Osaka RESPECT Program: Toronto 2015 Field Report

Nicholas Feinig
Rasha Darghawth
Jennifer Gibson
Felicia Perricelli
Caitlyn Therrien
Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto

Introduction

From April 30th to May 8th, 2015, the University of Toronto played host to the Osaka University Doctoral Program for Multicultural Innovation (also known in English as the "RESPECT Program"). In collaboration with a team of graduate student researchers from the University of Toronto, graduate students from Osaka participated in a combination of special seminars and off-campus activities held across Toronto in order to generate a comparative framework for further studies of multiculturalism in the Japanese context. The program was structured around three core clusters, each attending to a different set of issues Toronto faces as a city renowned for its diversity. The first cluster, conducted by the Department of Anthropology's Professor Bonnie McElhinny, provided students with an introduction to critiques of Canadian multiculturalism that draw on anti-racist and anti-colonial perspectives. Cluster two, led by the Department of Anthropology's Professor Girish Daswani, focused on the practices of transnational "home-making" and the role of religion in diasporic connection. The final cluster, overseen by Asian Institute Director Professor Joshua Barker, was built around a case study of Kensington Market: an area of the city offering a variety of goods and services from around the world. Through fieldwork sessions conducted in the market, students applied ethnographic methods to analyze urban infrastructures as sites of political contestation.

While Canada has developed a national brand that draws heavily from its unique cultural milieu, discourses of vibrant multiculturalism and diversity often conceal the

politics of contestation and resistance that play out in these communities day to day. Moreover, "multiculturalism" can paradoxically appear monolithic in a context in which its existence is rarely questioned. However, recent shifts in the Canadian political landscape, including wider awareness of territorial sovereignty claims by First Nations groups, legal reform to tighten citizenship regulation, and the 2014 attack on Parliament Hill[1], have begun to unsettle the way that the Canadian public and observers abroad think about the nation's diversity project. The RESPECT program provided students with an opportunity to reflect on some of these issues by facilitating an exchange of ideas. Students from Osaka University brought with them very different understandings of "diversity" derived from Japan's unique political and economic conditions. Across nationalities, "ethnic groups", religions, and differences in sexual orientation and ability, it is necessary to acknowledge and engage with "diversification within diversity": the boundaries of a concept which are continually rewritten. How might we think beyond a singular framework for "multiculturalism" and acknowledge the many ways in which diversity can be expressed, understood, and incorporated in policy? What lessons from the Canadian context might be carried into the Japanese context, and vice-versa?

This field report contains reflections on the practical component of the RESPECT curriculum from the University of Toronto RA team. The RA team assisted in program coordination and planned and executed many of the events and field trips. We attended lectures and excursions to share in the learning experience and to engage with colleagues from Osaka. In the spirit of the RESPECT program, it was a welcome opportunity to reflect critically on our understandings of multiculturalism in Canada, which is so often taken for granted. The RA team was uniquely positioned to observe both the content of the field site visits and the reactions and comments of the visiting Osaka students. Interactions with and insights offered by Japanese students unsettled the supposed "universality" of diversity as a principle of co-existence in liberal-democratic contexts, opening new lines of inquiry into

[1] On October 22nd, 2014, Michael Zehaf-Bibeau fatally shot Corporal Nathan Cirillo, a soldier on ceremonial guard duty. Zehaf-Bibeau was homeless and had a history of substance abuse, and had planned to travel to the Middle East. While he had expressed jihadist beliefs to friends at a local mosque, he was not marked as a terror threat by Canadian intelligence. Zehaf-Bibeau was shot and killed by Sergeant-at-Arms Kevin Vickers as he attempted to enter the Parliament of Canada caucuses.

This paper begins by addressing the contrasting notions of "*kyosei*" and "multiculturalism/diversity", which anchored much of the discussion and exchange between the visiting students and RESPECT instructors, presenters, and the RA team. The gaps and slippages that emerge from this analysis open more pointed lines of inquiry that are explored in reflections from the field. First, we consider the way in which students engaged with and contested narratives of multiculturalism and diversity at the Regent Park Development Project and at First Nation's House. We then turn to our visit to the Ghanaian Pentecostal Church, and offer a reflexive critique of diversity-as-policy inspired by the insights of Osaka students. Finally, we offer a meta-analysis of the fieldwork conducted in Kensington Market, with special attention paid to the way in which the unique qualities of *kyosei* are reflected, or neglected, in ongoing political struggles at that site.

