

## Care ethics and narratives of the ‘grateful refugee’ and ‘model minority’: A postcolonial feminist observation of New Zealand in the wake of the Christchurch terror attacks

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### Abstract

In this article, Nishhza Thiruselvam interrogates Aotearoa/New Zealand politics in the last decade and a half, attempting to make sense of the events leading up to March 15, referred to by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern as ‘New Zealand’s darkest day’. She argues that the terror attacks perpetrated on this day were, paradoxically, both shocking yet unsurprising, given that racist and Islamophobic scapegoating and anti-Māori rhetoric are consistently manipulated by Aotearoa/New Zealand’s political elite in a strategy to maintain power. Informed by postcolonial feminist analysis, Thiruselvam argues that social discourses in the wake of March 15, such as Ardern’s insistence that ‘This is not who we are’, constitute forms of institutional gaslighting, which invalidate the author’s own lived experience of occupying the space of the ‘Other’ in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

### Key words

*Christchurch, ‘grateful refugee’, ‘model minority’, gaslighting, (post)colonialism, Islamophobia*

In the aftermath of the March 15 Christchurch terror attacks, those of us living in Aotearoa/New Zealand persevere with our grief as we try to make sense of a senseless event. Our centre-left government’s immediate response to the attacks – banning semi-automatic weapons – gained us worldwide praise. Such an appropriate response strengthened Aotearoa/New Zealand’s reputation as a peaceful nation far down in the Pacific. On the day of the attacks, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern addressed the nation, repeating in her speech the lines ‘This is not who we are’ and ‘They are us’ (see e.g. Whyte, 2019). Through these lines, a narrative came together from which many people in Aotearoa/New Zealand have been able to take comfort, while processing the collective trauma of what Ardern called ‘New Zealand’s darkest day’ (Whyte, 2019).

Yet for many New Zealanders, this narrative is alien to our reality of life here preceding and following the attacks. For those of us who are unable to find comfort in Ardern’s discourse, the channels through which to process our grief and trauma seem limited. Moreover, the widespread acceptance of this narrative profoundly invalidates the complex reality and history of Aotearoa/New Zealand, as experienced by those of us living beyond the rose-tinted lens of white liberal sensibilities.

As a migrant of the Tamil diaspora and a feminist, I move through the world distanced from this rose-tinted lens. I am political as a means of making sense of my world. My family migrated to Aotearoa/New Zealand in 2004 when I was 14. The news was full of the trial of asylum seeker, and suspected Al-Qaeda member, Ahmed Zaoui, and anti-terrorist scaremongering made up much of Aotearoa/New Zealand’s political climate. Meanwhile, in my first year of schooling here, my name was taken away from me, and I was given a new identity – ‘curry muncher’, or sometimes ‘curry bitch’ – terms I hadn’t heard before. In these enactments of racialised misogyny, I became an Other.

In the rest of this article, I outline my observations of Aotearoa/New Zealand politics in the last decade and a half, attempting to make sense of the events that led us to 'New Zealand's darkest day'. My troubling truth is that the terror attacks of March 15 were shocking, yet came as no surprise to me. Racist and Islamophobic scapegoating along with anti-Māori rhetoric are consistently manipulated by Aotearoa/New Zealand's political elite in a strategy to maintain power. Informed by postcolonial feminist analysis, I argue that claims such as 'This is not who we are' constitute forms of institutional gaslighting which invalidate my lived experience over the last 15 years during which I have occupied a space here as Other. 'Gaslighting' can be described as 'the effort of one person to undermine another person's confidence and stability by causing the victim to doubt their own senses and beliefs' (Kline, 2006, p. 1148; cited in Davis & Ernst, 2019, p. 762). The term is taken from the 1944 film, *Gaslight*, in which an abusive husband manipulates his wife's surroundings and makes her doubt her own sanity. It is commonly used in feminist discourse to describe the dynamics of an abusive relationship, where the victim's attempts to express their experiences are dismissed as irrational by their abuser. I argue that gaslighting articulates a type of violence so deeply embedded in Aotearoa/New Zealand's social discourse that it has become normalised, accepted, and allowed to continue largely unquestioned.

