

Migrant Labour and Social Justice | Text Transcript | GIDS

This is a text transcript for the recorded discussion of “Migrant Labour and Social Justice: A Panel in Honour of Dr. Kerry Preibisch,” presented by the Guelph Institute of Development Studies (GIDS) at the University of Guelph. The panelists were Evelyn Encalada Grez, Warren Dodd, Sally Humphries, and Gabriel Allahdua. The event was recorded on January 27, 2023.

Transcript:

Craig Johnson:

Okay, well welcome everyone. Can you hear me okay? Am I on the speaker? Wonderful to see everyone. My name is Craig Johnson. I'm a professor of political Science here at the University of Guelph, and we're here today to discuss an issue that I think has become unavoidable in the daily press on social media and certainly in academia. And from what I'm told at an amazing migrant summit today looking at the nature and scale and implications of precarious migrant labor and its relationship to Canadian and global agriculture.

It's also a very special event for us here at Guelph, and I think for many of you and family and friends listening online to pay tribute to our dear friend Kerry Preibisch, who passed away almost seven years ago to the day. I think it was the 28th of January. So welcome to everyone. I'll introduce the panelists in a few minutes.

Given our shared interests in borders, migration, citizenship, and rights, I think it's fitting that we start by recognizing that we live and work on the ancestral lands of the Attawandaron people and the treaty lands of the Mississaugas of the credit. We recognize the significance of the dish with the one spoon covenant and offer a respect to Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and Metis neighbours as we strive to strengthen our relationships.

I'll start first by just offering a personal memory of Kerry. I think like many of you I was touched by her friendship and her scholarship and her work over the years. I think I first met her in 2002 when I first came to the university. She was a seasoned veteran there, I think of about two years by the time I got here. And immediately I was blown away by both her positive and outgoing personality, her commitment to social justice and just the sheer joy of being around her when we shared offices on the sixth floor.

I remember one time she came back from doing field research in southwestern Ontario with the largest cucumber I think I've ever seen in my life. And she gave it to me as a gift and I was very grateful. But it really sort of opened my eyes to the precarious nature of migrant labor in this part of Ontario and also what it would mean to be a scholar with a strong commitment to social justice and the wellbeing of people around the world.

And I think it's credit to her that we have so many people here today sharing in this discussion. Joining me on the panel are Dr. Evelyn Encalada Grez, who is assistant professor of Labor studies, sociology and anthropology at Simon Frazier University, Dr. Sally Humphries, professor of sociology and development studies here at the University of Guelph, Dr. Warren Dodd and

GIDS alumni, and also assistant professor in the School of Public Health Sciences at the University of Waterloo, and Gabriel Allahdua, a migrant labor advocate and visiting fellow in the grounded Theory lab here at the University of Guelph.

So please join me in welcoming our panelists. I'm going to take a seat, a backseat, and open the panel up. First of all, I've asked the panelists or we, we've decided that we would first start off by reflecting on Kerry's legacy in both your personal lives and in your professional lives. And then we'll move on to more focused discussion after that. I add that I'm happy to moderate questions from the floor and we'll also be monitoring the online chat. And if people want to ask questions online, they can do so as well. So Evelyn, we'll start with you.

Evelyn Encalada Grez:

Hello everybody. First of all I wish Kerry was here to open up with music, like the music that Kerry likes to listen to. I like the LA says she would sing to Sophia and share that she would tell me about so. But I did bring streamers, streamers from Mexico because it reflects the beauty of her soul, she and what she loved so much, that world that she loves so much Latin America, Mexico. And my presentation is personal and political, academic, but mostly activism.

It's intended to reflect hearing Kerry who did all of this work seemed from where she tried to also hold multiple words within who is being a rigorous academic and excellent, exceptional sociologist will also be an activist and working with activist communities. So I didn't know where we started so I thought, you know what? I'm going to start with the last time I saw her to tell you a little bit of a story. Mind you, I just came back, well, Gabriel and I just came back from the migrant summit. It took me a while to get here.

I wanted to start at the end being that I saw her, this picture is hiding so many things. It was right after was Harry took the stand as an expert witness for the case. That was a vulnerable case where the employer was sexually harassing the funeral workforce. And after several two women stood fair and took on the employer. And Kerry was so instrumental to mobilizing her research in the space of the law through the human rights tribunal.

And I remember just being in the room, it was so disgusting to see that one employer had about four lawyers and our side, the worker side, we had two lawyers. And it was awful to see the ways that the lawyers from the employer side obviously were trying to break down Kerry and migrant women that were adamant to have their case and voices heard. So we were at the edge of everything ourselves and some of the force and the violence of the law. She held herself with so much grace.

And it was also there was a heat wave, it felt like we could almost, well, I know I almost fainted because that's what it was. And so that's my last of my professor. She was one my monitors that was basically teaching me how to be a sociologist. And she was supposed to be with me towards the very end of my PhD and be a part of my community. But then she wasn't just part of my community. Instead she became a part of my life and imprinted so much within me as I know she imprinted so much with the room.

The last message that I received from Spencer that night that received was that Kerry was basically waiting to die. And of course that night I didn't want to sleep because I knew when I wake up, when woke up, most likely Kerry was not going to be around. So the moment I just thought, what's the point of this academic work that we do? What are we doing? What is Kerry leaving behind, besides from her beautiful children that are her legacy.

I started doing this online search about Kerry's work and reading every one, including on the human rights tribute material website where there was some, I couldn't find it, but I did see it that night. And then I just started to see the importance of what powerful academics such as Kerry, for all of us. And so Kerry, in the end, it was a case that was won and it was set up presidents, it was a president setting, Kerry's that, but all work has material actually benefit from and respective of their status and Kerry, she was instrumental.

