



## Speaking like a citizen: Biopolitics and public opinion in recognizing non-citizen children in Israel



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### ABSTRACT

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This paper examines the public sphere process by which non-citizen children of labor migrants came to be recognized as Israeli citizens. In response to a public campaign, three government resolutions were issued in the 2000s to provide Israeli citizenship for these young non-citizens. Generally, studies of non-citizen migrants have emphasized their deportability and illegality as the primary aspect of the biopolitics of contemporary citizenship. On the other hand, I draw attention to the mass mediated process from which public opinion emerges to set the boundary between citizen and non-citizen. To describe this, I examine the pragmatics of voicing non-citizen children in public discourse. I also describe how legal documentation became the semiotic technology through which public opinion was rationalized bureaucratically.

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In March 2006, about thirty Israeli scouts, mostly in their mid-teens, went as a group to the Ministry of Interior in Tel Aviv. The trip to the ministry was a public act of citizenship: the group wanted to address the Israeli national public as co-citizens and request support in a campaign to gain a pathway to citizenship. Most of the scouts were from “Eitan” troop, which is in a working-class neighborhood in southern Tel Aviv, and which was known at the time for its high number of non-citizen and undocumented labor migrants, especially Latinos. The ostensible purpose of their trip was to submit bureaucratic files as part of an application for citizenship. The application was in accordance with a government resolution from June 2005 to provide a pathway to citizenship for the children of labor migrants. However, the 2005 Resolution did not cover most of Eitan’s non-citizens. The trip to the ministry was part of a campaign to stimulate further government action for a new resolution.

The group’s public message of citizenship was complex. It was not only non-citizen scouts who participated in the trip to the ministry. The Israeli head of Eitan organized the trip, and Jewish scouts joined from a wealthy, mostly Ashkenazi northern Tel Aviv neighborhood. The presence of the Latino non-citizens with their wealthier mates and the scout administrators produced a “diagrammatic icon” of the campaign, to take a term from semiotic theory (Parmentier, 1985; Gal, 2013), where the non-citizen was framed by—and thus likened to—citizen supporters. This framing relation to produce a diagrammatic icon was typical of the campaign, where advocates both enabled and helped to voice the non-citizen child to an Israeli public. Another aspect of the message was service to the state. Most scouts wore their uniforms, known as being *al xaki* (in khakis),<sup>1</sup> as a sign that they were already doing service for the state, and were prepared for compulsory military service in a few years.

The act of going to the Ministry of Interior was not simply a bureaucratic one to hand in an application form. The Scouts, both the Israeli administrators and the non-citizen participants, wanted and required media coverage to address the Israeli

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<sup>1</sup> I use symbols for contemporary Israeli Hebrew that are generally easily read in English. One difference is that the [x] represents a sound like the “ch” sound at the end of the German pronunciation of “Bach.”

public. This media coverage added another layer to the framing relation of the diagrammatic icon, where the innocence of the nation was at stake. The head of Eitan Troop had arranged for Israel's state television news hour, *Mabat*, to send a team of reporters. *Mabat* ran a short but sympathetic segment on the scouts' trip to the ministry midway through its evening broadcast. The anchor and reporter framed the issue in what by then were predictable ways, calling the non-citizen scouts "Israeli in every way." Also predictable was their use of an interview snippet with Robert, a Colombian-born teenager who, speaking native Hebrew, expressed his complete desire to live in the country in which he was raised, Israel. The *Mabat* segment helped to further frame and also ritualize Robert as an innocent child for Israeli viewers (see [Malkki, 2010](#); [Moeller, 2002](#); [Rosen, 2007](#)): Robert, it was conveyed, was not responsible for his parents' decision to bring him to Israel and therefore should not be exposed to deportation. The *Mabat* anchor and reporter represented the voice of the citizen advocates, like those who accompanied the scouts to the ministry. The news segment thus also composed the voices of the liberal advocate and innocent child in a diagrammatic icon. As I will argue, throughout this vital media campaign, the contrast and composition of liberal advocate and innocent child suggested to viewers a dual relation: the advocate's voice implied indexically the national belonging of these non-citizen youth, while the non-citizen child's voice indicated indexically the innocence of the nation as whole.

The trip to the ministry, and its accompanying media coverage, was another iteration of the public message that advocates and non-citizen families hoped would be adopted as public opinion: recognize these children as our own and we show our own innocence. The most meaningful evidence of the positive uptake of their message came two months after the visit to the ministry, when the government issued a second resolution that ultimately would enable most of the non-citizen scouts at Eitan, as well as hundreds of their peers, to receive citizenship.

Like in the campaign of the still unpassed US DREAM Act ([Chavez, 2013](#), 181–191), public acts like that of the Eitan scouts signified an attempt to characterize these youth as territorialized citizens in all but the juridical sense. Most of the kids who attended Eitan Scout Troop were "deportable" ([De Genova, 2002](#); [De Genova and Peutz, 2010](#)). That is, they were highly aware of their own precarious status in Israel and conditioned their conduct accordingly. These were the children of unauthorized labor migrants who had arrived to Israel in the nineties and early 2000s, and they held no legal residence status that permitted them to remain in Israel. Indeed, no law prevented their deportation.