## Colonialism and 'care' in the Age of Enlightenment

As a settler-colonial state with a settler-colonial government, Aotearoa/New Zealand's multi-cultural society lives under settler-colonial rule. Underpinning the nineteenth-century foundations of this settler-colonial state are white supremacist assumptions borne from the intellectual and philosophical movements of the Age of Enlightenment (Smith, 1999). The Enlightenment era emphasised the value of science, liberty, and progress, elevating the status of so-called rational thought and objective reasoning, both of which were androcentric and Western in their orientation. Significantly, this period was also a time of colonial expansion, galvanising Western imperialists to extend the reach of their domination under the notion of bringing 'light' to the 'darkness' – in other words, bringing Western progress in the form of colonial, capitalist patriarchy to the rest of the 'backward' and 'primitive' world (Smith 1999, p. 25).

In her book *Decolonizing methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) traces how these Age of Enlightenment discourses of race and racism continue to be manifest in Aotearoa/New Zealand society today. According to Smith:

The form of colonisation that indigenous peoples are confronting now emerged from that period of European history known as the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment provided the spirit, the impetus, the confidence and the political and economic structures that facilitated the search for new knowledges. The project of the Enlightenment is often referred to as 'modernity' and it is that project which is claimed to have provided the stimulus for the industrial revolution, and the philosophy of liberalism, the development of disciplines in the sciences and the development of public education. Imperialism underpinned and was critical to these developments ... As a system of ideas, liberalism focuses on the individual who has the capacity to reason, on a society which promotes individual autonomy and self-interest, and on a state which has a rational rule of law which regulates a public sphere of life, but which allows individuals to pursue economic self-interest. (1999, pp. 117-19)

Within Enlightenment notions of Western progress lie heavy assumptions of white, Western superiority. Such assumptions, further combined with delusions of Western benevolence, gave rise to the historical violence underpinning the colonial and imperialist expansion of the West. When such a violent history continues to be euphemised as a positive move towards modernisation, and is further distorted in its narrative presentation as an exercise in care, we

need to critically examine our understanding of care and caring. Jacinda Ardern's decision to ban guns in response to the terror attacks, as well as her donning the hijab while visiting Aotearoa/New Zealand's Muslim communities at this time, were widely interpreted as gestures intended to convey her love, care, and acceptance of Muslim New Zealanders. Indeed, images of Ardern wearing a hijab and comforting those impacted by the attacks have come to symbolise an idealised government that cares for the people. Yet, such gestures of care and acceptance towards Muslim communities are inconsistent with other policies implemented by Ardern and her government, many of which are Islamophobic and hostile towards migrant/refugee communities and those seeking asylum (see below). The notion of 'care' within this context is further problematised by Teju Cole (2012) in his article on the 'White Saviour Industrial Complex'. The 'white saviour' trope articulates the praise and glorification afforded to (typically Western, cis-gendered, and able-bodied) persons situated within colonial, capitalist, and patriarchal power structures for their extension of care to victims of violence, despite this violence being the foundations upon which Western empires have been built. As Cole notes, 'The white saviour supports brutal policies in the morning, founds charities in the afternoon, and receives awards in the evening' (2012).

The New Zealand government's refusal to condemn the indefinite detention of asylum seekers demonstrates our complicity in the torture and inhumane treatment of people fleeing homelands destabilised by Western imperialism (Dateline Pacific, 2017). Furthermore, in the Labour government's latest budget, \$25 million<sup>1</sup> has been allocated to deterring boats containing asylum seekers from reaching Aotearoa/New Zealand (Manch, 2019). While such an allocation has been portrayed as one fuelled by care and concern for victims of people smuggling, the reactionary undertones of such policies play on and exploit scaremongering tactics against the Other. The framing of this budget allocation further demonstrates 'relations of care as relations of power' (Bartos, 2018), showing how colonial capitalist governments manipulate discourses and perceptions of care in order to maintain power. According to political and feminist academic Joan Tronto, care can be defined as 'everything we do to maintain, continue and repair "our world" – our bodies, ourselves and our environment so that we can live in it as well as possible in a life sustaining web' (1993, p. 103). When our white supremacist, capitalist, and patriarchal world is built on relationships of dominance and subordination between Western imperialist nations and postcolonial states, maintaining and continuing such a world seems to be a white saviour's exercise of 'care' in order to preserve the status quo.

