The Intersectionality of Racism, Globalization, Climate Change, and Forced Migration

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THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF RACISM, GLOBALIZATION, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND FORCED MIGRATION

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper was to contextualize the intersectionality of racism, globalization, climate change, and forced immigration. The paper focuses on conversations from numerous organizations and individuals working to deal with the aforementioned challenges. In addition to highlighting the challenges faced by many immigrants, or would-be immigrants, the paper pinpoints approaches being adopted by community organizations and social movements to end persecution and forced migration. The recommendations put forth by the stakeholders who are engaged in addressing these issues relate to the need for building a policy-relevant agenda and strategy for solving the relevant challenges. Thus, leading to a positive and lasting change in the relevant space.
Keywords: Racism, Globalization, Climate Change, Forced Migration

Introduction

Agricultural Missions, Inc. (AMI) was formed in 1934 for the specific purposes of supporting rural peoples in their struggles to achieve justice, better lives, and healthier communities. AMI aims to educate its North American constituency and the general public on issues of importance to rural peoples in the United States and other countries. Each year, AMI hosts study sessions to provide education and information that affect the global rural community for action and advocacy on economic justice, food security, and the environment. AMI uses this opportunity to provide training for support on vital concerns to rural communities and peoples in general. The purpose of AMI's 2019 Study Session was to contextualize the impact of racism, globalization, and climate change under the current humanitarian and immigration crisis. The main objective for the study session included developing practical solutions that encourage building strategies and engagement across borders. AMI proposed identifying issues that require a holistic approach, ultimately strengthening activists' collective work and socio-political movements.

In light of the current humanitarian crisis, AMI decided to publish its session proceedings to inspire organizations to develop a shared understanding surrounding the impact of forced migration due to climate change, racism, and globalization in general. Climate justice includes accepting positions that require eliminating borders to support refugees, mitigate struggle, and respect cultural and racial differences. Usually, structural barriers help sustain a system afflicted with violence and inhumanity toward refugees. This paper discusses the problems inherent in immigration laws that prosecute victims of violence, persecution, and climate change. The latter phenomena lead to forced migration. In addition to identifying and analyzing the problems associated with the intersectionality of globalization, racism, climate change, and forced migration,

it highlights some of the organizations on the front lines of the struggle and their efforts to solve those problems in both a just and humanitarian way. Some of these organizations are the Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project and Movimiento Puente. The actions put forth by these organizations that are engaged in this critical struggle, seek to build a policy-relevant agenda and strategy to address the above issues. Ultimately, this paper encompasses dialogue from activists, researchers, academics, and nonprofit organizations seeking to create positive and lasting change in the intersection of race, globalization, climate change, and migration. The rest of the paper is discussed as follows: problems, approaches, and conclusion.

Problems

Climate Justice Means No Borders

The session titled "Climate Justice Means No Borders" featured Sarra Tekola's work on climate change and colonialism. Climate justice work often focuses on the impact that climate change has on those who contribute the least greenhouse gases. Still, climate change is not usually stated directly as a legacy of colonialism (Sealey-Huggins, 2017). Colonialism encompasses the era in which Western White countries penetrated the Global South and took resources, labor, and land, perpetuating unequal exchange on a global scale (Bulhan, 2015; Mignolo, 2011). Development for Western governments would have been impossible without usurping other countries' resources (Gilio-Whitaker, 2019). Indeed, the West developed during the Industrial Revolution, and this required a surplus of labor and agricultural resources. Western countries ultimately generated surplus from colonies, a process Marx describes as "primitive accumulation" (Marx, 2013;1867). Also, the Industrial Revolution caused carbon dioxide levels to rise, initiating the connection between climate change and colonialism (Andres et al., 1999; Gilio-Whitaker, 2019; Hornborg, 2015). This connection begins with the theft of resources, land, and people, a process that continues today, furthering global inequality and demanding climate justice solutions (Banerjee and Linstead, 2001; Harvey, 2003; Jorgenson, 2006).