Yet undocumented teenagers like those from Eitan—fluent in Hebrew, educated in Jewish-Israeli schools, willing to wear uniform, supported by the Israeli Scouts and other nationalist advocates—could not be deported. By order of the Ministry of Interior, neither they nor any immediate family members could even be apprehended by police, and public opinion was very queasy about the idea of jailing them. This was true in a situation where Israeli state institutions, especially the military, have no political or bureaucratic trouble using extreme force on non-citizen Palestinian children and, to a lesser extent, children of African asylum-seekers. How was it possible that these children, living without any formal protection of political community, were spared?

An increasing number of studies take the deportability and illegality of subjects like Eitan's non-citizen scouts as a primary aspect of the biopolitics of citizenship. In contrast, with a cue from Hannah Arendt, I seek to shine light on how the public sphere and its functioning comprises a neglected site for understanding citizenship as a governmental concern. In considering migrants' contemporary relation with state power, many scholars have usefully considered the biopolitical relation between labor mobility and graduated or fragmented citizenship (e.g., [De Genova and Peutz, 2010](#); [Gonzales and Chavez, 2012](#); [Hansen and Stepputat, 2005](#); [Kanna, 2010](#); [Ong, 2006](#)). They often contextualize this relation in terms of the global assemblage of institutions that regulate inter-state relations and capital movements. These studies definitively show that non-citizen migration constitutes a category of labor that is produced globally to maintain gradations across vast populations.

Public campaigns play an immense role in these discussions, and yet there is much work to be done explaining how they challenge or help reproduce the biopolitical effects of citizenship. For example, in a profound theoretical statement on deportation, labor, freedom and sovereignty, [Nicholas de Genova \(2010\)](#) uses a famous example from the US sanctuary movement. Yet de Genova has no account for how public claims affect the analysis of these issues. Aihwa Ong importantly goes much further. In a seminal book ([2006](#), esp. 24–25, 198–199, 211–217), she discusses how NGOs seek "to change public perception about the moral obligation" to non-citizen workers in South East Asia in order to encourage support for what Ong terms "biowelfare."<sup>2</sup> However, she does not delve into the specific means by which public perception is changed, nor the vexing issue of public uptake. Despite their importance, little attention is being paid across this literature to how messages of citizenship and moral obligation are produced, like with the trip to the ministry and the *Mabat* segment, and how these messages are incorporated into, and disseminate through, a seemingly self-regulating public opinion.

In this literature on the biopolitics of citizenship, Hannah Arendt is regularly invoked as a foundational theorist of the relation of statelessness, political community, and rights. I'd like to highlight a different aspect of her work. Arendt comprehends the political reality of a citizenry's world, and the potential for political transformation, to result from the process of communicating in public (esp. [1958](#), 50–58).<sup>3</sup> A political world for Arendt is built through the actions ("speech and deeds") of plural citizens—citizens whose action is first and foremost addressing each other in public, and thereby being recognized by one another.

<sup>2</sup> See [Sarah Willen's \(2015\)](#) similar analysis for the Israeli case. Willen usefully coins the term "local moral economy" to emphasize how claims for migrants resonate with multiple rhetorical traditions on the national stage.

<sup>3</sup> Arendt is important *inter alia* for connecting to the political realm Heidegger's anti-Cartesian ideas about the centrality of being absorbed into and constructing one's world ([Villa, 1995](#)).

If we accept this point, the question then becomes how to account in our analysis for the public address that is specific to citizenship. The mediation of public address, and the uptake that goes along with public recognition, are complex, as a growing literature on media and publicity shows (e.g., Bishara, 2013; Boyer, 2013; Cody, 2011; Ginsburg et al., 2002; Hirschkind, 2006; Inoue, 2005; Manning, 2012; Spitulnik, 1996). This work highlights the technological, visual, aural, discursive, and other semiotic aspects that are involved in the formation of publics. It thus complicates notions of speaking, authorship and circulation at large scales. This literature thus complicates how we understand the influence of media and publics in biopolitical formations.

This paper considers the relation of citizenship (with its biopolitical gradations), public address and recognition in terms of the complexity of mass mediation. In answering the question about how public opinion made it impossible to deport youth like Robert, I draw on two compatible approaches. First, I use contemporary elaborations of the work of Mikhail Bakhtin to examine the pragmatics of “voicing” different figures (e.g., the advocate, the child, or the nation) as part of the rhetorical effectiveness of addressing a public. In particular, I consider how, in a crucial moment in the campaign for citizenship, a famous news article was published where the innocent voice of the child was represented as converging with the liberal voice of the national advocate as part of suggestion how the nation could adopt them. Second, in line with the study of media and publics, I look at the genealogy of the files the scouts submitted to the Ministry of Interior in order to examine how a semiotic technology can substantiate those voicings. Throughout, I suggest that the pragmatics of voicing in political discourse can signal dimensions of biopolitics, and secondly, that these pragmatics are central to constituting a supposedly self-governing public sphere.

