**SPPH 552 Mini Essay**

**Julie Zhang**

**January 22, 2020**

Thesis:

My aunts and uncles want the Canadian government to significantly cut down on immigration and turn away refugees, despite the fact that we are an entire family of immigrants. I am justified in disagreeing with their stance.

Support:

Immigration allows all people around the world the chance to pursue a life of meaning and prosperity, which for some involves first fleeing persecution and undue hardships. As a signatory of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Canada has an obligation enable the realization of individuals’ right to “life, liberty and security of the person,” including individuals who are not yet Canadian citizens. While we cannot reasonably expect our government to promote the rights of every person in the world, we have an ethical obligation at least to those who show up on our doorstep.

Further, immigration creates a net benefit for the recipient country. We see this in how migrants grow the local economy such as by taking on skill-based work or jobs in rural areas that were not being filled by residents, or by starting business that create new jobs. Otherwise, second generation immigrants have gone on to pursue world-class post-secondary education and to contribute to their communities and the country overall in meaningful and important ways. In the case of our family, my cousins and I have taken on a variety of beneficial roles such as that of a Parkinson’s researcher, a medical doctor and a public health practitioner.

Opposition:

The Canadian government ought to respond first to the needs of its own citizens. More than ever, people are feeling the pains of rising living costs and a sluggish economy – we see this in how my cousins and I, despite being gainfully employed, have barely any disposable income while living in major Canadian cities and in how my parents, aunts and uncles struggle to pay for home care for our grandparents. Accepting more immigrants would further compromise the government's ability to support the welfare of actual Canadians. Additionally, maintaining our current lax immigration policy, or expanding it further, will only cause the influx of people to spiral out of control. Not only does having “open door” policies magnify interest among residents of origin countries, thereby exponentiating immigrant and refugee applications, it does nothing to address the root cause of displacement and emigration. Instead of allowing corrupt and mismanaged nations to continue their ways without abandon, we should redirect energy and funds from operating migration programs to creating structural changes to curtail the flow of people.

Response:

Even if immigrants and refuges are likely to rely on some form of welfare and government support programs upon arrival, this will only be temporary. Just as you and I prefer to live comfortably, continue to grow personally, and be able to support ourselves and our families, so do most migrants. By and large, people are motivated to engage in meaningful activities and dislike relying on charity. Even if immigrants to Canada are not contributing directly to the economy, they are likely using their time in valuable ways that cannot be monetized, including caring for their relatives and volunteering in the community. And although there are concerns about an “open door” policy. Canada does not in fact have a very lax immigration process. Entrance exams are notoriously difficult to score high on as immigrants are expected to demonstrate language, education, and employment capabilities to thrive in Canada and, if necessary, support their relatives who are not able to meet those requirements. Meanwhile, refugees go through multiple steps of screening and vetting before being approved to come to Canada. And while it is true that accepting refugees from conflict-ridden or mismanaged nations will not solve the refugee crisis, it is faulty to only address root causes without attending to the immediate aftermath. If a drunk driver causes a car crash, we don't simply penalize the driver, but would first rush the crash victim to the hospital.

Conclusion: During times of crisis, closing our borders actually lead to peoples’ lives being put in danger, either in the form of physical violence or in the form of structural violence, which includes discrimination and insurmountable inequity. If it is in our capacity to save at least some innocent people from harm and help them realize their fundamental human rights, it is a worthwhile endeavour. Moreover, while immigration and refugee programs add stress to finite government resources that also need to be allocated to supporting our own citizens, remember that most people who arrive will eventually become Canadian citizens, just as our family has. By proceeding in a thoughtful way and balancing the needs of current and future Canadians, we may discover that we are creating a more prosperous and just society.