Apr 30	THU	9:00–10:30	General Introduction	Transit House
			CLUSTER I	
			Overview of History and Debates on Canadian Multiculturalism	
		10:40–12:10	Session 1: Historical Context, Multiculturalism, and Settler Colonialism in Canada	Transit House
		13:30–15:30	Campus/Library Orientation	AP367
May 1	FRI	9:00–10:30	Session 2: Anti-racist and Anti-Colonial Critiques of Multiculturalism; Attempts at Reconciliation: Differences between the ideas of Redress, Apologies, Decolonization	Transit House
		10:50–12:20	Session 3: Case Studies	Transit House
		14:00-15:30	Field Trip Cluster 1: Regent Park Walking Tour: Redevelopment and Social Diversity	
May 2	SAT	10:00-13:00	Field Trip Cluster 1: Native Canadian Centre and First Stories Bus Tour	

			CLUSTER II	
			The Anthropology of Transnationalism and Religion: Home-making amongst the Diaspora	
May 3	SUN	9:30-18:00	Field Trip Cluster 2: Multiculturalism and Religion in Toronto's Priority Neighbourhoods	
May 4	MON	9:00- 10:30	Session 4: "Home-Making: Transnational Migration and Religion"	Transit House
		10:40-12:10	Session 5: Case Studies	Transit House
		13:30-15:	Session 6: Discussio	Transit House
			CLUSTER III	
			Ethnography of Kensington Market and Infrastructures	
May 5	TUE	9:00–10:30	Session 7: Ethnography of Kensington Market	Transit House
		11:00–15:00	Fieldtrip Cluster 3: Fieldwork in Kensington Market	
		15:30–17:00	Session 8: Discussion about Kensington Market Fieldwork	Transit House
May 6	WED	9:00–10:30	Session 9: Urban Infrastructures, Activism and Cultural Production	Transit House
		10:30–End	Fieldtrip Cluster 3: Tour of Kensington Market	
May 7	THU	10:00–16:00	Preparation for workshop	AP367
		16:00-19:00	***	AP330
May 8	FRI	10:00- 15:00	Joint Graduate Student Workshop (including lunch)	Larkin Building
		15:30-17:30	Joint Student Activity: Indigenous Peoples Film Screening	Robarts Library Media Commons

Schedule of Events I. Summer School in Multicultural Studies

1. On "*Kyosei*"

Coming into this project, the R.A. team was curious to hear more about the relationship established through coursework between "diversity" in Canada and "*kyosei*" in Japan. Here, we focus on "diversity" and "*kyosei*" instead of "multiculturalism" or "*tabunka kyosei*". "Multiculturalism" posits the a priori existence of distinct cultural groups, and can problematically reinforce systems of racial categorization. A focus on "culture", in this sense, is also too narrow for a discussion that addresses issues of gender, social and economic class, and ability, all of which are captured by the term "diversity". A literal translation of *kyosei*, a combination of "*kyo*" (together) and "*sei*" (live), captures only part of its meaning. From discussions with Osaka students in the field, we learned that the word itself originated in the biological sciences to describe the relationship between organisms of various species: closer to the English word "symbiotic". This notion of relationships between human and non-human things, between people and their environment, is part of the unique character of *kyosei*. It highlights a very different understanding of social relationships, one that emphasizes their place in a wider environment. It is interesting to note that the term diversity too has significance within the biological sciences: strong, healthy ecosystems are often the result of/defined by biological diversity- many species coexisting productively results in a more resilient system capable of compensating for changes in the balance of resources.

The structure of the RESPECT program reflects the importance of relationships with place. In order to learn about diversity, students traveled to churches, markets, and community centres as a means of understanding where and how these communities live and are organized in relation to the land, to the buildings they live and work in, to the goods they sell and food they share, to the plants they cultivate, and to the parks they protect. Through discussions with Osaka students, it became clear that the active political use of "diversity" seemed unique to its invocation in the Canadian context. Where *kyosei* often indicates a state of being- of harmony, of symbiosis, of coexistence- diversity is often used as an active, political tool. Through case studies, students learned about the way that diversity is used in action as a way to make changes or claims on people or institutions. The

centrality of diversity and multiculturalism to government policy in Canada enables appeals of this sort.

From these insights we derive two central questions to be addressed in the following subsections of the paper:

(1) How did the interaction between University of Toronto RAs and Osaka students help us see diversity as a project that transcends people to include spaces, places, and things?
(2) What is the role of conflict in the way we think about and encounter diversity?