### 1. Non-citizens and “The Demographic Balance”

Those who clashed over whether to recognize the children of non-citizen labor migrants had their eye on the demographic stakes. Elite factions sought to define the presence of non-citizen children as a means to determine possible population demographics. The major advocates were mostly liberal, left-leaning secular elites, often organized in human rights NGOs. Their chief opponents were religious politicians and high-ranking bureaucrats, especially those in the Ministry of Interior known to be jealous of the line between Jew and Arab. The pro- and counter positions were recognizable according to terms used: to emphasize the accent-free Hebrew and cultural assimilation of the children was to suggest a possible liberalization of immigration policy, while to emphasize the number of these non-citizen children was to suggest they could not be truly assimilated, like (according to Israeli political consensus) the Palestinians.

Indeed, the contrast to the Palestinians made non-Jewish labor migration into Israel’s “other” others, as Sarah Willen (2010) has felicitously termed them. As Willen argues, it is not possible to understand the position of “foreign workers,” as they are known in Israel, without considering the historical distinction of Jews and Palestinians in Israeli biopolitical formations. Labor migrants, including both authorized guestworkers and unauthorized migrants from outside the Palestinian Occupied Territories, began arriving in the late eighties and early nineties as part of Israel’s economic neoliberalization policies as well as part of a response to the First Palestinian Intifada (uprising), c. 1987–1991 (Shafir and Peled, 1998; Kemp and Rajjman, 2008). Like many other contemporary economies (see esp. Ong, 1999, 2006), labor migration to Israel involved new classifications of flexible workers, exploiting and correlating to distinctions in citizenship. Unlike Palestinians, these migrants were not understood by the state to involve a security threat, nor were they considered to be criminals, at least not immediately nor collectively.<sup>4</sup> Yet like Palestinians, some perceived them as yet another demographic threat to the stability of Israel’s Jewish majority. Further, one unintended consequence of this wave of migration was the birth and arrival of an estimated 2000–5000 children by the turn of the century, who grew up partially or entirely educated in Hebrew.

In the nineties and early 2000s, several Israeli human rights NGOs started to take up positions with respect to the rights of these workers, and in some cases even advocating for a broader “immigration” (*hagira*) policy—a term that is opposed to the notion of “return” for Jewish immigration (Rosenhek, 2000). This public communication about labor migrants began to produce the possibility for including some labor migrants as citizens. However, despite the best efforts of these advocates, when mass deportations began in earnest in 2002 (see Kalir, 2010; Willen, 2010), only the children of labor migrants and one parent to care for them could be saved from deportation.

The positions taken up in the debates about the possible recognition of such children continued long-standing political tensions among Jewish-Israelis, especially between liberal secular and religious political orientations. After more than a decade where the Ministry of Interior was usually controlled by a religious party, a secular minister, Avraham Poraz, was appointed in February 2003. Although he met intense resistance from the higher echelons of bureaucrats as well as from other coalition ministers, Poraz managed to advance liberal Israeli causes, like that of the children of labor migrants. On the other hand, in line with mainstream Israeli politics, Poraz also worked on resolutions that would limit any increase to the number of Palestinian citizens.

Poraz’ efforts for the children of labor migrants was immediately perceived by his opponents as part of an attempt to change what Israelis call “the demographic balance” (*hama’azan hademografi*). This term means that, for Israel to be seen as a state both Jewish and democratic, there must be a large majority of Jewish citizens and—equally important—a numeric limit to the proportion of Palestinian citizens (Kanaaneh, 2002, 28–56; Portugese, 1998; Rouhana and Sultany, 2003). Many officials

<sup>4</sup> Although see Willen’s (2010) important paper on how the Immigration Authority sought to criminalize unauthorized migrants.

feared “foreign workers” could produce a precedent for a future population of more non-Jews, and especially, for more Palestinian citizens.

For example, then Attorney General, Elyakim Rubinstein (now a Supreme Court justice), wrote in May 2003 an extensive letter to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon denouncing the various changes that Poraz was attempting to institute in the granting of citizenship. His letter cataloged various petitions to the courts that concerned the Minister of Interior, and argued that Poraz’s positions would lead to ever greater numbers of “foreigners” with legal residence. One of the petitions targeted by Rubinstein was on behalf of children of labor migrants (I return to this petition below). Given Poraz’s empathy for their situation, Rubinstein warned of dire demographic repercussions:

Currently the work of gathering the data is not complete. However, the initial data show that we are speaking of many thousands of children. If they and their families receive status, we are looking at granting status to tens of thousands of illegal residents, according to the Minister of Interior’s decision.

Moreover, this rule, if it will pertain to children of foreign workers, will also apply to the children of illegal residents in Israel from the [Palestinian Occupied] Territories, from Jordan and other [Arab] countries. The distinction between the two groups would comprise discrimination, and it will not be possible to establish it [the distinction] on legal grounds.

Needless to say that such a policy contradicts the instructions which were given of late to the bureaucracy to amend the law to cancel the automatic legal status of a child of an Israeli whose second parent is a resident of the [Palestinian Occupied] Territories. It will be difficult to distinguish between the two cases, given that the argument that the children of a resident of the Territories represent a security threat will probably not stand up to judicial inspection, especially when we speak of a minor.<sup>5</sup>

The problem, from the attorney general’s perspective, is the difficulty of legally discriminating “foreign workers” from non-citizen Palestinians or other Arab children, meaning that a possibility existed that the latter could gain legal status in greater numbers. Further, the Israeli establishment considers Palestinians and Arabs more generally to be a “security threat.” Yet, the problem for Rubinstein is exacerbated precisely because the presumption of a child’s innocence is difficult to overcome.