Moreover, I would suggest that institutional gaslighting occurs within this context too. State institutions often portray certain individuals as unreasonable and irrational when they threaten to disrupt the status quo. We become vulnerable to institutional gaslighting when we name, problematise, and challenge the sophisticated ways that settler-colonial violence is enacted through our institutions. Our critique of colonialist discourse is dismissed, as the media continually reminds us that according to global rankings, Aotearoa/New Zealand is the second-most peaceful nation, that it has the third-most trusted politicians and the sixth-most reliable police services, and that it is world's best place to be an expat (Cohen 2018). These rankings are used by the media to reinforce the idea that Aotearoa/New Zealand is almost a paradisiacal place to live (Cohen 2018). They likewise portray settler-colonial Aotearoa/New Zealand as a product of Enlightenment achievement and success. Moreover, given the international praise accorded to our government for the manner in which it responded to the Christchurch terror attacks, our paradisiacal image becomes all the more impenetrable. To suggest otherwise is to become a target of institutional gaslighting. For if we attempt to problematise this image by disclosing our own vastly different experience of living in Aotearoa/New Zealand as an Other, we threaten to smudge the rose-tinted lens through which Aotearoa/New Zealand is so often

viewed. The experience of being othered is in itself isolating; when we attempt to name and articulate our experience of othering, we risk being pushed further to the margins.

## Performing as 'grateful refugee' and 'model minority'

When marginalisation and social isolation are already a condition of migrant/refugee life, the vulnerable, racialised, and gendered bodies of migrant/refugee peoples are easily co-opted and coerced into a performance of what has been termed 'the grateful refugee' (Schwöbel-Patel & Ozkaramanli, 2017). The 'grateful refugee' is a constructed image and narrative, which imposes the burden of certain societal behaviours and expectations onto refugees: a willingness to work, gratitude and deference to their host nation, and an unwillingness to be a drain on state resources (Schwöbel-Patel & Ozkaramanli, 2017). This construction is similar to the myth of the 'model minority', which lays certain expectations on migrant communities to excel in areas such as socioeconomic accomplishment, education, low criminality, and stable family/marital lives (Lee, 1996). In both constructions, the success of migrant/refugee individuals are measured against colonial, capitalist, and patriarchal standards relating to the perceived 'worthiness' of the Other. Meanwhile, the language of 'diversity' and 'inclusivity' is co-opted to conceal the continuing legacy of othering and violence. This is akin to the co-option of gendered bodies in 'lean in feminism', a politically liberal concept articulated by Sheryl Sandberg in her 2013 book, *Lean in*. Sandberg has been widely criticised by feminists for ignoring and denying the systemic entrenchment of capitalist patriarchy – the very structure through which the oppression and disempowerment of all women is enacted – especially for those who do not benefit from racial or class privilege. Instead, 'lean in feminism' capitalistically focuses on women's individual responsibility to pursue professional advancement in their corporate workplace (Miller & Plencner 2018).

Performances of the 'grateful refugee' and 'model minority' roles also involve racialised bodies contributing labour, producing capital, conceding vulnerability and weakness as racialised subjects, confessing the regressive nature of their own culture and the superiority of Western culture, and basically keeping their heads down. This last point involves turning a blind eye to the institutional violence of a white supremacist state. As a reward, tokenistic gestures are extended to the Other, such as access to positions of institutional power, thereby giving the illusion of a commitment to diversity, inclusivity, and acceptance. This acceptance is of course conditional, and based on how convincingly and enthusiastically they perform and continue to perform as 'grateful refugees' or members of the 'model minority'. Just as neoliberal feminism lacks the fundamental resources to challenge an overarching patriarchal social order, co-opting the Other into a performance of these roles coerces them to affirm a narrowly construed ideal of racial empowerment, while wrapping a white supremacist script inside the language of diversity and inclusion. Such a performance ultimately upholds and grants legitimacy to white supremacist institutions. Expectations to perform the 'grateful refugee' and 'model minority' roles also put migrant/refugee communities in opposition to Māori. Coercing migrants and refugees into this performance is an exercise in concealing the structural inequalities that exist as a result of colonial violence, and leaves Māori vulnerable to overrepresentation in narratives and statistics relating to crime, poverty, and violence. 'Model minority' and 'grateful refugee' discourses thus undermine solidarity between migrant and Māori, and can further lead to lateral violence between our communities. In the following section, I explore this further, tracing the colonial violence that underpins both Māori and migrant/refugee experiences.