Western nations consume at a rate more extensive than the Earth's capacity. For instance, it is believed that in the near future, at the rate at which Americans are consuming, there will not be enough resources in the world for everyone to consume (Brand, 2012; Meadows et al., 1972; Steffen et al., 2015; Warlenius, 2016). In fact, several studies reflect the notion that Western nations rely on and ultimately require a Third World for them to reign as the First World (Geisinger, 1999; Jorgenson, 2006; Siddiqui and Girdner 2008). In this regard, the call for climate justice must address the harms of the hegemonic Eurocentric colonial empire that is the West (Grosfoguel, 2015). Part of those harms includes creating false borders that deny the social or ecological relevance of Indigenous peoples experiencing a more nomadic and mutualistic relationship with the land rather than the West's current parasitic and exploitative relationship (Burman, 2017; Miller, 2017; Walia, 2013). For these reasons, climate justice must include the removal of colonial borders.

As climate change worsens from the West's inaction (Waugh, 2011), ecological collapse and resource scarcity become increasingly common (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2018). Now the same peoples colonized by Western nations are being starved to death by the West via climate change droughts, eventually increasing the likelihood of civil war due to government breakdowns (Gonzalez, 2021; Roberts and Parks, 2009). According to a National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) study, the possibility of civil violence will increase by

about 11% per degree Celsius of warming (Burke et al., 2015). Climate refugees attempting to flee famine and conflict suffer even further from the lack of protection granted by the United Nations (Berchin et al., 2017). Climate justice must address massive, forced migration that is inevitable due to climate change (Gonzalez, 2021). The West is responsible for this imminent collapse (Hornborg, 2015), and has a responsibility to open its borders (Walia, 2013) to immigrants.

Storming the Wall: Climate Change, Migration, and Homeland Security
This session focused on Todd Miller's 2017 book, *Storming the Wall,* and his investigation of the intersection of borders, displacement, and climate change as a global phenomenon. The session explored the impact and experiences of climate change and displacement by individuals forced to migrate across international borders. It focused on migrants' challenges due to political behavior in the climate change arena. Issues faced by climate refugees are only going to increase with the warming of the globe. For instance, a dry corridor in Central America plagued approximately 400,000 people in Honduras, a condition that has continued for at least 10 years. More than 2 million people were in peril in the last two years due to climate change in this dry corridor alone.

Agricultural Missions, Inc.'s (AMI's) 2019 Study Session centered on how the U.S. Department of Homeland Security pressured Mexico and sent resources to train and assist the Mexican military with policing its border. Over the last 25 years, since the Clinton administration in the mid-1990s, the United States invested untold amounts of money into physical barriers, technology, and agents. These investments increased throughout the Obama administration, which continued to build borders, construct detention centers, and increase deportations. Additionally, the Trump administration persisted with the highest levels of enforcement yet.

The Department of Defense and Department of Homeland Security are taking climate change into account with climate adaptation plans and are paying close attention to the future displacement that climate change will cause. Instead of seeing mass migration as a global problem and giving humanitarian aid and status in the United States, they choose to continue building border apparatuses. The Global North's border regime, for the most part, refuses to recognize climate change as a primary factor in the ever-increasing forced migration. The 2003 Pentagon Commission Report described the worst-case scenario for climate change when it concluded that the United States has enough resources to take the climate shocks (Schwartz and Randall, 2003). However, countries in Latin America and the Caribbean will be severely affected, causing some of their citizens to attempt entering the United States, which will in turn prompt the United States to build defensive fortresses to stop unwanted refugees entering the United States (Schwartz and Randall, 2003; Miller, 2017).

Detention Centers
Rape, murder, and other forms of extreme violence are among the experiences of those in detention centers. The United States immigration policies since 1996 are representative of a criminal approach for many people who, for the most part, are merely seeking a better quality of life. Consider the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act, which charged civil penalties for noncitizens and other stringent legislation reflective of xenophobic responses to non-White immigrants (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2019). The criminalization of illegal entry varies under different administrations. Still, illegal entry has increased since 1996 and, as of 2016, accounted for 52% of federal criminal prosecutions detrimentally impacting people of color,

mainly from Latin America (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2019, p. 19). Furthermore, the zero-tolerance policy implemented by the U.S. Border Patrol and by the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) in 2018 established norms of separating children from families and caging them in detention facilities similar to those used for detaining adults (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2019, pp. 23-25).