Rubinstein’s letter was effective in achieving his stated purpose of limiting Poraz policy on “foreigners.” The prime minister established a committee of coalition ministers to oversee any changes to Israeli citizenship. Until the end of his shortened tenure, Poraz was forced to gain approval from all coalition parties for his initiatives. This move effectively limited the changes that Poraz could push through.

If Rubinstein’s letter exemplifies the position that granting citizenship projects a future demographic threat to the Jewish state, advocates for the children of labor migrants projected a cosmopolitan future without explicit challenges to Israel’s demography or its regimes of knowledge. The typical message advanced by advocates was that the children of labor migrants were not only culturally Israeli, but also they were very few in number—and therefore they could not be considered a demographic threat. At the same time, several of these advocates saw the incorporation of non-Jewish migrants as citizens as potentially leading to a more rational and liberal “immigration policy” (*medinyut hagira*). In a state discourse built around the narrative of “return” from diaspora, the term “immigration policy” itself suggested for both advocates and opponents new governmental rationalities.

In this debate, the position on children thus signaled through voicings the possible flexibility of Israeli categories of citizenship and labor. To be sure, much more would have to be discussed to show the full effects of the bureaucratic and institutional rationalizations that resonate with such public discourse. But here I would like to point out how the framing of voices is structured discursively. Elyakim Rubinstein’s letter was typical of opponents of a pathway to citizenship in that it nowhere voices (or represents the speech of) the children directly or indirectly. The only subject positions—indeed, citizens—who are represented as speaking or being addressed in the letter are those of high level politicians and policy makers, plus the projected voice of the judge who in future will need to rule on the distinction between labor migrant and Palestinian children.<sup>6</sup> Against this structure of voicing, as I will now describe, advocates emphasized the native sound of the voice of non-citizen children of labor migrants, and believed that the children addressing the national public via news media could achieve a pathway to citizenship.

## 2. How can the subaltern child speak in public?

The concept of “voice” and the pragmatics of voicing being advocated for here comes from a tradition of reading literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin in contemporary linguistic and cultural anthropology (e.g., Hill, 1985; Tedlock and Mannheim, 1995; Silverstein and Urban, 1996; Keane, 2003; Inoue, 2005; Agha, 2005). Bakhtin was keenly interested in how forms of discourse had their effects by signaling for participants (as part of small or large scale communication) relations between socially-locatable subjects. Further, Bakhtin explained how, for any given discursive segment, multiple voices—associated with multiple kinds of subjects—could be simultaneously represented and related to one another in ways that go far beyond grade

<sup>5</sup> From [http://my.ynet.co.il/pic/doc\\_27/default.htm](http://my.ynet.co.il/pic/doc_27/default.htm), accessed March 2009. The letter was published as part of an online news article.

<sup>6</sup> Space does not allow for a careful analysis of how these distinct voices are represented in the letter.

school distinctions of “direct” and “indirect” quotation (esp. 1981; see also Voloshinov 1973, 109–159). What Bakhtin emphasizes is that all subjects form by partially repeating and partially inflecting what has been said before, by partially adopting some speech and partially avoiding others, always in anticipation of an imminent response. These dialogic relations are achieved through complex pragmatic (or indexical) values, and they are deeply imbricated in practices of all kinds, like those of public debate. As socio-historical process, such a view of discursive interaction also explains the links between concrete instances of discourse. These emergent links, which Michael Silverstein (2005) terms “interdiscursivity,” can concatenate across mass scales, like those of public opinion.

In such a process of emergent interdiscursivity, the innocent voice of the non-citizen child arose in Israeli public discourses in the early 2000s as an effect of particular moments that congealed together within national spacetime. At the same moment, a bureaucratic and legal instrument arose to rationalize for institutional recognition that public opinion: like the scouts discussed above, each child needed to produce a file, a semiotic technology (Hull, 2003), to substantiate their biographies in Israel. The file gave a bureaucratic presence to the voice produced through mass media in the campaign.

In a sense, non-citizen children actually began their path to citizenship prior to any public campaigns, when they began to receive what TH Marshall famously called “social rights” of citizenship (like schooling and health insurance) despite lacking “political rights” (like the vote or residence status) (Marshall, 1965; see Holston, 2008 and Joppke, 2010 for critiques). Prior to the establishment of the Immigration Authority in 2002, relatively few unauthorized labor migrants were deported. During the nineties, with the blessing of local officials, non-citizen children went to Jewish Hebrew-medium schools, mostly in the urban centers around Tel Aviv. Schooling also meant socialization into the public culture that underlies the Israeli national imaginary. In other words, at school, these non-citizens were learning to speak like Israeli citizens.

That socialization was then integrated into the public campaign. Interestingly, the public appearance of the voice of the non-citizen Israeli child did not begin in the paradigmatic genres for the formation of publics, like the newspapers discussed in the classic works by Jürgen Habermas (1989) and Benedict Anderson (1991). Indeed, the first time the voice of the child effectively showed up in public as a threatened part of the nation was in a court document, viz., in a petition (*atira*) to the district court submitted by the human rights NGO and legal powerhouse, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI). ACRI launched this petition in February 2003 against the Minister of Interior when several “children” of labor migrants began reaching eighteen, the legal age of majority, which exposed them to deportation.