## Colonial violence

Preceding the colonisation and settlement of Aotearoa/New Zealand, European colonial and imperial endeavours inflicted horrific violence on indigenous populations elsewhere in the world. The atrocities endured by indigenous populations were determined by their positioning in a European constructed hierarchy, referred to by James Belich as the ‘great chain of being’ (2011). God sat at the top of this hierarchy with apes coming at the bottom. Europeans positioned themselves closest to God, near the top of this hierarchy, as the most superior and civilised form of humanity. Arranged below were various indigenous populations from around the world, ranked ‘scientifically’ from the most to the least civilised. On this scale, Australia’s Aborigines were placed at the bottom, close to the ape, as they were deemed ‘lower savages’ and barely human. Māori, conversely, were positioned higher up the scale, as an example of the so-called ‘noble savage’. The position given to indigenous communities on this scale also determined the extent of the violence by which they were colonised. The further their proximity from Europeans signalled their reduced humanity, which in turn justified the infliction of more violence in the conquest of their land, labour, and resources (Belich, 2011).

Classified as the ‘noble savage’, Māori were ‘assumed to be capable, with proper guidance, of graduating to civilisation’ (Sorrenson, 1975, p. 97). In an overestimation of British colonial benevolence, the civilising mission of Aotearoa/New Zealand is accordingly believed to have been ‘generous’, or ‘caring’, towards Māori when compared to the violence endured by indigenous people in other British colonies around the world. The colonial atrocities endured by Māori, however, are considered by many to have been genocidal in scale. In an instance of cultural genocide, Māori were forced to speak English and violently discouraged from speaking Te Reo Māori; Māori children were humiliated with corporal punishment in schools when caught speaking in their mother tongue. Many Māori also called for the British forces’ brutal military invasion of Parihaka, where Taranaki iwi peacefully resisted the colonial theft and occupation of their ancestral land, to be commemorated as a national day of mourning (Godfrey, 2015). And just over a decade ago, the Te Urewera raids of 2007 saw a long list of human rights abuses by the Crown. The raids gained widespread coverage in the Aotearoa/New Zealand colonial media, where Māori sovereignty activists of the Ngāi Tūhoe tribe were scapegoated as a threat to civil society in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Sluka, 2010). During the raids, Tūhoe children were searched and held at gunpoint – quite literally terrorised by the state. In media narratives, however, it was the Tūhoe sovereignty activists who were dehumanised as ‘terror suspects’; this portrayal further served to justify the systemic violence relentlessly inflicted on Māori by what remains a colonial government (Sluka, 2010).

While Māori continue to endure the relentless violence under settler-colonial rule, the belief that European settlement in Aotearoa/New Zealand took place peacefully continues to be widely propagated in mainstream discourse. For example, in 2015 former prime minister of Aotearoa/New Zealand, John Key, infamously said, ‘In my view New Zealand was one of the very few countries in the world that were settled peacefully. Maori probably acknowledge that settlers had a place to play and brought with them a lot of skills and a lot of capital’ (cited in Bell, Elizabeth, McIntosh, & Wynyard, 2017, p. 18). Such a narrative is obviously lacking in coherence when the effects of colonial atrocities continue to play out today with an over-representation of Māori in New Zealand’s neoliberal prisons-for-profit system, along with the relentless and ongoing theft of Māori land by the New Zealand Crown. This narrative distorts reality and individualises blame onto members of the Māori community who fall victim to the violence upon which this settler-colonial state is built. The narrative is also a blatant invalidation of the collective trauma experienced by Māori. It is an instance of institutional gaslighting,

which denies the legacies of settler-colonial violence endured by Māori. This narrative isolates individual persons as problematic, using a strategy which distracts from identifying the ruthless extent of New Zealand state violence. This strategy only serves to strengthen colonial hegemony and maintain the colonial capitalist status quo. As Morgan Godfrey notes:

Most New Zealanders are vaguely aware of their county's unsettling past, yet prefer to reduce history to a neat transaction in which settlers arrive with 'skills' and 'capital' to bargain with Māori for their land. This is not done out of delusion or hypocrisy. Revisionism is a deeply ideological act. (2015, p. 4)

Aotearoa/New Zealand's self-indulgent self-image as a nation built on 'benevolent' colonialism is consistent with the phenomenon articulated by Canadian Tamil academic Mirusha Yogarajah, which she refers to as the 'angel complex'. This term describes the ignorance that many New Zealanders have about institutional violence which lies normalised within our systems. This ignorance occurs through comparing ourselves to countries like Australia and the United States, whose institutions we perceive to be far more violent than our own towards first peoples, migrants, and refugees. As Yogarajah explains:

Canada tends to nod in agreement to the conversation about their angel complex – constantly contrasting themselves to the United States to highlight their zeal behind human rights initiatives and the galvanizing force of their diversity with their 'reconciliation efforts' or gender based federal budget. I've seen Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in a myriad of South Asian fashion surrounded by racialised people around him – a spectacle illuminating a performance that is at the forefront of Canadian immigration law. In the midst of fashion nods towards South Asia, and correcting 'mankind' to 'peoplekind', there lies a history of deplorable immigration policies that have treated racialised people as deplorable. Canada is no angel, let's get that straight. Canada's angel complex is a joke from the settling of Indigenous lands to the detainment of Tamils merely seeking security. (2018)

I began this article with Jacinda Ardern's assurances in light of the violence perpetrated on March 15 that as a nation, 'This is not who we are'. Yet, as is clear from my discussion of Aotearoa/New Zealand's violent colonial history, this statement does not ring true. Rather, it is symptomatic of Aotearoa/New Zealand's angel complex, where New Zealanders also take great comfort in the belief that the colonial violence experienced by Māori was not as brutal as that experienced by Australia's Aborigines. We continue to situate ourselves in a binary with Australia in an effort to sugar-coat our colonial history. Such an act is not only delusional, but also a deeply ideological act of revisionism. Aotearoa/New Zealand's angel complex extends into a denial of institutional complicity in the white supremacist terror attacks which took the lives of 51 Muslim New Zealanders. Through our national narrative condemning the violence of the attack, it lays full blame on an individual Australian white supremacist terrorist. This is a revisionist act, where institutional powers wash their hands clean of liability in what was a natural outcome of institutional violence.

Aotearoa/New Zealand's Muslim community is no stranger to institutional terror and oppression inflicted by the violent systems of this settler-colonial state. In 2002, Ahmed Zaoui, an Algerian man seeking political asylum in Aotearoa/New Zealand, was detained at the airport on arrival and held without trial in solitary confinement for two years (Price, 2004). Torture of this kind seems to have become the standard dehumanising treatment that the global Muslim community are expected to tolerate under state-propagated hysteria about terrorism. The Minister of Immigration under our then centre-left Labour government declared Zaoui a threat to national security and issued a Security Risk Certificate against him, allowing his continued detention for suspected involvement with Al Qaeda. This was done without substantiated evidence against Zaoui, who was eventually released in 2004 after it was concluded he had no involvement with terrorist groups (Price, 2004). Zaoui's case was widely and invasively reported in the Aotearoa/New Zealand media, to the extent that this asylum seeker's life and safety were put at risk.

Scaremongering about the threat posed by Muslims has become a largely accepted and unquestioned reality in a post-9/11 world, and it is a process in which Aotearoa/New Zealand has long been complicit. In 2016, the current Deputy Prime Minister of Aotearoa/New Zealand, Winston Peters, delivered a controversial speech in parliament calling for New Zealanders of Islamic faith to help monitor terrorist activity, acting as informants within the Islamic community, and turning in people they suspected of being involved in terrorist networks. Prompted by a series of terror attacks that took place in the United Kingdom that year, Peters declared that the Islamic community must ‘clean house’ and ‘turn these monsters in’ (Jones, 2017). Aotearoa/New Zealand’s Muslim community have, furthermore, experienced abuse under state surveillance. After the March 15 Christchurch attacks, the New Zealand Human Rights Foundation released a survey report on Security Intelligence Services’ surveillance of Muslim communities. The report, titled *And you think maybe this is not home: NZ Muslim community experiences with New Zealand authorities*, contains descriptions by Muslim New Zealanders of their experiences of dehumanisation and abuse under state surveillance:

I am emailing you regarding my experience at the NZ customs at the airport yesterday as I was returning my overseas trip so that you are aware of this continued practice by the customs of deliberate target of people from Muslim backgrounds. Despite our outcry and numerous complaints about the NZ Airport customs over the years, nothing seems to change ... I had been away 10 days visiting Turkey. When I arrived back yesterday at the airport was sent to the special lane where people are questioned about their trip and their bags searched. I don’t mind to be searched occasionally as I have got nothing to hide but I was surprised at the level of questioning about my trip.

After spending about 45 minutes with the first officer, I proceeded to another officer in another area where my mobile phone was taken away from me and my bags emptied. I had to give names and contact details of people I know or organisations I belong here in New Zealand. So I gave both your names and mobile numbers as I told them I belonged to FIANZ [Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand] and my local Waikato Muslim Association. Furthermore they took my mobile and a USB flash drive as they said they needed to see the contents. They did this viewing in a room away from me so I am not sure whether the downloaded all my phone contacts/messages or just browsed a bit to check any suspicious content.