All of her work was instrumental. Oh, and I also want to say to the English family from Chilliwack, and so I started to see what she made every single birth count. And one of the last messages that she sent herself before becoming severely, severely unwell to the point where she couldn't email anybody anymore.

She was consumed with sponsoring a refugee family from Syria at the time. So even at the very last part of her life, she was always concerned with human rights, asylum seekers and sharing my, lived every single moment expressing all of her passion for social justice. And I also wanted to mention that Kerry was as well an expert witness for the North perk case. And again, she got to those spaces because of all of her work.

And so that's where we see that academic work is so important because then that academic work becomes evidence that academic work then has all of this weight in these spaces of power. And then so amazing projects that I've have ever worked on all this point has been one that Belinda Leech led women making change among with other academics here at Guelph. And wow, I really missed the website.

I wish the website was still up cause there was so much content there and Kerry was the researcher for the migrant aspect of the project. And while through that project I learned so much about how to really make research accountable to the people that you say that you're aligning yourself with, that you say that you're in support of. And so with Kerry, we co-organized the workshops with the migrant women, and there's Janet McLaughlin, she taught a Latino course [laughs], Dr. Janet McLaughlin.

And we had a workshop where we wanted to present our findings to them women to make sure that we got all of their test and their experiences correct, that we weren't misconstruing their stories or their words or [inaudible]. So Kerry was dedicated to this type of research before it became one of the thing. And then also one of my most beautiful memories of Kerry was, here I am, sometimes I get like, I dunno, I complain about being tired and I need no energy.

So with Kerry, both of their energies, amazing. So Kerry was pregnant with, and both of them arriving from Mexico City on a bus and was so happy to be finally arriving to this immigrant

town that Janet and I also spent a lot of time in and Kerry didn't let anything stop her. And Chloe, of course what we say, well, just cause I'm pregnant doesn't mean that I can't do all of these things.

She just was always wanting to be out no matter, no matter what. That's what made her so happy being out and about doing ethnographic work, being community, and of course a large part of our community work was eating with migrant workers. But that's the way that also Dominican women show and transmit their love. And of course we got the same thing, Mexico, so is Kerry and Germany, some homemade food in Mexico also very happy to be her together.

And there's Kerry again, my mother in the home of another immigrant worker. So she didn't let anything stop her, including when she did have [laughs] Ben, of course, she brought him as well to all of these sites. So she was definitely an academic member and that was her Twitter handle. She was a true feminist by exposing, by living all of her ideals. By making her research a family affair times sometimes.

Yeah, we would have to coordinate with Spencer and who would have the kids and we would all go home into the countryside. So that was amazing to see how she knew all of these roles within her life function even though the spaces of academia were still very normal course centered and anti-parenthood. But she always found a way that I could work for spite of the obstacles and in spite of the obstacles.

And of course Kerry, she supported many organizations including our collective justice for migrant workers. So here is Kerry joining us in one of our actions, harvesting freedom, in Toronto. And the comrades are from Justicia, BC, but have now gone off to do other organizing and other parts well in other parts of the world in Mexico now. And Kerry was also recognized by U F C W when they used to run the Caesar Chavez Award for all of her amazing contributions to the migrant justice movement.

So obviously she just not only worked with Justicia, but also worked with other groups. So she was making sure trying her best to make her research count in different spaces and for those of us who are fighting against these structural inequalities in different ways. And then this picture not a very complimentary picture of me, but Kerry looked really nice, but I it's part of the story.

So here we are, we find ourselves, and by the way, I've lost track of years because it's like before the pandemic or after the pandemic; before Kerry, after Kerry. So I don't know what year that is, but here we are in Vancouver, we're giving a presentation showing El Contrato in this very humble Chilean co-op in Vancouver. Yeah, you were there, right? Oh my goodness. Wow. So yeah, it's like a little community event. Wow. No empanadas though that day.

And little did we know after our presentation, this woman who says she's a senator was there in the audience and then she invited us to Ottawa to give our presentation at Parliament Hill to all of these parliamentarians. So you never know, do those community events, do all of the events because you never know who's there. And if we're not going to speak, who's going to speak take up space.

And so there's Kerry in the cafeteria of Parliament Hill with the senator, and then a lot of the set of the parliamentarians actually were busy and there's Jenna as well. We were having dinner and debriefing afterwards. But one of the MPs that was there was this man named Justin Trudeau that later on, so sometimes when my students that were really innocent say, oh, but the government should know, I'm like, oh, they know. Well, at first they created this system and I could say I told Justin Trudeau about all of these issues.

And then we also had to debrief a debrief among ourselves because the end, guess what Justin Trudeau said after he heard Kerry and myself, he said, wow, I can't believe this happens in Canada. And I'm like, I can't believe he said that. Anyway, but, so these are the experiences that we had with Kerry. And then Kerry was during the last part of her life, she continued to of course be driven by ethnographic field research. And she insisted no matter what her health condition was like at that time, everything was up in the air but not looking good. She wanted to go to Guatemala and do her work. And, wow.

So I reached out to this particular family, the Sitan family, and they still have a space reserved for Kerry at her table. Basically. She is still a part of their lives. And when she passed, they wanted to speak to Spencer, but I'm like, how are you going to speak because of the language? But they were just so shocked and they didn't know how to reach out to Kerry's family here. But Kerry has left like so many imprints in people's lives this way.

And Kerry did such amazing work in this particular community in the Highlands of Guatemala. And actually one of her last articles was about her field work that she did there with other US American colleagues and Kerry just she had this way, well, she learned Spanish many times I saw, I realized that Kerry speaks better Spanish than I do with many things. So I just found that to be so admirable of how she immersed in herself in Mexico.

And of course she lived in Mexico for a few years, did her graduate research there, PhD research. And she had a way with connecting with people that was uniquely hers. And sometimes when we would be out in the field, we would sometimes compare notes, why do the migrant workers tell you versus what they tell me? And I remember once one migrant worker was of course denouncing Canada, and then the migrant worker said, oh, but sorry, because I know you're a Canadian.

