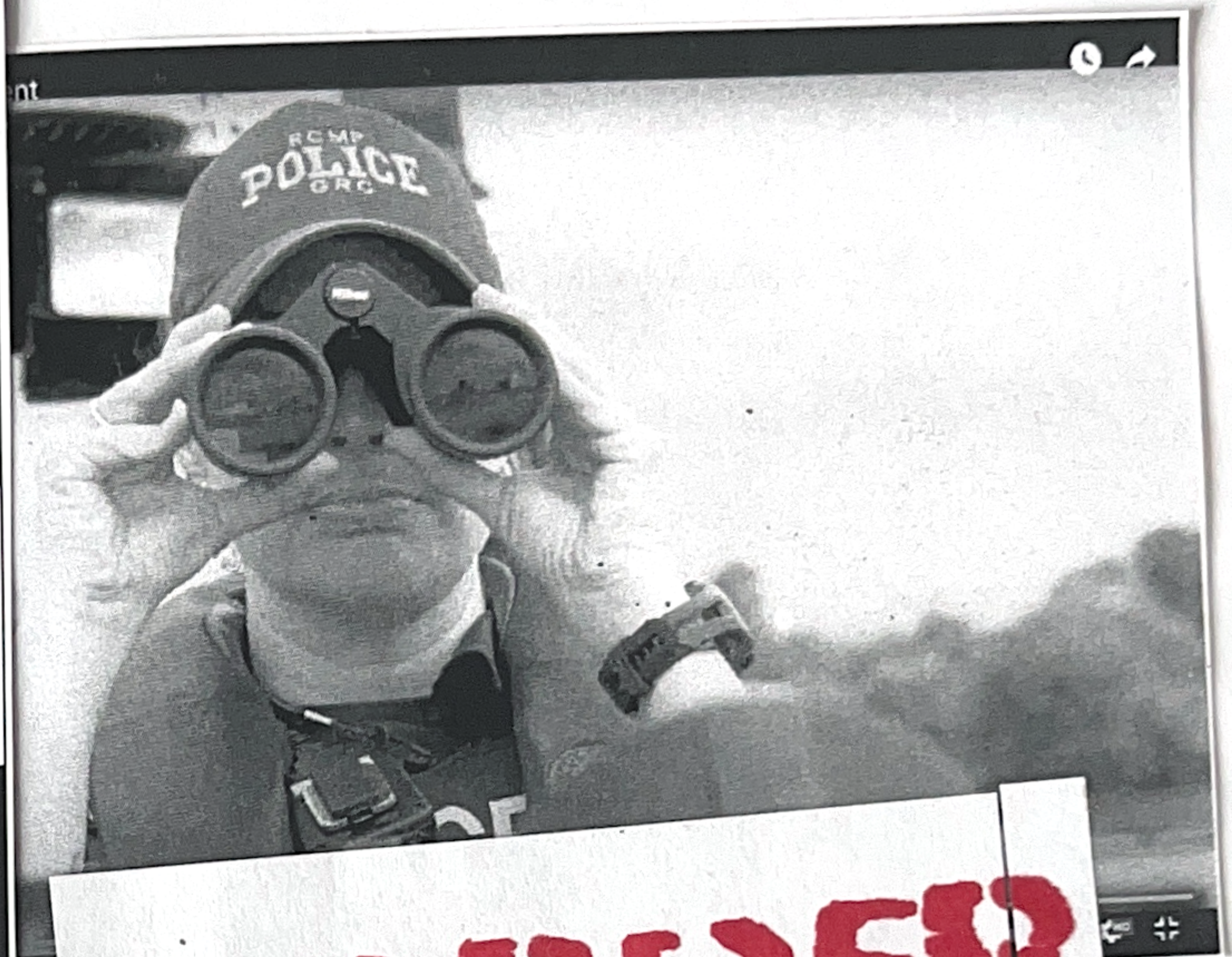




BORDER

CORRUPTED

This zine looks at Canada's border regime, arguing that surveillance tech at Canada's borders perpetuate carcerality.

What is carcerality?

When we say carceral, it is usually understood to be related to prisons, jails, or other kinds of incarceration.

