of the professional arbiters of usage.

The most recent entry concerning “illegal immigrant” in the Stylebook is from November 2011, when it was last updated online:

illegal immigrant Used to describe someone who has entered a country illegally or who resides in a country in violation of civil or criminal law.

Acceptable variations include living in the country without legal permission. Use of these terms, as with any terms implying illegalities, must be based on reliable information about a person’s true status. Unless quoting someone, AP does not use the terms illegal alien, an illegal, illegals or the term undocumented.

From the news community's perspective, this rationale follows journalistic practice norms. It is "neutral" in the sense that the status can be externally verified and measurable through law. The point that its use "must be based on reliable information about a person's true status" refers to basic reporting norms that responsible reporters adhere to. A story is only as good as its reporting. Terms that are culturally problematic – because of what could be interpreted as derogatory – are listed as ones to avoid.

That the entry is in the Stylebook, also a repository of fairly inert information about abbreviations, datelines, and spelling consistency, means that its social presence is already marked. (Similar to entries in the Stylebook for age, gender, and religion.) Indeed, usage questions surrounding the term arose in the Ask the Editor sections in 2007 and 2008.

2007

Q. Is "illegal immigrants" still current AP style? If it is, since the word "illegal" refers to human beings, this is harsh. Can "undocumented immigrants" be used instead?

A. AP uses illegal immigrant to describe those who have entered the country illegally. It is the preferred term, rather than illegal alien or undocumented worker or similar.

2008

Q. AP style still advises against saying "illegals" when referring to illegal immigrants, right? I've seen it come over in a few stories and headlines in the last few months and just wanted to make sure.

A. Correct. The stylebook entry is "illegal immigrant" ... do not use the shortened term "illegals."

The 2008 questioner (who I would surmise is a wire editor, given the usage of "come over") noted a change in usage and wanted to determine that the style rule was still tenable. The concern that the use of "illegal" to refer to human beings is "harsh" (in the 2007 example) is similar a question in 2011, which details a rationale for the use of "undocumented" on the basis of legitimacy and utility (very journalistic-centric rationales):

2011

Q. What is the reasoning behind the preference for illegal instead of undocumented when referring to immigrants? It seems to me that undocumented is a legitimate description and useful when there are multiple references in a story.

A. It's more precise than the euphemistic term, which seems to skirt the legalities of living or working permanently or longer-term in the U.S. without permission — meaning in most cases illegally or unlawfully.

The reason the editor gives – *precision* – is actually a community norm (cf. Hymes 1972) for reporting and writing (cf. Cotter 2010, Mencher 2006), and his reference to "legalities" and "permission" harkens to features that can be measured and verified. That the underlying premise, legal or otherwise, may be challenged or is inherently problematic is not within the purview of the reporter.

Which brings us to academics and their tools. Hilary and Alejandro's contributions make it abundantly clear how important it is to query the usage of a term of reference, and to understand its power. Their examples and discussion, along with Jonathan's letter, show that any terms related to immigration are far from neutral. Which is an excellent place to begin a productive argument with a journalist.

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With thanks to Hilary Parsons Dick, Jonathan Rosa, and Alejandro I. Paz for their insightful comments and generous exchanges, and to Leila Monaghan for coordinating us.

The examples here come from the AP Stylebook' Ask the Editor column and are all copyright Associated Press 2012.

Question contributors variously self-identify in their online queries as journalists or journalism students, or the relatives or friends of one, or as outsiders. Some contributors cannot be as readily identified as members of the news community and may be interested members of the public.