But then Kerry obviously right away she said, no, you can tell me anything you want. And so Kerry just made everybody feel comfortable around her. And I learned from her too, how to maintain contact with people no matter where you are in the world because she then jugged off to the UK and had an amazing transnational life, right? Because as she had promised Spencer, yes, they will go to the UK.

So even though Kerry spent some time in the UK one semester or in a year or so, she still had all of these connections and that you don't see all the time with all of the academics because of all of the pressures of academia and time, the restrictions on time. And of course part of the field work again is food. How can you get away from food? And of course Kerry was way far away from the corn flakes there in the corner.

And the family that I reached out to recently actually the main person, the main contact from the family was a former migrant worker. And this is his father and actually this migrant worker, SNA and I, we met them remember on the street in Limington. And so all of those contacts become like everybody's contacts and then one contact leads to a whole family, a whole community.

And so that's how we work together and support each other in our work as organizers and academics. And Kerry became a large part of their lives and she received a lot of support from the family. And the last time I was there with the family in Guatemala the father here, he led prayer for Kerry because we knew that Kerry was on her last days. And I was reading, I was rereading a letter that I wrote to Kerry before she passed.

And there I explained how when Señor Sitan was actually praying for Kerry, I felt some type of energy around me. I don't know what, it was like a force of grace. And so we were all holding space for her, everybody was praying for her. And then the migrant worker that no longer comes here to Canada, the one that took us to this com community, he told me that they had to contend with and deal with the fact that when they last saw Kerry, that they had to give her one last LA hug.

And I'm like, oh, I can't imagine what that last hug actually was. And then I wanted to start ending. This is the last time that I was at the University of Guelph. Kerry invited me with Min. So, and there's Min so as well, like being a mom, [laughs] not letting you know these walls between that impose us being just one thing. Of course we're more than just one thing. And she brought her new daughter to give a presentation on Migrant Dreams.

And I don't know how long that was, but that was the last time I was here at Guelph. And here I am at the university again where Kerry did so much. She ran the Farm Worker Awareness Week here at the university. She came up with all of these amazing assignments for her students so that way her students could fuel all of that anger and shock of, oh, I didn't know that this happened in Canada into their work.

And so who knows where those students are and what they're doing in life because they are part of that seed, you know, that keeps on growing throughout Canada. That seed that you know, wakes people up and wakes people up from the miss that really cloud Canadians or people here, in Canada with actually seeing injustices. So I'm sure many of them are doing wonderful things. So for me Kerry's legacy, what did she teach me?

She taught me that that rigorous scholarship does have its place and those of us who are not on the mainstream, a lot of our research has to be even more rigorous because we know that it's going to ruffle feathers and we need to do research that we check and double check. And I don't think any of us now moving forward, if we're going to continue to write about migrant farm workers that we can't do that without still citing her work that laid the foundation for where the sociology and the work contemporary for worker programs actually is like she built that basis for us.

And then she also embodied what mobilizing research beyond academia actually is and should be. And then the importance of community relationships and sustaining these relationships beyond obviously one grant beyond one season. Kerry had these relationships, some of which she formed, for instance, when she was doing her PhD research in rural Mexico, that's where she started meeting migrants or families that had migrants, not just to the United States, but then also migrants to Canada.

So since then for so many years, she built not only built, but maintained these connections. And that is very difficult many times. And then of course Kerry not only had these relationships within migrant communities, but also with community organizations like I was saying before in unions. And she was an amazing pedagogue that believed and embodied transformative education. So she used the classroom as a sub subversive transgressive space to build power or to show students that they do indeed have power to affect change.

Because sometimes when we are teaching oppressions, it could paralyze some students. So Kerry made sure that she also gave students tools to use and feel transmute to their anger and doing something and doing something that was really tangible. And oh, there's David Griffith, hello David. Okay, and then also the love for Latin America. And that's also what her fuel was to do all of this work that she did.

And she also showed that it is possible to dream of having a transnational life that you couldn't exist, of course in more than just one place. She made that all work. And while she was traveling, she was still connected to wherever else she was to all of her steps. And I think about all the people that some of us don't know from the UK whose lives she touched and who are also missing her that in that side of the world.

But I know Kerry's impact was beyond just borders. That's why I wanted to reinforce this Fronteras part. And lastly, it's hard in these academic spaces to get lost in your mind, but I just want to take a moment to see what I have left out in my ramblings before I get to this link. In my letter to Kerry, I mentioned, I mentioned this civil rights leader who said that he knew that he could probably be killed when the US troop forces or state forces were coming against him. Congressman Lewis, it was an actual interview on democracy.

Now that really moved me. And he said that he was just taken by the force of history, the force of change, that he couldn't stop that was embodying him and protecting him and propelling him. And then I told Kerry, envelope yourself in that grace, in that spirit. And if she left us really early, I know that until the very end, she had that flame within her and it never disappeared.

It continues, and it continues within many of you, within many of us. And with Kerry, it made me think about the times that we do get to be here. How are we going to apply our fuel, our energy? What are we going to dedicate ourselves to? And I see that with people like Kerry when they pass, of course they don't really die, they remain in so many ways. And so I see that it is very difficult to hold academia and activism.

Kerry did it. And once you do all of this work, and it is really difficult for us, especially for us who are racialized and we don't, we're bodies that have placed, many times people don't even think

we're professors. But with Kerry's example, I realized, you know what? It's all worth it because what we do is beyond us and we leave all of this behind for future generations.

And so Kerry left us so much and I'm glad that we're able to commemorate her and celebrate her. And I want us to leave with her joy and passion. Passion for everything that she did, including the passion she had. I remember before she passed, she really wanted to make cookies with her son, Christmas cookies with her son and with her daughter. So she pushed herself to be there for them during Christmas.