Carcerality, as a mentality, moves beyond the spatial barriers of a prison. It is asserted socially and politically in the public domains of carceral state. Everyday 'preventive' policing, segregation of minoritized groups, and censorship/condemnation of political dissent are examples of carcerality.

Essentially, all colonial and imperial states like Canada resort to this mentality to protect their neoliberal security interests, particularly controlling the racialized and colonized populations.



in this ZINE.

The zine first explores key themes

from our data cultures class

- racial capitalism
- in/security
- biopolitical control

Then, it links these themes to the concepts of 'smart borders' 'border-industrial complex'

Next, it focuses on the Canadian immigration system and explains the recent commitments towards increased border surveillance in Canada and the United States.

Subsequently, the zine analyzes the following case studies:

- CBSA's Traveller Modernization Initiative
- CBSA's ReportIn app as part of the Alternatives to Detention (ATD) - which uses Amazon Rekognition
- RCMP's collection of personal information by services such as BabelX which is investigated by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner (OPC)

The final section consists of an actions/demands page, as well as a space for reflection.

Additional resources and references/citations can be found at the very end of the zine.



racial capitalism

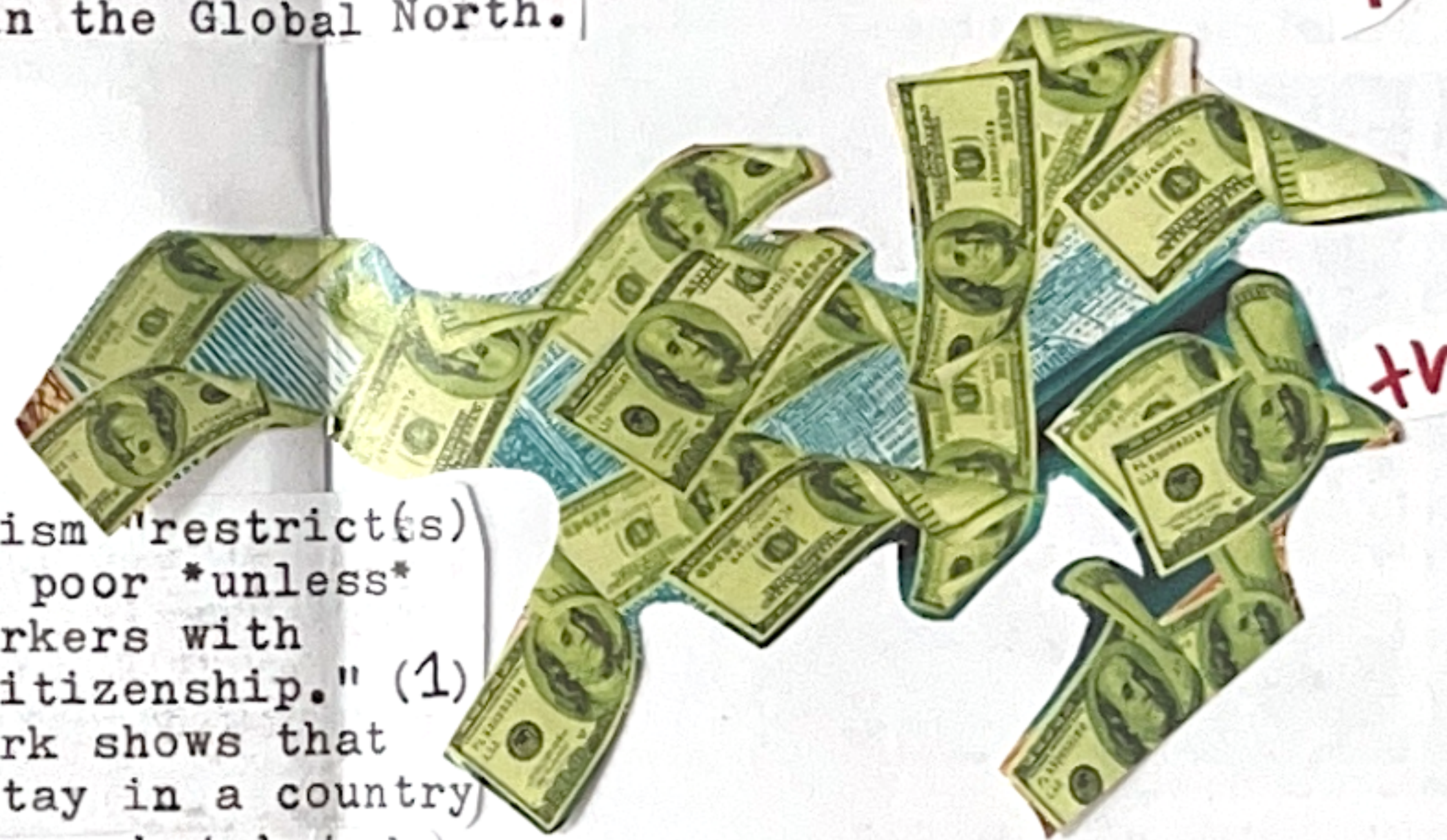
This concept, originally conceptualized by Cedric J. Robinson, points to the lack of attention to race in historical materialism. Racial capitalism suggests that capital accumulation always both depends on and results in racial subjugation and exploitation. Strategies for controlling, containing, and commodifying racialized bodies and cultures involve restricting mobility, enforcing disposability, and resorting to violent dispossession of identity.