These loosely structured reflections draw on the collective experience of the RA team. We highlight specific encounters and conversations with and between Osaka students, presenters, and the RAs, drawing out moments of puzzlement or discomfit. These gaps in understanding draw attention to the assumptions held by the RA team concerning the nature of multiculturalism and diversity in Canada, and open up space for critical analysis.

2. Regent Park and First Nation's House: Multiculturalism and Canada's Colonial History

Module one introduced students to Canada's ongoing struggle with its colonial history. The Canadian government's promotion of diversity and multiculturalism stands in stark contrast with its unjust treatment of First Nations groups. The legacy of residential schools and lopsided treaties play a prominent role in contemporary Native claim making. This discussion grew to incorporate broader critiques of Canadian multiculturalism as policy. In tandem with Professor Bonnie McElhinny's seminars, students visited the Regent Park Development project: an area of the city in which old houses are being transformed into mixed residential and commercial space in the hopes of attracting families from diverse economic backgrounds. Sharon Kelly, who recently finished her dissertation situated in this site, provided a guided tour, imparting information and inspiring discussion. The Regent Park Area is undergoing a multi-phase development project (including the

construction of residential space, community centres, parks, and land for commercial use) that greatly increases the number of residents, mixing members of divergent economic groups. We learned that this project's goals were built upon a taken-for-granted 'multi-cultural' landscape. Beyond this assumption of the unquestionable inclusion of diverse peoples ethnically, racially, and culturally, the only "difference" left to "solve" in this development was the varying economic standings of its residents. From this perspective, class and class-mixing became the central feature of the project. Diversity in this scenario was enacted by pushing for categorically distinct class groups to mix socially and spatially, forming a community that would be beneficial to both categories of resident.

Some of the questions and critiques raised and noted during our visit to this project and in discussion with Sharon were as follows:

(1) How does the assumption of multiculturalism in Toronto - because it is such a pervasive narrative- actually work to misdirect attention from this concept, which is assumed to already be "working"?
(2) If multiculturalism is assumed, and diversity issues become centered on class, how are religious or cultural needs accommodated, or perhaps overlooked? This line of questioning led us to discover that, as phases of the development are carried out,

there will no longer be multi-use religious and community spaces that were once available.

(3) The cultural, ethnic, racial, linguistic, and religious make-up of the condo purchasers are unknown. The sole requirement for moving into Regent Park is having the funds to do so. How is this community development project that is meant to bring diverse people together overlooking so many aspects of diversity?

RESPECT students noted that there are high density condo residents in Japan, but there doesn't seem to be the same issues that the Toronto case study reveals. Is it because the tensions that residents in Japan encounter in urban condo living do not surface in public discussion? Are these dialogues absent or silenced by omission? Will this be the case for Regent Park as time passes? Perhaps this is the case for Canadian multiculturalism at large; this celebratory narrative of social cohesion and harmonious living may overshadow or limit the critiques that are offered- now and in the future.

The focus of the module shifted with the next field site visit: First Nation's House and the First Stories Bus Tour. The tour began with our guide, Brian, suggesting that the landscape of Toronto is filled with what he called "whispers of Indigenous presence". The purpose of the tour was to draw these whispers out and make them heard. The tour brought RESPECT students to several locations throughout the city where they were shown sites of historical use and occupation and some of the physical remnants of it. In High Park (a large, municipal park in Toronto's west end), the group saw an *Anishinaabe* message tree: a tree with a branch bent hundreds of years ago to point northward for the purpose of indicating direction for navigation etc. Davenport Road was a widely used pre-contract trail and trading route. Early colonists made use of this trail, eventually building the road we know today on top of it. These are features visitors and residents would never recognize as anything more than a tree or a road without being informed of their unique histories. However, once one is taught to read objects and environments in this way, it fundamentally alters all encounters with the landscape of the city. The intent of the bus tour was to "mark" Toronto with knowledge of the silenced history of its spaces.