So she had all of this strength and force. And I wonder too, almost done [laughs], sorry, during the times that we've saw migrant workers die in the farms or during the times when we heard of migrant workers that we've known for many years like Luis Ray, Erika, Erika, who's done amazing work with Erika Mi, Miranda Luis, the Sunflower man, there's so many people that didn't make it. And I always wondered, what would Kerry be doing during the time of the pandemic where we saw that some lives were completely disposable?

We've always known this, but now, wow, it's just like right there in our face that some people are just allowed to be, to let die the state, let certain people die. What would Kerry be doing? I know for sure Kerry would be continuing on to lobby, to do her work. And speaking of her work, I am very lucky to have a really amazing research assistant who helped me compile a listing of Kerry's work that you can find through this tiny URL. And I try to make it as easy as possible, but it outlines 15 pages of Kerry's work.

You'll see many of your names there too, because of course a lot of us collaborated with her. So that's something that I wanted to give to all of you who are here. And it's a gift that Kerry left us and future generations and migrant workers and their families. So for those of you who are academics and activists, don't lose hope. I think Kerry's life is a beacon of hope that we can hang on to when it's 3:00 AM and we can't sleep cause somethings do or not do. I think all of our work is really worth it. So I think Kerry taught us that we have to keep on going. Gracias.

Craig Johnson:

Thank you, Gracias. Your comments have evoked so many memories that I have over the years of Kerry, and I love the way you put it, that she ruffled feathers. She was such an amazing ally in her research obviously, but also as a colleague and a friend here at the university. I remember many good fights being fought that weren't have happened, were it not for Kerry. And thank you again for those comments. Before we move on, I just want to double check with the people online if we're lost them, okay but they're still with us. Excellent. Okay, thanks then. Okay, next I'll invite my other former current colleague Sally Humphries, to say a few words.

Sally Humphries:

Well after Evelyn's talk, it's a hard act to follow, I have to say. And my comments would, will be much shorter. So I remember very clearly when Kerry arrived at Guelph in 2001 and you know the dynamism that she had was evident right from the get-go and she was going to go places. There was just no doubt about it. And straight away she and I became really close friends,

despite the difference in our age. We were just really, really close to each other and we socialized outside the university and in the department.

We ruffled feathers together and we nearly always fought for the same causes. That's within the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. And I said goodbye to Kerry the very night she died, Spencer and told me, invited me to the hospital and a couple of hours from now seven years to this day, it was, it's extraordinary that this has happened on this event around this day on the way it's occurred.

So what Kerry and I initially bonded over was, am I speaking too loud? I don't think, okay, I got a very loud voice. What Kerry and I initially bonded over was community engaged scholarship. Our absolute commitment with our research partners and the communities that they represent. And I should add that we also bonded over our passion for Mexico. And Evelynne's already talked about this extensively.

Both of us done our doctorates in Mexico focusing on small farmers, and we both collected quantities of artisan. But during our research, which we filled our world houses with, and we had this dream that we would go on a shopping spree together to Mexico to buy more of Artisan, sadly we never did. I have to say I'm wearing gifts from Kerry today. So the colours look like Mexico even though they weren't, didn't buy it in Mexico.

What I should say though before I start my talk is that Kerry, unlike Evelynne, I didn't work in the same, exactly the same area as Kerry. We were both development scholars with an interest in and farmers but we focused, focused on them in different contexts. So I can't provide the same kind of discussion that Evelyn has just provided to us. So Kerry, obviously her focus is on Canadian farms and my focus shifted into small farmers in Honduras.

So my focus is more at the other end of the migration chain, how can we improve food security so that migration isn't such a pressing factor? So unlike everybody else on this panel, I'm not an expert in migration. And what I'm going to talk a bit about today is engaged scholarship, which clearly Evelyn has mentioned. So when Kerry started back in 2001, there was much less clarity about what engaged scholarship was.

And there was even less when I started in the mid nineties. But we were both fortunate that we were in a department sociology and anthropology where a colleague who had started in the 1970s worked in the era of engaged scholarship even though there was no such name of as such at that time. The person in question was Nora Saif. She was a researcher and an engaged scholar right up until the year she died in 2007.

She was a pioneer, not only because there were far fewer women social scientists at the time relative to males scientists but she focused on women particularly in Latin America. And she supported them through research and development in numerous ways, working with C and other funding agencies because engaged scholarship was unrecognized in the academy at that time, our department created a special category for Nora's work under the title of professional practice recognizing that much of what Nora's work encompassed couldn't come under the label of research alone.

Happily, when I joined the department, I was partially put into this category two, allowing me to pursue a much broader development focus than is norm normally permitted at universities. More recently, the categories collapsed by the department into what is called now called engaged scholarship. Whether two categories are comparable is not a discussion today, but I think it's an interesting discussion. So what is an issue here?

So a lot of what goes into Engage scholarship is not necessarily recognized in the number of publications that a storm has produced. And again, we see that very, very clearly in through evidence discussion, the kind of engagement that Kerry's work compass, as well as my own means being an ally of those with whom we work.

Kerry, Kerry was a very strong ally as we know of migrant workers and the organizations that represented them, and I won't go into the, Evelyn already discussed how she provided expert witness, witness how she went to Ottawa and met with senators and members of the House of Commons on discussing the shortcomings of the Seasonal agricultural workers program.

And in Guelph, I remember an incident where she was advocating for a group of women who were on a private contract from Mexico. I think they were contracted to a worm producer in Guelph. And Kerry was outraged at the treatment they were getting and she immediately leapt into action and to see how she could find a just solution for them.

And I'm sure there are dozens and dozens as Evelyn has referred to, of instances of such engagement on behalf of migrant laborers and what stands out for me, how it was always ready to use her knowledge gained through her research to try to influence policy and challenge the law in support of the rights of migrants. She was tireless and she went, and clearly this work went beyond what is typically expected of an academic, but it was advocacy that was grounded in the excellence of her research, and she was a highly effective ally and advocate because her research was so strong.