The petition innovated public discourse by producing the arguments and evidentiary basis that figured the four petitioners as “Israeli in every way.” A lawyer who worked closely on the case, Merav, explained to me that this petition represented a novelty in the work of ACRI. They had always worked on cases where at least one of the petitioners was formally a citizen. The 2003 petition innovated in asking for legal status for non-citizens with no ties to a citizen. Instead these non-citizens had two claims to substantive citizenship: the idea of cultural assimilation and the legal concept of domicile (*merkaz xayim*, lit. “center of life”).

Describing and proving cultural assimilation and domicile were the two central strategies of the petition. First, the petition argued that the four petitioners were culturally assimilated to Israel (*hishtalvu* or *hitaru be'israel*), and articulated this in the introductory remarks:

The issue of this petition is the respondent's [the Ministry of Interior] policy, which ignores the special life circumstances of people like the petitioners [the children of labor migrants]. We refer to foreign citizens that as children have lived in Israel for many years, grew up and were educated here. For these people, Israel is their domicile [*merkaz xayim*], Hebrew is their language, and Israel's culture and values are their culture. Yet the respondent [the Minister of Interior] denies these people permanent residence in Israel, which comes with adulthood, and, also denies them, with time, Israeli citizenship.

The petitioners have lived in Israel many years, separated in practice from the countries of their formal citizenship. Their assimilation to Israel [*hishtalvutam be'israel*] is absolute. According to their identity and their self-perception they are Israelis in every way and manner. Despite this, their status in the society where they grew up and were educated is inferior, they have no social or political rights, and they are exposed to the danger of arrest and deportation.<sup>7</sup>

In such a description, the child petitioners are voiced in an “analytical” way (Voloshinov 1973, 128–131), from the point of view of a distant outside observer. Although different than Rubinstein's letter quoted above, the legal argument absorbs to itself entirely the form of their speech. There is no “direct” quotation or other close representation, although some inferences are available from formulations like “according to their identity and self-perception.” On the other hand, the voice of an advocate that frames the child's voice is fully elaborated: it characterizes the children and their problem in juridical terms.

The second strategy in the petition was grounding the advocate's case about cultural assimilation in a series of documents found as appendices. For the first time, in these appendices, a file was assembled to enable the bureaucratic recognition of the child within formal procedures of citizenship. In the petition, the main arguments described many biographic details of the petitioners as arguments for assimilation, for example, friendship with Israelis, as well as participation in soccer clubs, the Scouts, or the military's “youth battalions.” Much is also made of the fact that the petitioners speak Hebrew natively. All of these are taken as signs of their cultural assimilation. But it is in the appendices, where a series of records is provided to prove

<sup>7</sup> Atira minhalit 1113/03.

these claims, in analogy with domicile cases for tax or other purposes, that the cultural assimilation is given its interdiscursive substance. For example, one of the petitioners is shown in photos wearing a military uniform with classmates while participating in the youth battalions. The other three petitioners (all brothers) are found in photos as children dressed in Purim costumes as well as wearing gas masks during the 1991 Gulf War. Their native Hebrew proficiency is documented with school certificates and report cards. Thus everyday sites within the national spacetime (like school and dressing up for Purim) are integrated with national historical events (like the 1991 Gulf War) to connect the arguments of cultural assimilation to the legal notion of domicile.

Through the petition, and others that followed, the voice of the child of labor migrants gained a legal presence and procedure for gaining formal citizenship. The relation between the petition's argument and the appendix also produced a diagrammatic icon, where the voice of the advocate framed the legal substantiation of the children's voice through documents. Remarkably, the file that ACRI's 2003 petition innovated was later actually adopted by the Ministry of Interior upon the passage of the government resolutions for a pathway to citizenship. Indeed, when the Scouts took their highly public trip to the Ministry of Interior in March 2006, described at the outset, it was these files that they had prepared to submit.

Despite initiating the appeal, ACRI felt that the legal merits were not strong. No law prevents the state of Israel from deporting anybody without legal status, even minors. Merav explained that the petition was prepared mostly to "arouse a public debate." All those who worked on the case agreed that it was the media coverage that made the campaign successful. If the petition saw the voice of the child entirely absorbed to the voice of the liberal advocate, the media campaign involved voicing the child in ways that seemed to directly speak to the national public, and where the voice of the child could even be represented as permeating that of public opinion to diagram the nation's own innocence and outrage.

### 3. Child citizens speak to the nation

ACRI's 2003 petition did not by itself make the child's voice available for incorporation into an Israeli national imaginary. The whole issue of labor migrants had gained greater public salience in late 2002 as the well-resourced Immigration Police was established and began both round-ups and propaganda. Media coverage of the increased intensity of deportations and atmosphere of fear was reinforced by more and more middle class Israelis coming to terms with the state's new policies. The realization often happened for middle class Israelis when the domestic worker they employed was arrested, sometimes at the house of the employer.<sup>8</sup> The issue of deporting non-Palestinian unauthorized migrants was hotly contested, and those who sympathized with the deportees drew on nationalist narratives of Jewish history to influence public opinion. The actions of police were compared to episodes of persecution of the Jews. In other words, public opinion began to congeal around the issue of labor migration which figured the state as persecutor of innocents. This rhetoric only became effective in preventing deportation in the case of children; adult migrants, no matter how long they had lived in Israel, were not protected by public opinion. The emergence of the voice of the child and the voice of the national advocate made it difficult to gain the political and bureaucratic will to deport children who spoke like native Israelis.