Studies show that the prison-like detention model is slowly becoming the norm (Ackerman and Furman, 2013). Private corporations such as CoreCivic and the Management and Training Corporation (MTC) specialize in the idea of providing top-notch "corrections" businesses, ultimately appealing to the correctional nature of prisons for detention centers (Gilman and Romero, 2018, p. 6). For instance, electronic ankle monitors are secured in contracts between federal immigration agencies and private prisons to track released migrants, further perpetuating a prison-like culture for immigration (Gilman and Romero, 2018, p. 7). In this regard, the United States upholds a for-profit incarceration agenda that allows corporations to receive taxpayers' dollars and exploit the labor of immigrants housed in detention centers. In particular cases, migrants themselves perform some of the work required to maintain prison operations (Gilman and Romero, 2018, p. 2).

Criticisms from the public and government officials pinpointing the homogeneity between immigration detention and criminal incarceration inspired the transition to standardized risk classification assessment (RCA). The RCA requires ICE officers to conduct interviews and observations first to identify any "special vulnerability," then evaluate mandatory detention before using a criminal history database to score the person's risk level to public safety (Evans and Koulish, 2020, p. 14). ICE officers perform a flight risk assessment to combine with other risk factors that determine recommendations based on the following categories: "release, supervisor to determine, detain-eligible for bond, or detain in the custody of DHS" (Evans and Koulish, 2020, p. 14). The idea is that the RCA would enable low-risk migrants to be free from treatment similar to that of incarcerated individuals. However, Evans and Koulish (2020) show that the RCA method was compromised from the beginning and ultimately manipulated over time based on enforcement choices rather than the risk of flight or public safety, thereby creating unconstitutional detention and failed policy achievement (p. 5). Since 2012, there have been numerous punitive changes to the scoring rubric, yet the RCA has been the primary tool for ICE recommendations on detainment or release for migrants. As a result of racially biased enforcement choices, countless migrants experience unlawful punishment that exacerbates immigration detention's terror.

Approaches
The Florence Immigration and Refugee Rights Project
The arrival and apprehension of families and unaccompanied minors at the border between the United States and Mexico continue to be critical issues for those working to solve forced migration challenges. Poverty, land evictions, forced labor, child abuse, targeted gang violence, and climate change are a few reasons refugees seek asylum or migrate elsewhere. Unfortunately, asylum seekers face difficulty in fleeing adverse circumstances due to weak asylum laws and individual countries' inadequate capacity to properly satisfy U.S. application status requirements. New rules and policies compound asylum seekers' conditions to remain in border towns plagued with violence and trafficking. For instance, the U.S. Third-Country Transit ban, effective July 16, 2019, denies asylum to refugees who transited through a third country without applying for protection

from persecution in at least one third country en route to the United States' southern border. Federal judge Timothy Kelly in Washington, D.C., struck down the third-country transit rule in July 2020, claiming the Trump administration failed to abide by the notice-and-comment procedures under the Administrative Procedure Act (APA) (Capital Area Immigrants' Rights Coalition, 2020). To address increases in asylum requests, the Trump administration instituted the metering policy, which dictates the amount of time asylum seekers must remain in Mexico before asylum procedures begin. This process could usually take from six weeks to three months, jeopardizing asylum seekers' safety and well-being. However, federal or state regulation governing the numerical limitation of asylum seekers at designated ports of entry is nonexistent (Smith, 2019).

During the 1980s, numerous immigrants fleeing violence and persecution in Central America crossed the Mexico-Arizona border, eventually acquiring the need to birth the Florence Project as a defender of those suffering without a lawyer's help. The Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project diligently assists those impacted by the "crimmigration" system in the United States to direct change. Crimmigration reflects experiences by individuals who seek a better quality of life but are instead inflicted with senseless incarceration probes because of the intersection between criminal and immigration law (Stumpf, 2006). Primarily helping those in Arizona, the Florence Project provides free legal and social services to detained children and adults for immigration removal proceedings.