Histories of colonialism and slavery as well as the mentality of coloniality are closely linked to racial capitalism. In the context of technology, for example,

- racialized people are treated as cheap and 'unskilled' labor in testing or training new tech, or
- precarious contract work is extracted as 'resource' from the countries in the Global South for the development of emerging tech in the Global North.

In the context of migration, racial capitalism "restricts) the mobility of the impoverished racialized poor *unless* these groups agree to inclusion as migrant workers with deflated labor power and no legal or social citizenship." (1) Such 'exclusion by inclusion' (2) framework shows that migrant others are welcome to enter and stay in a country so long as they 'bring value' to the labor market but do not ask for the socio-economic compensation that matches such value.



YOU CAN'T
HAVE
CAPITALISM
WITHOUT
RACISM

CAPITALISM ISN'T
WORKING
ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE

DISMANTLE
SYSTEMIC
RACISM

you're not scared,
you're in
the wrong place.

in/security

The concept of in/security is closely linked to borders. Nation-states, in their efforts to protect colonial sovereignty, often 'secure' their borders via technologies of policing, shaped by military tactics, such as the use of video surveillance, unmanned drones, radars, and sensors at borders/crossings.

Security is a socially and politically structured project of policing. The counterpart to security is surveillance, for which new tactics are adopted constantly to address the continuous reconceptualization of what security means. Security is often, if not always, discriminatory, as protecting and securing the interests of certain groups is deemed more important, and often comes at the expense of other groups, for whom insecurity and vulnerability can be 'tolerable.'



biopolitical control



Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitical control emerges in contexts of welfare, health, education, surveillance, and the infrastructure they operate. It refers to nation-states' governance, regulation, and exerting power over populations' minds and bodies. Both the biopolitical and its infrastructural counterpart shape each other through ideas of modernization, development, progress, and industrialization; as such, they are both concerned with the "politics of anticipation." (3)

Biopolitical control thus aims to predict and maintain the norms of existence of the future.

In the context of migration, future-envisioning projects like 'smart borders' as well as seemingly progressive initiatives like alternatives to detention are forms of biopolitical control.

SMART BORDERS

1010

101

This zine aims to demystify the notion of 'smart borders.' In a general sense, this term refers to the increasing use of technology in border management. You may have already

- used airport kiosks and passed through eGates, or
- applied for electronic travel authorization (eTA) via online apps.

This means your biometric data has been collected and stored somewhere online. Facial recognition, retina scans, fingerprints, and other personal data are examples of biometric identifiers.

When our personal data is collected in vast amounts, algorithms are needed to sort, order, classify, and process such data. An algorithm usually involves a set of instructions to regulate 'how' such data is handled. Depending on the ways the algorithm is trained to process our data, what our data tells can be different. For example,

- if the algorithm has been fed with the assumption that racialized people are more likely to commit crime, or people with Islamic names are more likely associated with terrorism, these individuals could be subjected to discriminatory policing.