This is worth stressing because one of the dangers of being an ally is that you can be dismissed easily because of the perception of bias in research. To be an effective ally, I would argue, requires the individual to be a very, very strong researcher. And Kerry was so as you've heard from Evelyn Eric, Kerry published in a wider array of journals and I just looked at a few rural sociology International Migration Review, journal of ETH Ethnic and Migration Studies, American Anthropologists.

These are top journals, such a publication record requires very solid research. It also speaks to her capacity for interdisciplinarity, her strong social science focus rather than a strict disciplinary one. She could publish equally in one of the top sociology journals such as rural sociology, as in one of the top anthropology journals, American anthropology, anthropologists, sorry.

Her meticulous data collection analysis, which grounded her theoretical frameworks, came from her detailed attention to the stories to hold to her and to her research assistant. During interviews with migrant workers across Canada, she was an effective ally of migrant workers because of the strength of her publications and the data that underpinned them.

Kerry's work mainly employed qualitative data, the stories of migrant labourers, which she collected in a variety of locations obviously across and farms across Ontario and other provinces. But I remember straws, she told me about visiting bars and the dances and obviously in home communities. Kerry was out there collecting data and she analyzed this data using rigorous methodological tools to ensure accuracy.

Her approach was mainly inductive. She used the data and analysis to inform her theoretical frameworks that were grounded in the lives of migrant workers. And in the political economy, larger political economy, her meticulous presentation of her data and strong writing skills helped to mitigate the perception of bias in her work as an ally.

So I'm just going to deviate briefly to some of my own work, but I'll be brief on it because this is about Kerry. the perception of bias is something that I, along with my research partners in Honduras have had to confront in research in the project, in the Arab project evaluation, the gold standard for project evaluation is the use of randomized control trials which seek to use the scientific method in social science evaluation to avoid perceptions of bias. Effectively it means comparing those affected by a specific project or program against those without it.

Whenever we seek to publish our evaluations, we, and we always publish as a team, we are invariably asked why we didn't use randomized control trials. It's quite easy to counter the suggestion that we should have taken this route since a project such as ours, which involves training farmers to be researchers is one where individual communities or individuals choose to opt in and they're distinct from individuals or communities who choose not to opt.

In other words, there is distinction between these groups and they're not necessarily comparable, and hence randomized controlled trials are not a useful instrument for determining impact. But in view of this, very strong research methods are essential to establishing the legitimacy of the study and to guard against accusations of bias. Without these, we would not have succeeded in publishing in the top journals. The point that I'm making here is that if you are an ally, it behooves you to have very strong research methods or your findings will not be taken seriously.

Even armed with carefully applied methodologies and strong research community engaged researchers are still liable to be criticized, certainly carry face pushback from Canadian farmers who employ migrant labourers. And while some of the poor working conditions that migrant farm workers face are due to individual farmers Kerry's analysis of the broader political economy within which Canadian farmers so are forced to compete, recognize the structural factors that contribute to the working conditions of migrant labourers.

Here in Canada, she offered a wide lens on problems facing migrant workers and Canadian farmers. So even though she had many critics among the pharma population, her arguments in favour of improved migrant workers' rights were not aimed at individual farmers, but rather at a systemic level.

In Honduras, this ought to be necessary to keep systemic factors rather than individual opposition in mind. The pushback to pharma story research, especially to participate plant

breeding has come from plant breeders and government scientists who resisted the idea that small farmers have an important role to play in improving seeds and research more generally for food security.

The dominant model in Central America in the early nineties when I started as a researcher there was that the plant breeder alone should be the one who determined the best variety sea varieties for national release. This led to a long-term standoff between the research organization in Honduras that I helped set up and the head bean breed of a central America and the Caribbean. It took more than 20 years for this to change. It was only when empirical evidence could no longer be ignored that change occurred.

So take heart. Those who've been working for a long time in the field of trying to change legislation around migrant labourers here in Honduras specifically, we found that being varieties which involved the selection of small farmers had much higher adoption rates than the varieties that were developed solo by solely so solely by the breeder on the research station, the breeder, who is a very well-known figure in the region, is now a standard bearer for the engagement of small farmers in research, a change that has brought a new approach to improving food security in the region.

But he needed the empirical evidence before he was willing to chart this new course. In other words, he needed very strong research. And in the interim, a period about 20 years, I faced many awkward occasions when we were seated side by side, much as we are today on a panel. Without speaking a word to each other, both of us convinced that our approach was correct.

The discomfort of confronting sometimes very angry opposition means that engaged scholarship of this nature is not for the faint of heart. Kerry was never faint of heart. She was always ready to stand up for the migrant workers whose human rights she argued were not being adequately recognized by the seasonal agricultural workers program. Finally, I have to add in here that Kerry's position on workers' rights was an integral part of her cultural DNA, her family, particularly her parents.

Gerhard and Winn, who I know are listening are stalwart NDP-ers. She was raised in a household where it was understood that workers' rights are sacrosanct and should be defended and protected from both capitalist and status infringement as a, but as mentioned, Kerry was clear about the bigger picture that impose hardship on Canadian farmers to the requirement that they compete in a continental market that was dominated by US producers with access to cheaper labor and easy access to a much larger market than is available to farmers.

North of the border was part, very much part of Kerry's analysis. It was the system that shortchanged Canadian farmers more generally and migrant workers, particularly this breadth of perspective, her research excellence, her tireless devotion and passion for research allowed her to be enormously an enormously effective ally, an advocate for the agricultural workers whom she strived to support in every possible way. Her Esso, her commitment to them was absolute.