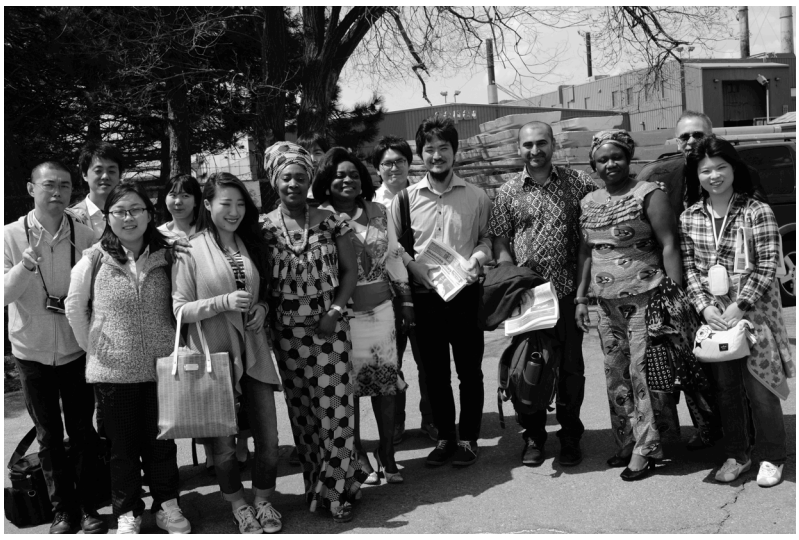
The tour culminated at First Nation's House, a centre dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Toronto's native heritage and support for its native community. Here, RESPECT students also engaged in informal but intensive conversation around the issues faced by First Nations people in Canada. The group's second tour guide, a young *Anishinaabe* man named Sam, passed around his Indian Status card and offered a withering critique of its existence. When one of the students from Osaka asked "why not just renounce the card and claim to simply be Canadian like anyone else?", Sam offered an astute response – that, as problematic as it is, to renounce Aboriginal status is to renounce a claim to the land; a telling example of the way in which the fraught discourse of multiculturalism can be leveraged productively by marginalized groups to advance their own interests.

RESPECT students drew parallels between the struggle of Canada's Aboriginal peoples and native Okinawans, who occupy a marginal position in government policy. Allocating land in Okinawa for use by the American military has been a source of conflict in the community for decades, and the financial return for hosting a military installation has come at the expense of the health and wellbeing of the surrounding population. While plans are in motion to relocate U.S. Marine Air Station Futenma, activists argue that this simply relocates the problem. It is the insistence on placing this burden on the people of Okinawa, specifically, that reveals racial hierarchies within the Japanese state that stem from its own colonial legacy (the island, formerly known as the Ryukyus, was annexed in 1879) and from the pseudo-colonial intervention of the United States (which confiscated land after World War II, helping to establish the ongoing security alliance between the two nations at the expense of Okinawa and its people). It is fascinating to note the way in which non-human actors, in both of these examples, are implicated in the political contestation of space. Canadian Aboriginal peoples frequently invoke a spiritual and practical connection with their territory (played out in myth and custom) as a means of asserting their status as stewards of the land. The famous "Dugong v. Rumsfeld" case (in which environmental activists launched a complaint against then U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld that included "Dugong", an endangered marine mammal whose habitat was threatened by

military base construction, as a plaintiff) in Okinawa similarly positioned a non-human actor to serve as a representative of the land and its indigenous species and communities threatened by the military installation.

3. Ghanaian Pentecostal Church: Transnational Diaspora and Religion

Module two, conducted by Professor Girish Daswani, addressed diasporic communities in Toronto, home-making, and the concept of "Methodological Nationalism" - wherein "nation" is assumed to anchor migrant relations across borders. In seminar, the group reflected on concepts related to the notion of home-making, including: neighborhood, place, comfort, belonging, familiarity, safety, and security, all of which articulate around the central concept of nation. These concepts were widely agreed upon by RESPECT students, and acknowledged by Prof. Daswani as familiar responses to this question. However, through the lens of multiculturalism and diversity, the identities and types of 'home' that are produced by these practices vary widely. So called "cultural groups" are rarely, if ever, homogenous. By way of example, it was clear that RESPECT students are not easily generalized or homogenized, but come with distinct family histories, different religious affiliations, and connections to various nation states or migratory entrances into Japan.



At the Ghanaian Pentecostal Church, a federally registered religious non-profit organization, students attended a morning prayer service, which included dancing and songs of worship and praise. During this session, RESPECT students noted that the people they encountered were not equal in their engagements with the religious aspects of participation. They observed that one man was deep in prayer and recitation, while another was playing on his cellphone. Similarly, gender was a division that marked ability to speak authoritatively, and was often reflected in whether or not one wore 'typical' Ghanaian clothing. This heterogeneity is important to notice because the Ghanaian Church is a site defined by the presence of individuals belonging to a national-cultural imaginary. This identity category becomes politicized as Ghanaian Torontonians work towards a 'normalized' citizenship and Torontonian status equal to other society members. The ability of Ghanaians to 'home-make' in Toronto is shaped by their heterogeneous political and racialized subjectivities.