0101

In the name of 'scientific objectivity' and to eliminate the human bias, smart borders resort to automation. This results in asking algorithms, instead of humans, to make decisions about our data.

But, just as we discussed, this is an illusion.

There is a human behind the algorithm, orchestrating what it is supposed to perform.

On the other hand, artificial intelligence (AI) is perceived as a more insightful version of automated decision making, since it does not only follow one orchestral chief but also 'learns' from other members of the orchestra supposedly considering various perspectives. Yet, the stakeholders of smart borders do not prefer that AI just potential. Instead, it works for them, for example,

-that visa-triaging AI is taught to mark applications from countries in Europe as 'low-risk' but countries in Africa and Middle East as 'high-risk' in pre-arrival assessments. Far from fair screening, these AI predictions are then indeed instrumentalized as nationalist anti-migrant rhetoric that scapegoat migrants as potential 'security

hlogon.exe



Canada Border Services Agency's (CBSA) 'Traveller Modernization Initiative' is an example smart border effort. In a promotional video,

-CBSA envisions that tablets, heart rate sensors, smartphones, QR codes, and kiosks make up an efficient and expedited border infrastructure;

-the borders are SAFER, FASTER, BETTER when you enter your traveller info online, declare customs online, check in and scan your passport at kiosks, and be in and out of airports or ports of entry in a matter of seconds!!

-no need to worry, the video makes sure emphasize that your information will be kept secure and border officers will be there just in case, of a potential emergency/confusion

--- Why such a mention though?
What should make us worried anyways?

- at the end of the day, we know, as the video ends, that CBSA is building the "border of the future." (4)

For what kind of a future,

one should ask, is this smart border "fix(ing) space and time." (5) Which trajectory are we committing to ask we accept smart borders?

Did anyone ask us whether we wanted to be secured/surveilled in such a way? about my

Can we OPT OUT? Of what? Travelling?

Here is what the video does not mention:

Initiatives like this are discriminatory.

They only supposedly advance travel for some. When I entered Canada and sought asylum here years ago, I was not even thinking about/aware of the ways my data was being collected. It's now been about three years since I was granted and citizenship got my passport.

Similarly, each time I travel to the U.S., officers stop me after I scan my passport to ask about the details of my migration journey from about ten years ago. Sometimes I can't even remember the details, but I must be careful! The borders are smart. They must remember!

Although I am finally able to travel, each time I return to Canada from abroad, these modern infrastructures flag me. I am always directed to immigration for an officer to status history. So, my migrant lives on the minds of the smart borders, even though it has expired on government papers.

What if misspoke my date of entry? Will the smart borders forgive?

What if,
they are UNDER MAINTENANCE ???

CAUTION

'BORDER-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX'

Just like the frameworks of prison-industrial and military-industrial complexes, border security and immigration sector can be framed similarly. It is just as costly, violent, and profit driven in exploiting migrants. This is how it works:

- Nation-states in the Global North (GN) need migrants for economic activity.
- They hegemonize socially, politically, economically, militaristically the Global South. Legacies of colonialism and imperialism create poverty, social unrest, and climate emergencies globally. This leads to economic hardships, displacement, migration, and the so-called migration crisis.
- Nation-states in the GB are on the receiving end of this migration.
- Before allowing migrants entry, they sort and classify. Some migrants are called 'skilled' and others not so much, apparently.
- Those who are supposedly unskilled also happen to be a bit of a 'security risk' coincidentally.
- Essentially, this is all discriminatory sorting based on race/religion/political or economic situation.

--Migrants are in limbo either way. If they are allowed 'legal' entry, precarious contract work awaits them. Often seasonal, they must go back, they are told. If they stay in the country, their documents expire, and they suddenly become 'illegal.'

If migrants cross 'irregularly' upon refused entry, and are not 'caught,' there is the opportunity to find undocumented work. But, of course, this means they've got to do the same for less money.

