

Book Reviews

Asha Siad and Roda Siad, directors, *19 Days*, National Film Board of Canada, Montreal, Quebec, 2016. https://www.nfb.ca/film/19_days/.

As I watched the short National Film Board (NFB) documentary *19 Days*, I was carried back to discussions with my Opa (grandfather) about what it was like when his family lived in Russia. He would speak with a mixture of joy and sadness of the life he'd had and the life he'd lost. When he spoke of the events that forced his family to leave the farm, of being refugees and of the long trip to Canada, his tone changed from nostalgia and grief to determination and gratitude. He talked not only of the difficulties and the suffering but also of the hope and the help that his family received from others along the way.

In the wonderful palace of a child's mind, these stories became my stories. The sadness for a country lost was part of my understanding when I thought of Russia, though the events took place half a century before my birth and half a world away. These stories shaped not only my sense of geography but also my sense of identity; I was part of a people that moved. We are a people who are not rooted to a place but to an idea, or maybe better stated, a faith. Who we are is more important than where we are. Tied with this identity came a sense of humility; we had needed help and we had received it. Opa told me of the time that the family had received a bit of bread from Mennonite Central Committee while still in Russia. There was no shame in the telling but instead a gratefulness and a corresponding responsibility to help others who might be in need.

I had not thought about Opa's stories for a long time, but they came rushing back to me as I watched *19 Days*, directed and produced by two Somali-Canadian journalists—Asha and Roda Siad. The film gives a glimpse of new immigrants arriving in Canada and staying in a center for nineteen days to help with their adjustment to Canada; families of different sizes coming from different situations prepare for a new beginning in a new country. The film shows the extraordinary moments of transformation through the ordinary tasks of acquiring clothing, learning a new language, and talking to people back home. Viewers are offered a glimpse of the beginning of what must have been both terrifying and exhilarating life-changing experiences. While some families seemed excited, others were still touched by uncertainty; yet all had the determination that I imagine my great-grandparents and their children had. Despite different appearances, cultures, and faiths, it is easy to see the commonality of their story and my grandparents'.

I am reminded of my duty to my grandparents' memories and to the life they passed on to me—to pay it forward by helping others who are new to Canada. But even more, I am reminded of the calling of my faith to welcome the stranger, to

provide a space for those who have lost their own space, and to be the arms and hands and heart of Christ to new arrivals. As others helped my family when they were newcomers, so now I would like to see myself and the church giving aid to those who are new to this place. The church should be marked by the same excitement and fear that the film shows in the new arrivals, as we see before us the chance to be renewed in these new relationships.

In the past few years, our church has had a chance to partner with other churches in sponsoring a few families to come to Canada. Each time, though not without challenges, it has been a rewarding experience for us to extend hospitality and to receive it in turn. Though some in our country may question the value of immigration and refugee sponsorship, we have found it to be as much a blessing for us as we hope it has been for the families we've supported. This practice of hospitality answers the call of our faith, and, for me at least, is a meaningful way to remember my own history.

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Dina Gilio-Whitaker, *As Long as Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock*, Beacon Press, Boston, MA, 2019. 212 pp. \$25.95. ISBN: 9780807073780.

Lynne Davis, Jeffrey S. Denis, and Raven Sinclair, eds., *Pathways of Settler Decolonization*, Routledge, New York, 2019. 126 pp. \$140.00. ISBN: 9781138389816.

It's all about the land.

It's still going on.

Two new texts, *As Long as Grass Grows* and *Pathways of Settler Decolonization*, explore the ever-present structure of settler colonialism, its overarching goal—to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their lands—and its prime method—the erasure of Indigenous peoples. Both texts address the integral connections between environmental and Indigenous justice, why these pursuits require a decolonization framework, and how settler allies might practically center the Indigenous-led, anti-colonial project in collective action and personal ways of being.

For many, it's long been apparent that Indigenous peoples are on the bloody colonial frontlines, combatting the capitalist-industrial machine of our First World “throw-away culture.” We know that Original-Nations-made-poor endure relentless corporate pressure to collude and “sell-out” to state-induced “partnerships.” We