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LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Self-Deportation

Hilary Parsons Dick

(Immigration Discussion III) Self-Deportation as Neoliberal Cautionary Tale

In January 2012, Mitt Romney explained his position on immigration at a Republican primary debate in Florida, [stating he favored policies of self-deportation](#), “which is when people decide they can do better by going home ... because they don’t have legal documentation to allow them to work here.” When Romney made this statement, people in the audience laughed. How can a person conduct upon himself an act of forcible removal? But for anyone who has followed the recent spread of restrictionist immigration policies across US states, “self-deportation” is familiar shorthand for an approach to immigration control called “attrition through enforcement.” This approach promotes policies, such as Arizona’s HB1070, which attempt to make living conditions so unbearable for unauthorized immigrants they choose to leave. Policies of self-deportation, though shocking, are not radical innovations. Rather, they are entirely consistent with the neoliberalization of immigration policy, which began in the 1980s. Neoliberalism is a philosophy of political and economic life, which posits that [“human well-being can best be achieved by the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by individual liberty, free markets, and free trade.”](#) Thus, neoliberal policies assert the primacy of individual freedom and personal responsibility as the hallmark of a functioning society. The brainchild of economists Milton Friedman and Friedrich Hayek, who were inspired by 19th century liberalism, neoliberalism has spread across the globe through policy reforms affecting a wide range of social processes, including migration. In this column, I unpack the neoliberal logic that informs attrition through enforcement through a discussion of the rhetorical appeal and effects of the term “self-deportation” and the arguments made for its associated policies.

This term has been popularized by Republican strategist Kris Kobach, who has helped author several attrition-through-enforcement policies, HB1070 among them. He has also advised the Romney campaign and contributed to the [GOP platform on immigration](#), which backs a policy of self-deportation. The use of term “self-deportation,” instead of “attrition through enforcement,” exemplifies a rhetorical tactic often employed by political strategists: re-baptize policies with pithy names that make appeal to “commonsense.” Think of the “death tax.” The commonsense appeal of “self-deportation” rests in the way this term, and the defense of its associated policies, harmonize with the neoliberal valuation of individual liberty, discussed above. Specifically, champions of attrition through enforcement argue it is more humane than mass deportations because it gives people the freedom to choose deportation on their own terms. The problem with deportation, then, is not the processes of migrant criminalization discussed in various ways by Rosa, Cotter, and Paz, in this month’s *Anthropology News* [Language and Culture](#) column, but rather too much government intervention in the removal process. The commonsense appeal of such arguments is fortified by the US national imaginary, which pictures US strength as rooted in independence and self-reliance. Stephen Colbert indexed this imaginary in a spoof of self-deportation, animated by his alter-alter ego Esteban Colberto, who claimed self-deportation empowers him [“to know I can throw myself out by my own bootstraps.”](#)

As arguments for self-deportation rely on the already naturalized and nationalist assumptions about individual liberty, any dispute of self-deportation is, consequently, rhetorically positioned as not only irrational, but un-American. At the same time, these arguments help recast the complex processes involved in deportation as matters of personal choice and, thus, personal responsibility. Such recastings are part of the logic of neoliberalism, one rhetorical effect of which is to position actors who do not comply with policy as morally suspect. In this case, any unauthorized migrant who does not choose to self-deport as constructed as making a conscious choice to willfully defy US immigration law—a positioning that furthers the on-going criminalization of unauthorized migrants.

One particularly disturbing effect of the success of such arguments is that they produce warrants for massive expansions in state policing—in this way, neoliberal policies are less about the reduction of government intervention and more about the channeling of that intervention into the policing of “unwanted” populations. Most self-deportation policies require state officials to act as enforcers of immigration law, turning encounters between immigrants and officials of the state (police, bureaucrats, teachers) into [immigration checkpoints](#). This increases not only the quantity of events of policing; it pushes such events into new realms of social life (driving, renting a home, etc.). HB1070, for example, requires police to check the immigration status of anyone they have “reasonable suspicion” to believe is an unauthorized immigrant. Yet, it does not define what criteria should be used to determine such suspicion. This creates a space in which existing connotations between the category “illegal alien” and certain migrants, especially those from Latin America, can lead to the discriminatory enforcement of these laws.

The expansions in policing legitimated by self-deportation policies place enormous strains on state and municipal budgets; these strains open the door to the privatization of enforcement. This possibility is consistent with another key facet of the logic of neoliberalism, which is that government policies should create

the conditions of possibility for the emergence of new markets. Consider mass incarceration. Largely as a result of the US “war on drugs,” there are so many people imprisoned in the US—more than in any other country in the world—that states cannot afford the costs of incarceration. As a result, an increasing number of states are outsourcing incarceration to for-profit companies to cut costs. If policies that require state officials to enforce immigration law stay in place without a concomitant expansion of state budgets conditions will be produced for private companies to play a role in immigration enforcement. For-profit prison companies have already begun taking over the building and management of immigration detention centers. The privatization of government services then creates incentives for corporations to shape future policy in order to protect their profit sources.