--What if one crosses 'irregularly' and is caught? The whole industry of immigration detention and its associated costs aside, the nation-states in the GN now have digital ways of exploiting migrants when they detect such an entry and offer migrants the so-called detention alternatives.



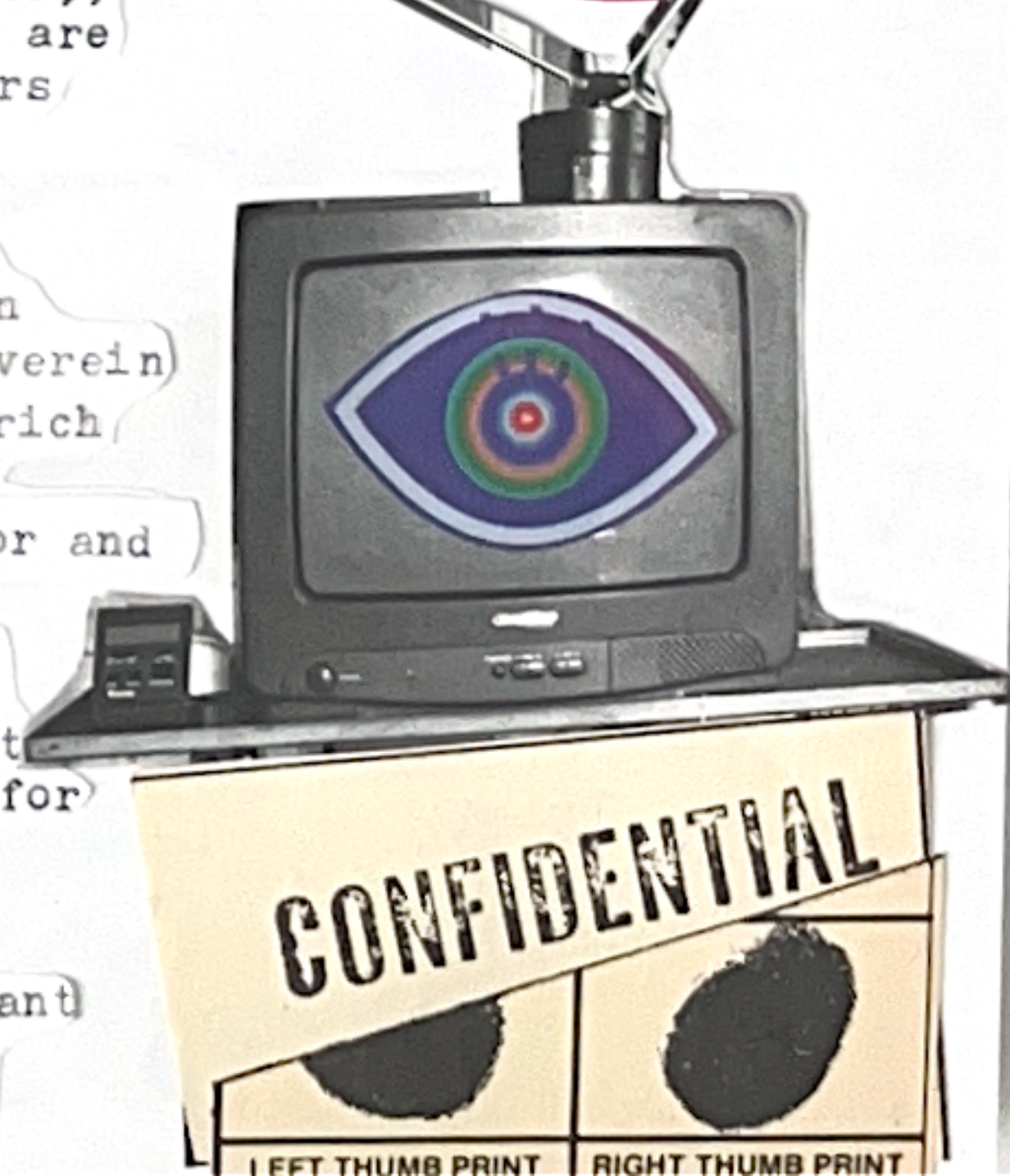
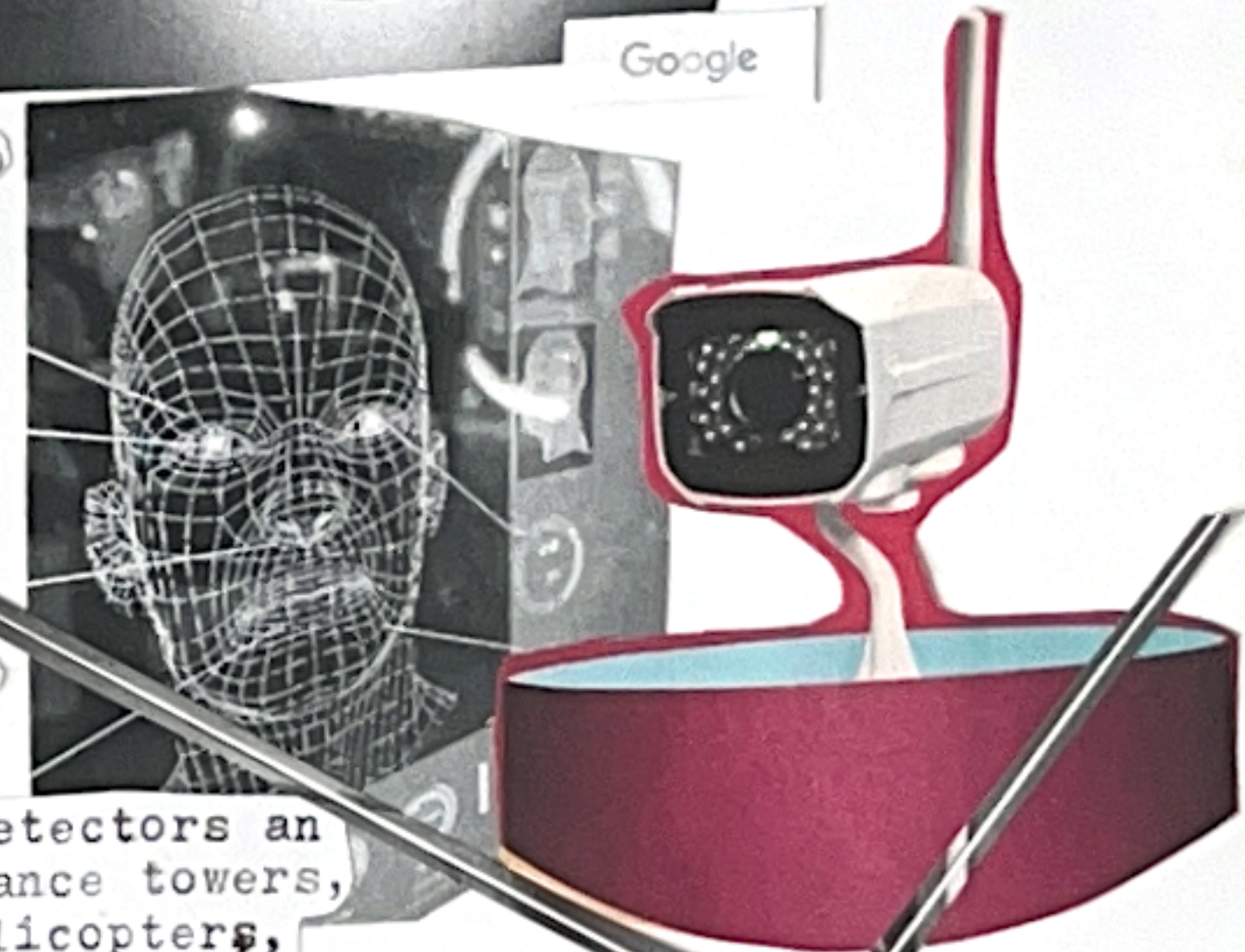
In Canada, CBSA's ReportIn app as part of its Alternatives to Detention' Alternatives to Detention (ATD) program, resorts to facial comparison software and collects geographical data to track migrants via their smartphones. (6) The said software is Amazon Rekognition, and it is only a 'minor issue' according to Employment and Social Development Canada's (ESDC) peer-review of CBSA's use of Rekognition that this software is not tested by Canada's remote reporting teams and is potentially, if not certainly, racially biased. (7) In another Algorithmic Impact Assessment, report, this is justified to be okay because a company called CredoAI is noted to have conducted a third-party review of Rekognition. (8) In addition to Amazon, Google's ML kit is also a part of ReportIn, to confirm that once a person is taking a photo of their face, they are positioned correctly and precisely in front of the camera. (9)