The Florence Project functions as a nonprofit legal service organization offering high-quality representation and mental health assistance through its Integrated Social Service Program, established in 2002 to target crisis intervention, trauma, and other underlying social issues impacting immigrants. In addition to providing pro bono representation and a holistic approach to mental health, the Florence Project engages beneficial advocacy and outreach initiatives. The lack of resources and infrastructure to support refugees inspires the work of the Florence Project. At least 7,000 or more people are detained in immigration custody each day in the state of Arizona, leaving men, women, and children vulnerable to unjust laws (Florence Immigrant and Refugee Rights Project, 2021). Due to immigrants' inability to receive free legal assistance except if found mentally unable to represent themselves, the Florence Project provides lawyers and social workers. Social workers and attorneys address complex cases and receive training on mechanisms to deal with patients who have experienced trauma and others with extenuating circumstances.

Movimiento Puente/Puente Human Rights Movement
In 1994, the United States passed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). It led to Operation Gatekeeper's development, specifically designed to keep out displaced Mexican workers due to NAFTA and its known detrimental impact on Mexico's economy. Structural changes at the border perpetuated "femicides" – retaliatory killings, torture, rape, and kidnapping of women (Arriola and Raymond, 2017, p. 15). Mexico and the United States also experienced increased trafficking of drugs; trafficking that fuels the United States' interest in militarizing police through legal policy changes due to the "War on Drugs" (Arriola and Raymond, 2017, p. 15). The expansion of the neoliberal agenda has fostered those same changes post-NAFTA in the Central American region, where mass migrations are more frequent due to social disorder and economic decline (Arriola and Raymond, 2017).

Arizona was the epicenter of tension around immigration to the United States. For instance, xenophobic politicians like former Sheriff Joe Arpaio of Maricopa County led the nation to target and violate immigrants' rights (Campbell, 2011). In 1996, Arizona policymakers linked driver's licenses to birth certificates, so undocumented immigrants could not legally drive. In 2002, the promotion of English-only policies dominated Arizona schools. Prop 200 passed in 2004, making it impossible for undocumented immigrants to receive public benefits. Eventually, in 2006, Props 300, 100, and 102 passed to remove immigrants' rights (Campbell, 2011). In 2007, the Arizona government enacted the 287(G) program, part of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 (American Immigration Council, 2020). This allowed state and local police officers to collaborate with the Department of Homeland Security to ensure that local law enforcement performs federal immigration agents' functions. With immigration power granted to local police, Sheriff Joe Arpaio wasted no time in starting raids rounding up immigrants and racially profiling Latino people by asking for their papers. In 2008, employer sanctions were passed, which made it harder for undocumented immigrants to get jobs. In 2010, with the passage of SB1070, the most racist immigration law in the country, only those outside of Arizona were surprised (Campbell, 2011).

Ultimately, the Movimiento Puente/Puente Human Rights Movement, a grassroots organization, emerged in response to the human rights violations against immigrants due to Arizona's anti-immigrant policies and practices. The Movimiento Puente formed both to educate immigrants regarding their rights and defend immigrants by protesting and organizing against the onslaught of anti-immigrant policies. Puente began by teaching people their rights, eventually establishing trust in the community due to its consistency in organizing movements. The movement empowered immigrant and undocumented communities to come out of the shadows and advocate for their rights. Puente has organized for over a decade, won many victories, and even helped change Arizona's political landscape. Puente played a massive role in turning Arizona blue in the 2020 presidential election. In addition, the organization led a noncompliance campaign against SB1070 and launched a campaign that eventually shut down Pinal County Jail, an immigrant detention center. Puente led the removal of Sheriff Joe Arpaio after 19 years in office and successfully opened a class action suit against the Phoenix Police Department for its excessive use of force against activists at a Trump protest rally.