The transference of the children's voice to the voice of the nation was, to some extent, set off by the police's own public campaign. In August 2003, about a year into its existence, the Immigration Police announced they were preparing a special jail to arrest whole families with children, and they issued a new series of police-sponsored radio and television commercials warning of what was to come.<sup>9</sup> In response, several editorials and opinion pieces, often by NGO activists, inveighed against the idea. The outrage led to a large demonstration at the beginning of September 2003 that brought out several celebrities who condemned the police. Many stated the Immigration Police's activities reminded them of the darker days of Jewish history, when Jews were persecuted and run out of their homes. All this occasioned a great deal more press coverage, including online, print, radio and TV, and a surprising amount of foreign press as well.<sup>10</sup>

At the same time, other forms of publicity were taking shape around labor migrant children. First, in September 2003, a movie called "They Catch Children Too?" (*Hem Tofsim Gam Yeladim?*) was screened at the high brow Cinematheque in Tel Aviv, with Abraham Poraz in attendance. The movie follows two ten year old children of Filipino labor migrants, after the father of one was jailed, and includes several moving scenes where the son talks to or asks about his father. The title of the movie refers to the opening scene, where the son looks directly into the camera and, speaking in native-sounding Hebrew, asks the filmmaker whether children are also being arrested. The other form of publicity that was being developed came out of the activities of teachers at Rogozin Secondary in Tel Aviv, one of the high schools attended by several teen-aged labor migrants' children. There, starting in September 2003, meetings were organized to work on public outreach, which culminated in two demonstrations in Jerusalem during the first quarter of 2004. Finally, a series of reports came out pointing to the stress and trauma that children of labor migrants were experiencing.

<sup>8</sup> As a volunteer with the NGO "Hotline for Migrant Workers," I often answered phone calls from outraged employers. I also met several volunteers who got involved after their employee was arrested.

<sup>9</sup> Nurit Wurgaft, "Whole families, including babies, will be arrested and held in a detention center in Hadera," *Haaretz*, August 6th, 2003 [Hebrew], <http://www.hotline.org.il/hebrew/news/2003/Haaretz080603.htm>, accessed March 2009.

<sup>10</sup> I am grateful to the Hotline for Migrant Workers for making available a very comprehensive archive of media coverage, which enabled me to write this section. I also benefited from the archive saved by teachers at Rogozin High School (now Bialik-Rogozin).

Between summer 2003 and early 2004, the public storyline about the plight of labor migrants' children coalesced. Certain youths and NGO workers or other advocates came to be standard interviewees. The kids answered questions about their childhood in Israel, and made statements about their intentions to live there, fulfill military service, and the like. The advocates were quoted to place the kids in Israel, argue for their cultural assimilation, and explain the issues of the campaign. The stock phrase "Israeli in every way" became ubiquitous. Thus the voice of the child most often came with a framing voice of the citizen advocate. Both were considered necessary for the success of the message to get through. When I worked on the campaign, advocates constantly worried that either the child's voice or the advocate's were insufficiently represented in a given news item.

The child's voice was not only a voice that spoke with native-sounding Hebrew, but rather a voice that spoke in ways ideologically considered to be Israeli: with the effusive, direct and hierarchy-violating interactional practice known in Israel as *chutzpah* (*xutspa*). In printed news, this characteristic was depicted with explicit commentary on the children's accentless Hebrew or else with statements on their Israeli directness, clearly assigning these qualities an ideological significance of rootedness to Israel (Katriel, 1986). For example, in an English language article from the *Jerusalem Post* on an eight-year-old, Wendy, born in Israel of a Ghanaian mother, the reporter writes about her desire to remain in Israel: "She dismissed the idea of moving to Ghana with rolled eyes and glib Hebrew slang."<sup>11</sup> The national significance of the described interactional behavior is later made more explicit by one of the longtime advocates from the Hotline for Migrant Workers, who is quoted directly:

"A child like Wendy, who answers her mother in Hebrew and has the Israeli *chutzpa*, will never fit into African society," she says. "She's not a polite girl who respects adults like African girls are supposed to. When she goes back to Africa, she will have a very hard time."

Here, the advocate's voice is directly represented to frame the child's: the rational, liberal voice maintains its distance from the innocent *chutzpah* of the child's voice.