The irony here is that when it comes to security risks, it is a concern from Canada that both the software they use to track migrants and the company they use to assess the credibility of such software are American. Probably the personal data-sharing is now so far-reaching between Canada and the U.S. that bringing in American Big Tech companies is not considered a major issue for Canada.

Continuing, tech like AI lie detectors, emotional-recognition, surveillance towers, unmanned drones, robot dogs, helicopters, radars, sensors, and thermal imaging are also being commonly deployed at borders around the world.

--As such, the border evolves into an exclusionary tool, integral to western empire-building, that functions to sovereign protect, and benefit the interests of rich and white citizens while exploiting, surveilling, and incarcerating the poor and racialized migrant others.

To secure/surveil the border, nation-states invest in border tech, putting significant amounts of money in pocket of the Big Tech companies. In return for their services, Big Tech not only receives monetary compensation but also migrant data. This can be called the 'datafication' of the migrant other. (10) Migrant data, like migrant labor, is extracted as a resource to uphold the border-industrial complex.



'RECENT DEVELOPMENTS'

In 2022, Canada announced plans to bring in 500,000 immigrants (pertaining to instances of 'documented' migration, ranging from economic immigration to family reunifications to refugee and protected person applications) each year by 2025. (11) Since then, the country has been admitting more than 450,000 immigrants yearly. (12) However, a sudden cut of 21% to immigration targets was announced in late 2024, as Canada now aims to take in about 395,000 immigrants in 2025, with targets set to decrease by 9.5% and 10% in the following two years. (13)

Moreover, approx. 400,000 individuals claimed asylum in Canada in the last three years. (14) Either at CBSA's ports of entry or in-land Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) offices, individuals can seek asylum 'regularly' but still unexpectedly, since these numbers are not included exactly in immigration level targets. On the other hand, about 40,000 individuals who crossed the border 'irregularly' in 2022 were intercepted by Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP); this number dropped to 15,000 with the closure of Roxham Road in 2023 and was only about 1,300 in 2024. (15)

CBSA's yearly budget is more than \$2.5 billion. (16)

-In December 2024, Canadian government announced a \$1.3 billion additional funding package for border 'security'/surveillance, of which \$667.5M will go to the RCMP, \$355.4M to the CBSA, and \$180M Communications Security Establishment Canada, with the remaining amount pledged to Health Canada and Public Safety Canada. (17)

remove

process

detain
remove

remove
detain

detain

Processing a removal

The removals process is complex and not linear.

detain
remove

remove
remove
detain

remove

detain



secure border
allowing for the legal movement of
American and global law enforcement partners.



Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Gendarmes royaux
du Canada

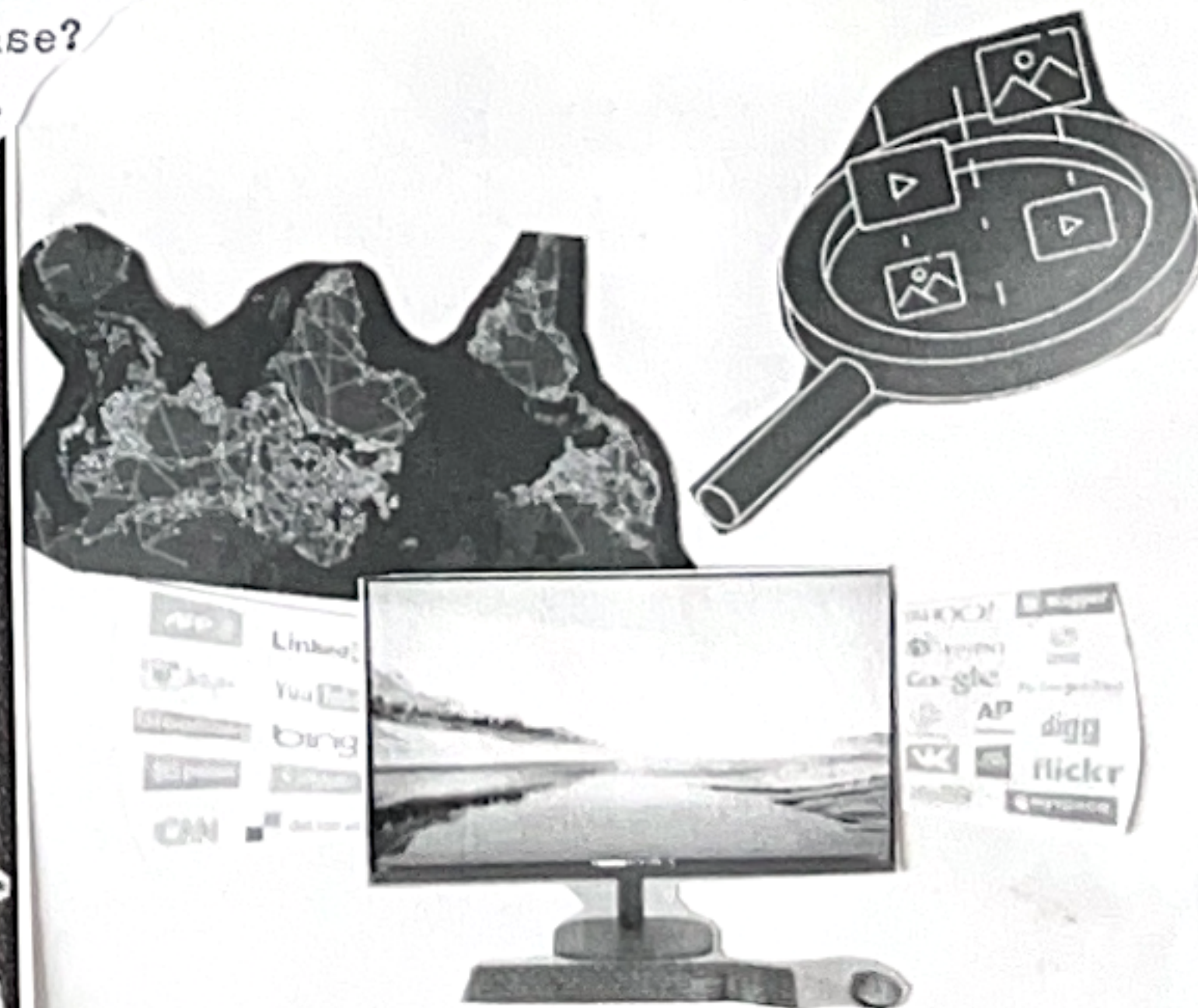
With the change of administration in 2025, the U.S. started scapegoating campaigns against migrants, going as far as tracking migrants via confidential taxpayer data (18), or attempting to revoke international student visas based on social media likes/posts by the findings of AI. (19)

In addition to Trump's tariff threats, this changing political atmosphere in the U.S. was also a prominent reason why Canada decided opportunistically to invest in border tech. Not because of a security need per se, but because of external political and economic influences.

In this funding package RCMP's prominent role in border management comes to attention. Previously received public scrutiny for its use of Clearview AI in law enforcement (which only concluded because the issue got news coverage), RCMP's current use of Babel X has recently been investigated by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner (OPC). (20) Again, an American software, Babel X allows for social media and web monitoring, with translation functions and access to geographical data. (21) While the RCMP's use of Babel X was not confirmed to be in compliance with the Privacy Act due to its collection of personal information, RCMP did not agree to follow OPC's guidelines to conduct due assessment of Babel X. (22)

As this issue remains unresolved, what this means for migrants in Canada is that they are being heavily monitored by an entity who openly and officially reject legal privacy frameworks.

So, who's corrupted in this case?
corrupting the border



This page is reserved
for migrants to share reflections
and make demands.

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