Building a Policy-Relevant Agenda for Tackling Issues Around Climate Migration
The lack of international protection granted to climate migrants reinforces the need to develop a compact for a shared understanding of migration's shared responsibilities. Through the United Nations Charter and mirroring the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, states have committed to objectives that guide evidence-based policymaking, monitoring, evaluating, and implementing a comprehensive strategy for improving migration (McAdam, 2019). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR] (n.d.) reports that 79.5 million individuals in 2019 experienced forced displacement due to various human rights violations. According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Center [IDMC] (2020), at least 23.9 million people experienced weather-related movements, such as landslides, droughts, storms, floods, typhoons, wildfires, and extreme temperatures.

Despite the lack of effort from those unwilling to accept climate change impacts, these challenges will not subside without the institution of intentional policies and strategic actions. Vulnerable

populations plagued with displacement due to the increased severity of extreme weather conditions are not considered in the detailed refugee status as defined by the 1951 Refugee Convention. Governments drafted the 1951 Convention to protect individuals fleeing persecution within Europe before January 1, 1951. The 1967 protocol omitted these limitations, ultimately leading to a universal approach. Even still, the definition of a refugee has not changed since its origination post-World War II to include individuals impacted by natural environmental causes that jeopardize the quality of life for vulnerable populations.

Environmental change and disasters can result in scarcity of resources like freshwater, food, and adequate shelter. Food insecurity tends to arise or increase in populations who are unable to cope and who surrender to displacement as a survival tactic (International Displacement Monitoring Center [IDMC], 2018). In this regard, migration signifies an adaptation mechanism to climate change and environmental degradation. IDMC highlights overwhelming slow-onset events that transition into rapid-onset events limit, and erode communities' and ecosystems' capacity to help populations withstand displacement (IDMC, 2018, p. 2). The Global Report on Internal Displacement (IDMC, 2020) proclaims that children under 15 represent 18.3 million internally displaced peoples (IDPs) and that 3.7 million IDPs are over 60 years old. From droughts and floods in Afghanistan to cyclones in Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe to devastating hurricanes in the Bahamas, around 1,900 disasters generated multitudes of displacement across at least 140 countries or territories in 2019 (IDMC, 2020, p. 4). In the end, intense circumstances as a result of climate change alter the lives of numerous communities.

Researchers' and policymakers' views remain contested as they pertain to the orchestration of effective policies and strategies that adequately address displaced communities' hardships and experiences. Organizations such as UNCHR shy away from coining climate migrants as "climate refugees." UNCHR claims that confusion arises from conflating the terms "climate" and "refugee" because a "climate refugee" does not exist in international law and because climate migrants are typically plagued by internal displacement before engaging in cross-border movement (UNCHR, 2020). Ionesco (2019), the head of the Migration Environment and Climate Change (MECC) Division at the International Organization for Migration (IOM), suggests that denoting the status of climate migrants to "climate refugees" overshadows the need to develop preventative measures and migration management policies like the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. The Global Compact recognizes the differences in legal frameworks that make the experiences of migrants and refugees distinct.

Relatedly, a strategic goal for AMI includes introducing an educational curriculum regarding challenges many forced migrants face as they try to integrate into countries. AMI believes that general messaging surrounding climate change's impact on forced migration is a strategic mechanism needed to improve awareness and increase civic participation and other support. Whether vulnerable populations are facing cross-country migration or in-country displacement, general messaging explaining people's dangerous circumstances as well as what caused them is critical. Also, establishing partnerships among networks and organizations is essential to gathering data from the grassroots level. These data could be used to influence and develop policies that would eliminate climate change's negative impact.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion on the intersectionality of racism, globalization, climate change, and forced migration based on conversations from numerous organizations and individuals (stakeholders) working to solve these related problems. The expected outcome of the discussion was to develop an easy-to-understand report and paper by embracing the message of those who are on the ground doing the work and those who are suffering from state-sanctioned inhumane laws and activities. The problems discussed throughout this paper highlight the need for countries to actively create alternatives for vulnerable communities. AMI focuses on helping marginalized communities whose voices are drowned out by those willing to uphold profits and greed over justice and humanity. A complete dismantling of structures that disregard the plight of communities plagued with climate disasters, food insecurity, racism, and xenophobic practices is the best outcome for rural and global sustainability.

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