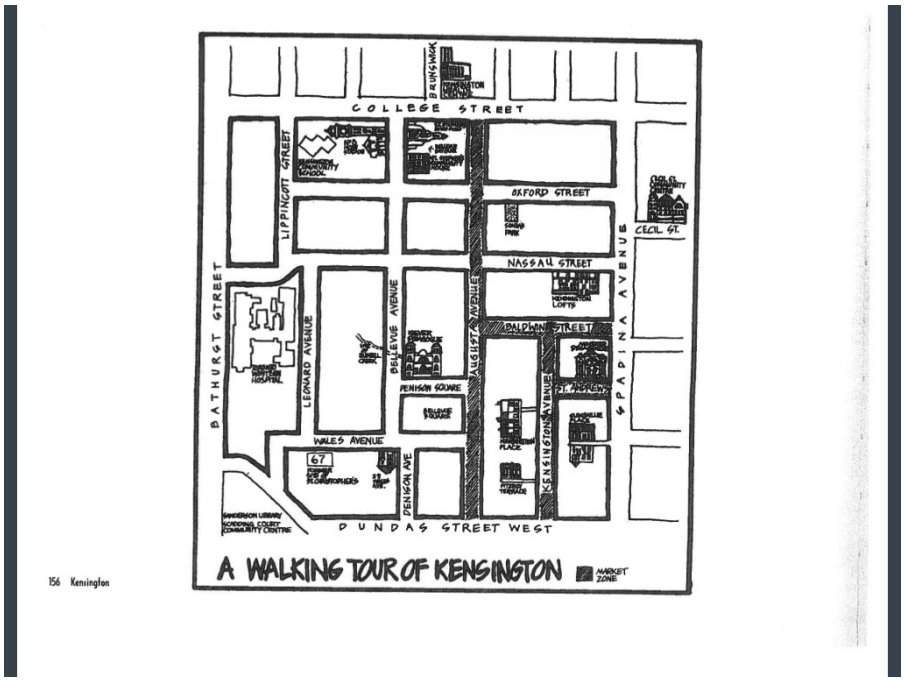
Having experienced firsthand the heterogeneity of the church's membership, the group discussed the way in which "cultural diversity" can lead to the creation of cultural groups defined in essentialist terms. In society at large, these groups are organized in a sort of citizenship hierarchy, affording privileges to some over others. The tensions and annoyances of these hierarchies (regardless of actual citizenship) manifest in the daily interactions between minorities and the majority population. The group addressed one common example: the seemingly harmless question, "where are you from?". While seemingly innocuous, this question can be rather antagonistic. Minority groups are constantly asked to legitimize their belonging, or to explain their visible difference, by responding to this request.

It became clear through these discussions, for both RAs and Osaka students, that Canada and Toronto do not contain "answers" or "solutions" to issues arising from diversity or for implementing diversity as policy. Very little, in terms of concrete, actionable plans, can be borrowed or transposed onto the Japanese context. Diversity is not something that can be easily legislated, nor is it taken up or engaged with predictably by the diverse members of each society. Tensions exist, manifesting as problems of equity,

marginalization, and cultural essentialization, all of which need to be addressed through open dialogue. The issues that were revealed over the course of the RESPECT curriculum are a source of friction, but it is the sort of friction that can be mobilized to help us engage with our communities in creative and productive ways.

4. Kensington Market: The Politics of Inner-City Infrastructure

The tour of Kensington Market was an exploration of space, place, and politics. While Kensington has become a symbol of diversity in Toronto, it is through the conflicts and struggle surrounding the use of space- whether roads, housing developments, or storefronts- that "diversity", as a concept and as a policy, can be seen put to use as a way of making political claims. Diversity is employed by many groups (the municipal government of the city of Toronto, the community organization Friends of Kensington, the association for local business owners etc.) as a tool. It is used to attract tourists (promoting the eclectic mix of people and services), and to keep them out (protecting tenants from gentrification and encroachment by large corporations); to encourage the exchange of certain goods (local, craft, or imports), and prevent the exchange of others (mass produced, brand name goods). It is always in a state of tension. We can trace this tension back through history to the market's origins in (and as) the Jewish Ward of the city, beginning in 1910. Subsequent waves of migration have shaped the market we see today, and it is this layered settlement of diverse migrant groups that gives the neighborhood its unique character.



