

ZALEENA PANCHAM, NEPEAN

“One of the rights of being a Canadian citizen should be that your relatives can come for visits from other lands without being harrassed.”

“As a Guyanese who has immigrated to Canada, I couldn’t be happier with the treatment and opportunities that my family, relatives and I have received since moving here. With one exception. I feel that Immigration Canada has policies which are discriminatory against people from particular countries, especially Guyana.

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“Last November, my husband, daughter, and I were subjected to treatment at Ottawa Airport which I think should be unforgivable in a country like Canada. A cousin of mine, coming from Guyana for a three-week visit, was detained without communication for five hours, from 9.30 in the evening until 2.30 in the morning. During this entire period, we were forced to wait without any kind of explanation, and my cousin was held in isolation without food or drink.

“The problem as it turned out stemmed from the fact that he arrived here with only \$80, and that the invitation letter from me was signed “Sister Zaleena”. The reason for the little cash was that this is all that the Guyanese permits its nationals to take out of the country. And my cousin calls me “Sister Zaleena” because we are a very close family, and our particular relationship has been like that of older sister and younger brother.

“I was questioned at one point during our wait by a younger officer who asked a great deal of personal information about my family, our home, our community in Georgetown—all without informing me what the problem was with my cousin’s visit.

“We are citizens just like other Canadians—and Canadians come from many different countries. One of the rights of being a citizen should be that your relatives from other lands can visit here without being harrassed. If Canada has special policies for people from particular countries, they should at least make these clearly known. What transpired that evening