The term “self-deportation” has its origins in a critique of such perverse excesses. In the fall of 1994, as residents of California debated Proposition 187, an important precursor to self-deportation policies, a mock political action group called Hispanics Against Liberal Takeover, run by a Dr. Daniel D. Portado, produced a satirical political radio advertisement. This advertisement championed Proposition 187 by explaining the benefits of something called “self-deportation.” [Daniel D. Portado](#) is the alter ego of comedian Lalo Alcaraz. The appellation “D. Portado” is a play-on-words invoking the Spanish word “deportado” (“deported”). Alcaraz and his co-writer Estaban Zul coined the term “self-deportation” to critique the cruel absurdity of Proposition 187. However, after their advertisement ran, then California governor Pete Wilson took up the term in earnest. In an interview with columnist William Safire in November 1994, Wilson defended Proposition 187, making a claim Romney echoed years later, “[If it is clear to you that you cannot be employed... you will self-deport.](#)”

In March 2012, TV host Rachel Maddow unpacked this discursive history to make the point that “this idea of self-deportation is a joke.” But self-deportation has already become a mainstream policy approach, in part, because of the ways it logically extends the on-going neoliberalization of immigration policy. This process relies on appeals to commonsense, of which the earnest uptake of “self-deportation” is part. This uptake produces an inverted voicing that transforms a once incisive critique of attrition through enforcement into a serious appeal for it. So, the joke is not on Romney, as Maddow would have it, but on anyone who does not take self-deportation seriously.

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LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Referentialist in Debates, Governmental in Entailments

Alejandro I. Paz

(Immigration Discussion IV) Reflections on a Campaign to Change the Terms of Israeli "Immigration" Policy

Jonathan Rosa's letter in support of the Drop the I-word campaign reminds us of the relationship between illegality and citizenship, and the dangers of naturalizing the language of the state—and thus the perspective of the state—by using its terms. He also describes vividly some of the terrifying everyday consequences for those labeled "illegal." Insofar as the state's terms manage to represent the preferred register of hegemonic factions of the US polity, it's possible to see how the social compact is at stake here, even if the battle plays out as whether "illegal" is referentially correct or not, or whether it is neutral or not, as Colleen Cotter describes in her description of the standardizing practices of the AP stylebook. Hilary Dick's case of the emergence of "self-deportation" as a neoliberal rhetoric also shows how elites seek to re-constitute polity and economy through the terms of immigration policy. Indeed, it seems to me that, by issuing a very public challenge to the supposed neutrality of "illegal," the campaign to "Drop the I-Word" is an opportunity to mobilize political action that can have very broad entailments. First, it can influence the broader hegemonic compact of state and society. Depending on its scope, a campaign like this can perhaps even bring up questions about the global consensus of nation-states for regulating trans-border migration, and throw into dispute the inter-state regulatory practices that divide citizen from non-citizen.

During fieldwork in Israel/Palestine, I worked on a campaign that sought different objectives, but ultimately had similar entailments. Much smaller in scope, the campaign explicitly pursued a path to citizenship for the children of undocumented labor migrants, many of whom had been born or raised in Israel—not unlike the DREAM Act debated over the last decade in the US. Labor migration to Israel, with and without guestworker visas, increased dramatically in the early nineties, ostensibly as a response to restrictions on Palestinian day labor during the First Intifada (1987-1991), but probably also as a result of emergent political economic relations brought about by the first decade of Israeli economic neoliberalization, which saw sweeping privatization of state industries and the dismantling of the economic collectivism of the early state period (see Kemp and Rajman 2008; Shalev 1997). To gain its objectives, the campaign promoted an image of the undocumented youth as a prototypical (Jewish-)Israeli child, albeit one not ethnically Jewish: brought up in Israel, attended Israeli schools, speaks Hebrew, and assimilated to Israeli society. The undocumented children were measured against these characteristics, and—as a central strategy—were brought before news and current affairs media to display their nativity to (Jewish-)Israeli publics by speaking in accent-free Hebrew and mentioning Israeli cultural references. The degree of assimilation, ironically, came to be described in terms of what *deportation* would mean, while also recalling nationalist versions of Jewish history: to remove such a child would mean "cultural exile" (*haglaya tarbutit*).