Even though Kensington Market is constantly changing, our discussion with the representative from "Friends of Kensington", Dominique Russell, made it clear that people in Toronto feel the need to protect it. The question, then, becomes one of why and how: why preserve that which is characterized by change, and how might one "preserve" something that is always in flux? Our host described Kensington as possessing certain persistent qualities that endured through demographic shifts: a "sense of village" and "porosity" (ie. a place people move in and out of). It was, in her words, a "place for those who do not have a place". In sessions held prior to the field site visit, Professor Joshua Barker spoke to the moral economy of Kensington. The market is not built solely on economic exchange; it draws heavily on the social meaning behind them. Ms. Russell's statements reflect the importance of these personal community values to the "brand" of identity of the market- what is valued in the market is the sense of place.

Such an understanding brings non-human objects into the discourse on diversity in Kensington. The relationships that define this place exist between people, the goods they buy and sell, and the place in which they shop and live. Through brief ethnographic interviews and observation, Osaka students were able to enter into these relationships by

participating in this economy- for example, purchasing a haircut allowed one group to learn more about the life of their barber through friendly discussion while sitting in his chair. In strange fusion restaurants like the "Hungary Thai" (which serves Thai curry alongside schnitzel and dumplings), used clothing stores, or Latin American food stands, the "diversity" of the goods and services offered in the market support broader claims to recognition- and protection- as a uniquely diverse and vibrant community.

It is also clear from our discussion with Ms. Russell that space defines the market. Many of the conflicts we investigated- the opening of a large grocery store, a new condo complex, laws meant to remove the homeless, the pedestrian Sunday debate- were rooted in the management of space. The unique qualities of *kyosei* are reflected in these issues: diversity appears as a larger question of environment and the way in which people and things are organized within it. Harmonious coexistence requires the management of more than just people. Infrastructure, goods, services, gardens and parks, homes, and art are all strategically arranged, their relationships with one another subject to intense debate and frequent modification. In this way, "diversity" can be understood as a question of the meaning of place: how do we understand or make sense of an area, and how does this understanding change the way we experience and interact with it? It was striking, then, to see the way in which Osaka students interacted with the spatiality of Kensington Market.

Working their way in from the furthest southern and western edges of Kensington, the students explored areas of contact with low income community housing projects. While the center of the market draws the majority of locals and tourists to its boutique coffee shops and trendy eateries, these contact zones house the businesses and residences of most of the market's most vulnerable community members. Interrogating Kensington at its geographic limits blurs the boundaries between neighborhoods, drawing in actors who move in and out of the market, or whose livelihoods are shaped by their proximity to the market. RESPECT students investigated and contested the limits of Kensington Market, rather than treat it as a hub or center towards which community members gravitate.

Conclusion

Over the course of the RESPECT program, it has become clear that "diversity and multiculturalism" are not singular categories of meaning or practice. "Diversity and multiculturalism" in the Canadian context operate as a brand, as social policy, as economic policy, and as a political strategy. It is this "diversity of diversity" that makes discussion of the topic so fraught: it is unstable, representing conflicting interests and generating tension and friction. It may have come as a surprise to some of our guests from Osaka University that much of the course syllabus was built around struggle rooted in the question of "diversity"- whether it was within a neighborhood, a city, or the nation. This is at odds with the general understanding of diversity as the basis of harmonious living and community, which is an important part of Canada's national image. This image is built on many struggles against the racism and oppression of Canada's settler-colonial state (among Native peoples, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese migrants etc.). Canada's diversity project came from, and has created, conflict. At the same time, we have seen that these conflicts- though sometimes violent or destructive- often generate change. They allow groups to form public identities where they were once invisible, to influence the way that they relate to their community, and to control the way they make a living and build a family. Fighting "against" a certain conception of diversity or fighting "through" or "with" it, then, does not necessarily indicate outright failure.

Experiencing some of Toronto's most dynamic and contested communities alongside the visiting students of the Osaka University RESPECT program generated novel critiques of Canada's brand of multiculturalism. The comments and queries offered by scholars encountering these areas for the first time gave the RA team cause to pause and reflect. Our discussions broadened our understanding of "multiculturalism" and "diversity" to encompass a broader array of actors, both human and non-human. We were able to draw parallels between disparate cases in Canada and Japan, and to situate shared difficulties as symptoms of overarching structures of colonialism. The RA team extends its sincerest thanks to the Osaka students for their warmth and for their insight into these issues, and look forward to seeing them carry their experience in Canada forward in their studies.