Craig Johnson:

Thank you. Thank you, Sally. Wonderful words. Next I'd like to invite Warren Dodd and it's a particular pleasure, Warren. It's both a former student and now a good friend and colleague, and it's wonderful to have you here. Awesome, thank you.

Warren Dodd:

Yeah, just to begin, it is a real privilege to be here. I'm grateful to be speaking with everyone and sharing some reflections on Kerry's work and particularly Kerry's role as an educator. I was a student of hers. I was an undergraduate student in a class that was focused on migration, and I was one of those students whose jaw dropped multiple times when she shared about the plight of migrant farm workers in Canada.

And it was that class in combination with other experiences I had during my undergraduate that really motivated me and made me want to look more at this issue of migration within a global context. I also had the opportunity during my PhD studies, which were here at the University of Guelph to work as a research assistant with Kerry.

And we worked on a small contract that was funded by the Solidarity Center and USAID to examine migrant work and look at the ways in which global governance, immigration policy and broader ideas around development and rights intersected to shape migrant experiences and precarity, particularly when accounting for the shift towards increasing demand for temporary migrant workers around the world.

And this was for me, an incredibly challenging project to work on. Kerry pushed me [laughs] in ways that I didn't know were possible. She refined my writing skills and really made a real impact, not only on my understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of work around migration in the context of global governance, but then also just pushed me to be a better researcher, reader to look at things very critically. And I'm just very grateful for that opportunity to have worked with her in that close capacity for about two years.

And my PhD work, it was in epidemiology and international development studies, and I know people hear a lot more about epidemiologists these days. A lot of the work isn't theoretically grounded. We don't engage necessarily with some of these ideas around rights and political economy. And so what I was really grateful for through this opportunity was to bring that lens to then some of my more quantitative work going forward.

I then took these ideas in this theoretical foundation and applied it to some of my PhD work, which was looking at the health of internal labor migrants in India. I was working on a border region between Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, and we were looking at or trying to understand the role that migration played in rural livelihoods.

And it was through this work that I saw parallels between some of the things I had heard from Kerry talking about in terms of the issues that were facing migrant workers and the negotiations, trade-offs, tensions that migrant workers and their families faced in order to make a living and support their families in a real way.

I also had the opportunity then to take some of these ideas to work in Honduras and I'd had the opportunity to work with the foundation for participatory research with Hunter and Farmers, which is the organization that Sally was speaking of, and speak with migrant workers or speak with families who had migrant members either in Spain or in the United States, and just understand the role that migration was playing in people's lives, how it shaped their understanding of how people who families who were not migrating understood migration, the role that remittances were playing in people's lives and just in some ways how people were feeling forced to migrate as a result of an increasing challenging conditions in Honduras, both political instability, gang violence that was increasingly moving into rural areas.

Since some of that work, we've continued to work on this issue of migration and introduced a new idea around this concept of immobility. And what this helps us think about is people's conscious decisions not to migrate. And understanding the role that agency and rights play in shaping and in informing conscious decisions not to migrate in areas where there are is high out migration.

There are people who are making a choice to live in rural areas and there's a real role for community development organizations in supporting families and individuals who are choosing to not migrate and even creating this as an option for people in the first place. I now also have the opportunity through some students I'm working with to work in the Highlands of Guatemala, which I know is an area that Kerry did a lot of work.

And in this work we're thinking about the ways in which migration and particularly remittances are supporting climate change adaptation and supporting local food transformation in agroecology and food sovereignty movements within the highlands of Guatemala.

And it's interesting because I think sometimes we think of food sovereignty movements and an agroecology movements as these self-contained movements that are happening, but I think what some of this work is showing is that remittances and these transnational networks are very much informing climate change adaptation and food sovereignty and a ecology that's happening within rural areas of Guatemala as well.

So I'm really thrilled to be a part of this work and continuing to engage with some of these ideas that I worked on with Kerry a number of years ago. So I think the main thing I wanted to share and the message that I wanted to get across was I have the opportunity now to be involved in teaching and mentorship. And right now I'm working with, I think I'm teaching about 400 undergrads across a couple of classes. So you're overwhelming sometimes and sometimes it's not the most I don't know, it's fine.

But I think just in preparing for this, I think I just was thinking through the role that Kerry played in my trajectory and you don't really know what the way in which you, you're crafting the classes, the messages that you're sharing, the impact that that might have on students in the classroom. And so that's I guess a message for myself and others here who have the opportunity to work with both undergraduate and graduate students, that there's a real gift and privilege and there's an opportunity to shape different people's trajectories. So thank you very much.

Craig Johnson:

Thank you so much, Warren. Now last and certainly not least Gabriel and as you're starting to talk, I'm going to stop the share of the PowerPoint as I think there's some difficulty seeing the video from the people online. But you go ahead and I'll just monkey around with the

Gabriel Allahdua:

But I need your attention, Mr. The moderator, [laughs], PhD. PhD, PhD. Can I put PhD on my name tag? Absolutely. For so many reasons, whenever I'm, I'm among all those PhD speakers, I will try to come up with an acronym PhD. PhD I've, and when I think of Kerry's work, the best I can think of right now is people have dreams at work.

Make sure that the people at the bottom, the people went, sure, food security, the people who work hard to put food on our tables, they too have dreams. It's the moderator. I want to tell you, I want to tell you that I was forced to come to Canada and the last speaker, he spoke several he made mention of migration several times. I want you to know that if had I come to Canada by choice, I'll be a tourist, I'll be a visitor.

That so many situations, so many factors come into play that forced us to leave our home country. I was forced to come to Canada because of a hurricane. I was self-employed doing five different things and just one hurricane, literally pull off the carpet and doing those five different things, I felt my life. So I was so confident that my income was diversified. I felt so confident that even though one is affected, that I could still live a decent life.