In the news media coverage of the campaign, the voices of the national advocate and the child do not rest solely within the narrow confines of the animating or quoted subject. As noted above, one of the important points in Bakhtin's oeuvre is discussing how multiple voices can be represented at once, and can in fact break the frame of formal quotation. As Asif Agha (esp. 2005, 40–43) has discussed, formal discursive devices can maximize or minimize the "transparency of voicing contrast" between framing and framed figures, but ultimately it is the text's (metrical) structure which enables the perception of voicing contrasts. Playing on such contrasts can invite an addressee to share in the subjective world of the represented figure, and see that world and subject position as their own. Such a process of identification is suggested in Benedict Anderson's famous chapter on national imagining available through the novel (1991, Chapter 2), especially where he speaks of the shift from a pre-national literary tradition to the nationalist one. Such historical changes to discursive practice are complex, but one important aspect are shifts in representing voicing contrasts that resonate across a wide domain. It was through the institutionalization of the news reportage that the voice of the child of labor migrants came to be available for adoption by mainstream public opinion.

To show this in greater detail, I would like to go over one article which came out in December 2003, during the period where public opinion about labor migrant children came to congeal. This article was remembered by Sivan, a prominent NGO advocate at the Hotline for Migrant Workers, as being particularly influential, and indeed the evidence suggests she is right. The article was playfully entitled, "Girl of Hope" (*yalda shel tikva*), in reference both to the neighborhood (called "*hatikva*") where the protagonist lived as well as to the journalist's adoption of the voice of the advocate.<sup>12</sup> Important for advocates, the article came out in a newspaper, *Maariv*, which is considered more mainstream than the venue of most other articles. The article focused on a girl of Ghanaian parents, named Galit, whose father had been arrested for the second time and was again facing deportation. The article clearly hit a nerve: a follow up piece was published in *Maariv* two weeks later commenting on the enormous outcry by the reading public and it included some of the letters that had been written in response.

"Girl of Hope" was also unique for receiving pre-publication coverage when Galit was interviewed on radio, and then that was followed up with a TV appearance where she directly confronted Poraz. Sivan recalled several times Galit's "*chutzpah*" with Poraz, asking him directly "why do you want to deport my father?" These confrontations occurred at the time that Poraz was attempting to gain approval for his proposals from other ministers, and when several reports had just been published that warned of the possible traumas children would undergo with deportation.

There are a number of unique aspects to the textual structure of the voice of the child in the article itself. Together with the response and timing, this rhetoric suggests what was happening more broadly as part of the public adoption of these children as Israeli. The 4000 word, in-depth article is framed as twenty-four hours to see the "private life" of Galit and her mother. The article portrays Galit as an irrepressible young Israeli girl, unrelenting in her desire to stay in Israel and have her father returned to her. Galit is described as Israeli in a variety of ways, starting with an opening portrait in a multi-ethnic school. At different times in the article, she is described humming pop songs, using slang, talking with gumption about police, participating in the Scouts, and watching popular Israeli TV programs. Galit also appears in a long series of

<sup>11</sup> Hilary Leila Krieger, "Foreign Worker Fears for Daughter's Fate," *The Jerusalem Post*, June 10th, 2004.

<sup>12</sup> Boaz Gaon, "Girl of Hope," *Maariv*, Weekend Supplement, December 26th, 2003, pp. 24–30 [Hebrew].

accompanying photographs, showing her in typical settings in the neighborhood, like at the school, the market, and the corner store. Such narrative segments worked like the appendices of the petition, suggesting Galit's domicile or center of life was fully Israeli.

On the other hand, there are other narrative segments that suggest persecution by the state. For example, the reporter and his cameraman, besides asking questions, are represented as arousing suspicion among other labor migrants. This suspicion helps the reporter to underscore the fear that pervades the daily life of labor migrants, how they hide at home to escape detection, and how any knock on the door creates panic. This description clearly set off in readers images of the historical persecution of Jews (see below). Finally, the article uses a stroll through the local market as a chance to portray the Jewish people, who are upset with the state but do nothing to help labor migrants like Galit and her mother.

Interestingly, the *Maariv* article deviates from the usual pattern of separately voicing the advocate. Here, the advocate is subsumed to the journalist's authorial voice. On the other hand, the journalist's authorial voice blends in obvious ways the voice of Galit, using voicing techniques that reach an almost novelistic complexity. Sivan, who clearly supplied much of the background to the story, is only quoted once directly, very briefly. In general, the journalist spends little time rehearsing the legal complexities of cases like Galit's, or even the stance of politicians. Instead he tells the story of Galit and her parents with biting satire, scoffing at the state which "loves to delude itself that it is a constitutional, philharmonic, western and democratic creation." He further sets up a dichotomy between a "warm Jewish heart" and "Israeli stone," as metaphors for national generosity towards the strangers: "They say that years ago beat in our chests a warm Jewish heart. Today, stuck in our chests is a basaltic black stone, Israeli and ossified." Using parodic voicing, he ridicules the demographic threat perceived by some in government, writing about a politician from the right-wing National Religious Party: "[he] wakes up bathed in sweat at night, buries his head in his wife's comforting underarm, in case the Jewish character of the state will suddenly dissolve under his feet because of nine-year-old girls." With these stylized voicings, the journalist condemns the demographic argument against granting citizenship to the children of labor migrants, and invites the reader to share in his aspersions.