The debate instigated by the campaign was never limited to undocumented non-Jewish children, but always also pointed to the repercussions for the demographics of Israel. Advocates made sure to emphasize that the numbers of children who would receive citizenship was very small. Opponents on the other hand, especially zealous bureaucrats in the Ministry of Interior, warned ominously that any government resolution granting these children citizenship would open the gateways for tens of thousands "illegal" Palestinian children to receive the same. This "demographic demon," as critics call this line of attack in Israel/Palestine (see Kanaaneh 2002), was released against the campaign time and again. The campaign however managed to gain its objectives, with resolutions passing in 2005, 2006, and 2010, each time loosening somewhat the criteria and thus including more children, and making the cause palatable to more mainstream politicians.

This campaign illuminates the US case both in its similarities and contrasts. First, it describes how the battle over terms is often about the larger stakes to delineate the state's population by crystallizing certain political discursive practices. In some sense, the undocumented children were the object which elite factions sought to define as a means to determine population demographics—that is, they sought to figure the signs for governing the population. The major protagonists were mostly left-leaning, secular elites, often organized in human rights NGOs. Their major opponents were largely high-ranking bureaucrats in the Ministry of Interior—known to be jealous of the line between Jew and Arab—and also religious politicians. The pro- and counter positions were recognizable according to terms that described the population governed by the state: to emphasize accent-free Hebrew was to neutralize the threat of non-Jewish Israeli citizens, while to emphasize large numbers was to suggest they could not be truly assimilated, like (according to Israeli political consensus) the Palestinians. Such demographic calculations are not absent in the US. During the current campaign season, we've already heard public discussion that "Latino voters" are attuned to immigration policy debates, and that they might end up supporting the Democrats long term on these issues. This possibility is the Republican's demographic demon.

Second, the Israeli campaign for undocumented children demonstrates how the terms illegal/citizen are articulated and shift within the particularities of nationalist institutions. The history of the term “illegal” in Israeli politics is suggestive of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and “citizen” is conceived in light of nationalist history of diaspora redeemed. Israeli officials often remark that Israel is a “country of return,” not a “country of immigrants” like the US or Canada, thus invoking the differential institutionalization in settler colonies of ethnic nationalism (*ius sanguinis*) and territorial nationalism (*ius soli*). Any Jew or descendent (to three generations) has the right to “return” and immediately become a citizen. Palestinians can be citizens if they are born in the pre-1967 borders to citizens, but they are not considered part of the nation. Otherwise, no “immigration” (*hagira*) policy per se really existed until the wave of labor migrants. In fact, the term *hagira* now signals anything to do with this category of non-Palestinian foreigner. In an ironic twist of fate, the first state organization to bear the term *hagira* in its name is the former “Immigration Authority” (established 2002)—mostly a police force tasked with deporting undocumented labor migrants. In formal and legal contexts, the term used for undocumented labor migrants, *shohe bilti-xuki* (abbreviated *shabax*)—parallel to the US “illegal alien”—evokes the security concerns used to demonize Palestinians from the Occupied Territories who enter Jewish-Israeli domains. From the current state perspective, *hagira* and *shabax* then delineate the types of exceptional categories produced when the wrong people cross national boundaries. NGOs who advocate for labor migrants now talk about changing “immigration policy,” and opponents often suspect their motives include changes to the status of Palestinians. This potential is always on the edge of public consciousness—along with the demographic demon.

The campaign for the rights of undocumented children helped to articulate new possibilities of citizenship, but left future entailments relatively underdetermined. If the Drop the I-Word and similar campaigns pick up steam, I am certain that we will see much more than a “political correctness” for reference. For within them dwells the potential for redefining citizenship and for refiguring the signs for governing populations.

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