But one hurricane. But Mr. Moderator, who are the countries creating global warming and climate change, Mr. Moderator, who are the countries paying the price, the global south are the force to become migrants. And there's so many reasons and I'm pretty sure my colleague here can give you a lot of reasons. But let me get into it. I want to tell you, in my home country, no news is good news.

The loudest voice, I was forced to come to Canada, but one of the loudest voice in my head was your silence. Mr. Moderator, you never told me about the difficult conditions that migrant workers face, the loudest voice, that thing that really helped me to decide to come to Canada as a migrant grand worker was your silence.

And no news is good news. I want to tell you that the most, when I arrived in Canada, I realized that English is not the most common language in Canada. Neither is French, neither is Spanish, the loudest. And most common language I discovered in Canada is the voice of the marginalized.

I want to tell you what nobody wanted to touch, nobody wanted to talk about, nobody wanted to take it on. That's what Kerry took. That's what she did. She took it on. I want to tell you, Kerry did not just take on these things ruffle up feathers. She did that way in Guelph. The status quo that we see in our society.

It's right here being maintained by Guelph, ministry of Agriculture. You name all the players, the right hand, Guelph. How can you describe somebody who can take on a giant? How can you describe somebody who take on a giant right there in their hometown?

Unlike my other colleagues, I did not, I don't think I ever met her. I think I got the opportunity to attend her funeral, but it never worked out because I don't, I'm not sure whether it's because of snow or whatnot. And I was new to Tara, I didn't know my way around, so I didn't really see her.

However, I am so proud to tell you I'm so bold to speak up because I know that the foundation that standing on is a foundation that somebody who knows that the people at the bottom, the people who has food security, Canada's food security in their hands, we standing on that person who was laid that solid foundation and we heard from the previous speakers how she, her work was stylist in laying, that foundation. I want to tell you, let's talk a little about the status quo. A couple of things.

This university, they honored Mr. Ken for. And if we know about Mr. Ken for and the organization that he represents, they do everything to maintain the status quo. And what is the status quo. I want to draw three instruments to your attention. Mr. Moderator, are you ready for them? Instrument work number one. And that is enshrined in Canadian law. According to Canadian law, a migrant worker is denied the right to vote.

The same politician on just policies. P P P. My poverty in Canada is because of the just policies of politician. We cannot vote, deny the right to vote. And as Enshrining Canadian law, enshrining Canadian law, who's a migrant worker, another name for migrant worker is Karen. We cannot vote. We cannot participate in family life. We cannot, cannot, cannot. Who is a migrant worker? Somebody who cannot? I want to tell you instrument number two, the three pillars.

And we heard a couple of times about the seasonal agricultural workers program, the three pillars of that program. Pillar number one, we are here of the jobs. Canadians do not want to do. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Moderator, during the pandemic we find employment so high. I thought Canadians would go pandemic. High unemployment. Food security is important.

I thought Canadians would go to the farm. They didn't even during crisis. Canadians do not want to. It is simply because why? The conditions are not right. They're not just, they are number one, we are here to do jobs Canadians don't want to do. Mr. Moderator, do you know that there are no more migrant workers in Canada? During the pandemic, we got a promotion.

We are no more migrant workers. We are now called essential workers. That was, that's a very deceptive promotion. Nice ones. Again, the politicians nice one. But where's the action to back it up? So we are here to do jobs. Canadians law want to do number one. Number two, we do not have status. And what is status in Canada? In Canada, if you do not have status, you're denied basic human rights, denied basic labor standards in Canada.

If you have status, you have rights. We are here to do jobs Canadians don't want to do. We do not have status. And number three, we are tied to our employer. Let me go over that. I am tied to my employer to do jobs. Canadians do not want to do. And at the same time being denied basic human rights basically by standards. Is that an accident? Is that an accident or is that by design?

I would like you to answer me, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Moderator. But before you answer me, I want to draw to your attention the food pillar, the food instrument. I think we should try to buy local. And I love local fruits. I love local vegetables. I think of freshness, I think of good health. I think of supporting the local economy. But let me tell you the story. Every time we buy local, think of the hands that are involved in the production of your local.

Number one, candidates descend in country, people of colour, by local people of colour candidate saying, I even rather those people of colour, if English is a second language or the credit, they cannot navigate the language. People of colour language send me. Also those people who are ignorant about labor issues and human rights issues, the food that you eat, racism is involved, language is involved, and ignorance.

So isn't that the recipe exploitation? And these are the very same people that are tied to our employer. And what is Canada saying? Come we send me those people come welcome in a climate of fear and I will take five hours. I will not tell you all the elements of fear that is built into the program. So Canada saying, come we in a climate of fear. And that is forcing me, forcing us to be submissive and compliant. Where is that happening? In a country we know with a culture of silence, nobody says nothing.

That is why I'm so proud today because when nobody wanted to talk about it, who took it on when it was a non-issue, Kerry took it on. And the ground that I'm standing on it is really solid because Kerry knows that food security is in the hands of migrant workers. But these people too are food insecure. They do not have a they're both, they're living and working conditions are difficult. So that is why I'm really extremely happy to be on this panel. So I have a PhD. People have dreams and I have dreams because of people like Kerry. Thank you.

Craig Johnson:

Actually, I will. Thank you so much Gabriel. We were a bit later I think, than we'd originally planned, but we started a bit late. I'm happy now to open the conversation up to members of the audience. And I'm also happy to run around with the mic to give you a voice. So please do raise your hands if you want to share an observation or make a comment or ask a question of our panelists. And I know many of you are probably quite tired after a long day at a full day summit.

Speaker 6:

Thank you for sharing.

Speaker 7:

Thank you for sharing what Kerry meant to you. And as somebody who also benefited from knowing Kerry and the amazing legacy that she left, just thank you for sharing that. I know it. You all were very close to her. Yeah, thank you.