I asked the officer about that and he assured me that nothing was downloaded. I don’t trust them. To my count this would be my fifth bad experience at the NZ airport out of possible 11 overseas trips since I arrived in New Zealand 23 years ago. The only consolation I got from the officer yesterday as he told me everything was fine was that hopefully next time I would not be a target. I don’t believe that. Anyways just sharing that and hoping that we continue highlighting this issue with the government officials we engage with. (Human Rights Foundation Aotearoa New Zealand, 2019)

Testimonies such as this, detailing the trauma and abuse caused by racist, patriarchal, and colonial othering, are countless. They also speak to the extent of psychological damage Muslim and migrant communities in Aotearoa/New Zealand have long had to endure due to being systemically othered. As another respondent to the New Zealand Human Rights Foundation survey stated, ‘A lot of young people feel oppressed by being seen as Muslim, Arab, black. We are not being looked at as a human being but as a category. When young people feel that, instead of lifting people’s spirits, it breaks them’ (Human Rights Foundation Aotearoa New Zealand, 2019). I cannot help but feel, then, that ‘They are us’ is a self-indulgent narrative which appeases the conscience of those who have never been targets of othering and racist scapegoating in Aotearoa/New Zealand. This systemic violence inflicted by the state against Aotearoa/New Zealand’s Muslim community problematises national narratives which claim that ‘they are us’, when ‘they’ have been relentlessly othered. Situating ‘they’ and ‘us’ on an oppositional binary also articulates the existing separation of ‘us’ (Pākehā New Zealanders) versus ‘them’ (the Māori, migrant, and refugee Other), despite flimsy attempts to signpost our nation’s commitment to multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusivity.

## Concluding thoughts

In this article, I have problematised Aotearoa/New Zealand's national narratives and the idealisation of our head of government in the months following the Christchurch terrorist attacks. This has been a traumatising experience. Colonial violence continues to be used against those who threaten the hegemonic status quo, and this violence is often enacted through institutional gaslighting. While our government's performance in moving forward from 'New Zealand's darkest day' has proven comforting to white liberal sensibilities, those who struggle to take comfort from such a performance become alienated. Furthermore, by refusing to partake in a performance of the 'grateful refugee' or 'model minority', one is considered unreasonable, irrational, and a disruption to the status quo. As Sara Ahmed writes in her book *Living a feminist life*:

Feminist and anti-racist consciousness involves not just finding the words, but through the words, how they point, realising how violence is directed: violence is directed towards some bodies more than others. To give a problem a name can change not only how we register an event but whether we register an event ... To give the problem a name can be experienced as magnifying the problem; allowing something to acquire social and physical density by gathering up what otherwise would remain scattered experiences into a tangible thing. Making sexism and racism tangible is also a way of making them appear outside oneself; something that can be spoken and addressed with others. It can be a relief to have something to point to; otherwise you can feel alone and lost. When we give problems their names, we can become a problem for those who do not want to talk about a problem even though they know there is a problem. (2017, p. 34)

In the aftermath of the Christchurch terror attack, Aotearoa/New Zealand is a heart-breaking setting in which to analyse the viability of an immigrant feminist voice. By articulating my observations of life in Aotearoa/New Zealand, and by calling attention to the conditions which unsurprisingly led to the murder of 51 victims of colonial, capitalist, and patriarchal othering, I am made to feel divisive – made to feel as though *I* am the problem. Those of us who resist the status quo face backlash from all angles – from the institutions of the colonial, capitalist, and patriarchal hegemony, from white liberals who are resistant to seeing beyond their rose-tinted lens, and, most heartbreakingly, from the migrant and refugee communities who have successfully been coerced into performing the role of the 'grateful refugee' and 'model minority'.

However, resisting the status quo as an Other also includes arming ourselves with strategies of survival. Surviving in itself is an act of resistance, and one which ensures the sustainability of resistance movements. When a Western liberal status quo concentrates on the individual, on notions of individual progress, and on pitting individuals against each other when they supposedly threaten each other's progress, finding a community of people with a shared view and experience of the world is an act of resistance. The care and validation we give and receive within our communities are often so healing.

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## Notes

1. Conversely, those in caring professions such as teachers and nurses continue to be undervalued, and were not awarded a pay-rise in the 2019 budget, showing the government's selective and inconsistent commitments to caring and carers.

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