In essence, the journalist thus produces great distance for his readers from the bureaucratic voice of the NRP politician, or of Elyakim Rubinstein, discussed above. At the same time, he uses an opposite technique to signal the full integration of Galit's voice to that of nation. In one passage, he cedes his voice as author to the childish, effusive voice of Galit, offering a figure for the supposed immediacy of Galit's appeal to the national public. In this passage and others like it, it becomes difficult to separate which formulations come from the journalist and which from Galit, and the quotation marks are only a partial help:

Galit grew up an Israeli in every way. About Ghana she knows nothing. On the Memorial Day for Fallen IDF Soldiers, she stands during the siren and reproaches her father for "not standing in memory of the soldiers who died defending Israel." She doesn't mix milk and meat because "it's not kosher," she goes to bed late on days when Dudu Topaz is on because she loves the show, she's never been to Ghana, doesn't want to be in Ghana and is scared of it. People there speak a funny and strange language, full of music and winks, that mom and dad sometimes talk (Galit speaks to them in English). Worse than that: there's witches, snakes and wild animals. Who wants to live there?

A sense of immediacy is achieved here through a combination of textual contrasts. First, the piece maintains the third person throughout, and quotation marks end after "it's not kosher." Yet the effusive style of the child continues beyond the quotation marks, helping to produce the textual effect where there is no contrast between the advocate and the child. Contrast for example the relatively more formal "About Ghana she knows nothing" in the second sentence to the more effusive "she's never been to Ghana, doesn't want to be in Ghana and is scared of it." (The reference to "snakes" and "wild animals" is situated later in the article in a direct quotation from Galit, where she answers a question about what she knows about Ghana.) This passage contains Galit's voice then, with its figuring of the movement from clear distinction in voices to one where the distinction fades, and thus helps to establish the sense that Galit speaks directly to the readers. An effect is produced that suggests that not even the journalist's authority is mediating her exuberance. The framing voice of the reporter is rhetorically overcome to represent the meeting of the national "we" with the little girl so much like "us," living just down the street.

In specific ways, the reader is positioned as the judge that must decide whether Galit and her family can stay. The journalist draws ominously on statements Galit makes about ending her life if they are judged for deportation. The judgment that is left for the reader then is one about the life and death of children and ultimately the nation's own spirit: exile Galit and you will repeat the persecution and death that has followed the Jews throughout history. To use the term that was coined not long after "Girl of Hope" was published, to deport Galit and the other children is to visit upon them a "cultural exile" (*haglaya tarbutit*) which is ultimately the reader's own cultural exile.

It clearly worked. The article helped canalize what was a building sentiment, as readers poured out their sympathy. According to NGO advocates, who kept a file with many of the replies, tens of readers contacted them and wrote letters directly to the Minister of Interior. Two weeks later some of these were published in the follow-up, where the journalist opened by stating that Galit—not him—had been able to "shake the Israeli conscience darkened from so much social injustice."<sup>13</sup> Two of the four replies printed, and several others that were not, made references to the Holocaust, drawing parallels to the sense of fear felt by Galit's family about each knock at the door. One reply was written by a survivor herself, who wrote that she saw in Galit's story her own search for a safe place to be a child in Poland. The survivor went on to say that she was willing to protect

<sup>13</sup> Boaz Gaon, "There's Still Hope," *Maariv*, Weekend Supplement, January 9th, 2003, p. 8 [Hebrew].

Galit herself. This reply in particular suggests the response of the grandparent generation that, as Don Handelman (2004, 111) argues, commonly represents the moral authority of the “founders and pioneers” of Israel.

In the context of the mass arrests by the new Immigration Authority, as well as increasing propaganda, articles like “Girl of Hope” and the other forms of publicity during that time helped congeal public opinion in favor of the non-citizen children of labor migrants. This public opinion continued to strengthen, and was even adopted publicly by three prime ministers, Ariel Sharon, Ehud Olmert, and Binyamin Netanyahu. All three passed resolutions enabling a pathway to citizenship, first in 2005 and 2006, and then when many younger children were left out, again in 2010.<sup>14</sup> Throughout, although the specific organizations driving the campaign changed, similar voicing techniques produced the diagrammatic icon so crucial to its success.

#### 4. Conclusion

For Hannah Arendt, famously, a political community is required to defend and thus substantiate any declaration of rights. Less remarked upon is her description of how the (Heideggerian) “world” of a political community forms: Arendt understood communication between citizens to center such worlds. While Arendt herself had very strict definition of transformative communication, the world that she described can be usefully analyzed as a “media world” (Ginsburg et al., 2002) in contemporary societies. Here, I have emphasized how a pragmatics of voicing in news coverage and an innovative legal file are essential to explaining the recognition of non-citizen children of labor migrants as potential citizens of Israel. The public emergence of the voice of the innocent, non-citizen child, and the framing voice of the advocate, along with the legal file to substantiate and rationalize those figures, helped to suture labor migrant children into Israeli political community. The close juxtaposition of these voices produced a constant diagrammatic icon throughout the media campaign. Indeed these workings of the Israeli media world point to how that recognition comes to appear as a result of a self-governing and rational public opinion. In this sense, I am suggesting that the complex interdiscursive processes of media messaging are a vital and underappreciated aspect of the contemporary biopolitics of citizenship.

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<sup>14</sup> For further discussion of the campaign leading up to the 2010 Resolution in particular, see Kfir and Kemp (2015) and Willen (2015).

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