Craig Johnson:

Thank you too. I should add, I think this is something of a cathartic experience for many of us that this is certainly the first time I think that I've engaged in a public discussion around Kerry since her funeral. So seven years ago. And I think Covid affected so many things in our lives, but it particularly affected our ability to connect and reconnect.

And I'm really grateful and so happy to see such a strong turnout today of friends and colleagues and family online. And it's just, I think, were she here, I think she would be so happy and engaged herself to be in this conversation. Can I encourage anyone else to just share a thought or an observation or a question? Belinda Leach, thank you.

Sally Humphries:

Thank you, Craig. Thanks. And I'd like to thank the panelists for reminding me a lot my friendship and the allyship that I found in Kerry as member of the department. But the point that I really want to make is that when I started working with Kerry around migrant worker issues, at that time it was still based around the bilateral agreements with the countries of the Caribbean and Mexico. And she pointed to how that was expanding beyond those agreements.

And she anticipated what we have actually seen happen, which is this influx of temporary migrant workers being brought into the country under labor market opinions that say there's a need but to work in all kinds of well beyond agriculture. And while I think the specifics of the agricultural system is really critical to how workers are recruited to work in that industry. I think that there is still lots of work to be done as activists around migrant workers now working in other industries we've seen in mining in fast food.

Those are just two that come to my mind really quickly. But Kerry was really prescient in recognizing that this was going to become a major root for capitalism to deal with its problems of labor, especially in a country like this where as Gabriel points out, Canadians don't want to do a lot of these jobs and we can see exactly why. So yeah, she was really at the forefront of understanding these global shifts and what they meant. And also Evelyn, your slides reminded me of her how beautifully she dressed [laughs]. So loved seeing what she would wear each day. Thanks.

Speaker 9:

I just want to add Yama, thanks. Your presentations were all so moving at one point in each of them I had a tear and I think you just evoked her memory so perfectly in different ways, all of you. So thank you. And at the migrant forum today that Gabriel so wonderfully inspired in us, one of the questions we were discussing was how can we bridge activism and academia? And this panel reminded me tonight that Kerry has really given us that framework. We were whole,

a bunch of us in the room. How do we do that? How do we do that? Well, Kerry did it. She laid the groundwork for us.

So all we need to do is follow her example. And I think that would be a wonderful way to honour her legacy. And Gabriel, I know that you left today saying, what are we going to do? What are we going to do? And I think again Kerry would say, do something. Put your minds together and be that collective push. And for Kerry, we should. So Gabriel, although you never met her, I do think that you are pushing that momentum forward that she would really want to see. So thank you for that. And but's all keep going with that and her honour.

Craig Johnson:

Thank you, Janet. I think what a wonderful point to end this amazing discussion. And I just want to thank everyone. Oh, we have one last question from the ever tricky. Ian Spears, I'll hand the microphone over to you.

Ian Spears:

Thank you. I also have learned a lot from the panelists and this is such a wonderful tribute to Kerry. Just one thing I have to add. So I came a year after Craig Johnson and Craig Johnson, I've just learned came a year after Kerry to the University of Guelph. And it's when you're a new scholar, there's lots of things that are intimidating for sure. But Kerry always struck me as someone who seemed to be at least fearless. And this may seem like a small point to make, but obviously her concern for issues of justice and so on, infused everything that she did.

And that included even on with her colleagues. So I just remember being on a panel with her at one point in, I think the year or two after I was at Guelph. And she was very clear, I'm not sure who she was speaking to say that junior faculty should not be overburdened with work because they really did have to make sure that they were able to get their own research and attend to their students and so on, and not be burdened with too much as we call it service work.

And as I never would've had the nerve to be able to say that myself. And I just felt that that seemed to be, it's obviously infused everything that she did in her life, but that was my own small experience with her. Thanks.

Craig Johnson:

That's, thank you for that, Ian. She was a wonderful barometer whenever I was in doubt about where I stood, what I thought about development, about human rights or about my own job, I think she was a great person to [laughs] to just [laughs] check my moral and ethical compass.

Craig Johnson:

The mic, just so the people online can hear you.

Speaker 10:

All right. I always have to stir the pot. So I'm going to, Gabriel just brought up a really good point about our good friend Ken fourth, who's the chair of the Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services the head people who are in charge of the season agricultural worker

program. A few years ago he received an honorary degree from this university. It might be a good time to have that honorary degree rescinded. Thank you.

Gabriel Allahdua:

Can I add one more point? Yes. I want to say that when I first arrived in Canada in 2012, there was a major accident in Kitchener Hamstead, and that's where I first came across Host Thisk or Justice of Migrant Workers. And right now we have two founded members of that group. Evelyn who earlier said she was mentored by Kerry and also Chris, who is another founding member for usia. And he also worked he Sarner. Okay. Also worked alongside Kerry. So Kerry influence those people.

Founding members of Justice for Migrant was, that's the first group, first organization I ever met, ever came across in Canada in 2012 when I thought, and that was a non-issue. Nobody's standing in my quarter when I thought it was my liaison, don't be fighting for me. It was these people from 2012, but now they still have for the long haul. And I'm telling you the fact that I am a former migrant worker into that group, I am the future looks bright good because so many migrant workers are coming into the fore. So it is all as a result of Kerry's work essentially. So the future looks good and her legacy, Liz on. Thank you.

Craig Johnson:

Okay. Well, in that spirit and in Kerry's memory I want to thank everyone for being here today. Thank you for those of you who joined us online. Thank you to the panelists for some wonderful thought-provoking, stimulating, challenging discussion. We will be recording or we have recorded the event. We'll upload it onto our website once it's been transcribed. We'll also make sure that that Kerry's compendium of publications will be made available too. So if you want to access those, we'll make them available before you leave. We have some modest refreshments here to enjoy before leaving the room and just encourage you to congregate, say hello to one another and have a wonderful evening. Thank you very much.

[End of transcript]