

THE SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF FORCED MIGRATION

A Multi-Media Educational Tool

Summer 2020

What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Forced Migration?

Target audience: Advanced and lifelong learners

Keywords: belonging, borders and borderlands, home, refugee

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Even when our public discourse meets the bare minimum standard for avoiding overt xenophobia, forced migration is not always what we think. What is [visible about forced migration and those who experience it](#) is not always the full picture. Many of us still tend to think in the categories of “lawful” and “unlawful” movement, without asking why certain behaviors are considered unlawful — and if they should remain so. Furthermore, beyond the narrow canonical definition of what makes someone a refugee (generally fleeing war or genocide) families and individuals can be forced from their homes for any number of reasons.

The books, articles, and film below — some produced by people who’ve experienced displacement themselves — discuss a selection of these scenarios, following families evicted from their homes, people sold into slavery, or experiencing confrontations at and with national borders, communities fleeing warming seas and rising tides, and rejecting the power of the citizen/non-citizen binary, and more. This collection is transnational, with an accent on the U.S.A., but is not possible to account for all the aspects of worldwide forced migration in a list of sources as short as this one. Instead, consider this a re-introduction to the topic — one that forces us to question the staid, flattening accounts of “deserving” and “undeserving” immigrants, in order to have a more nuanced conversation on movement, belonging, and the political demands of people who have experienced displacement.

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ON BORDERS: CROSSING THEM, AND WHO GETS TO DESCRIBE THEM

Gloria Anzaldúa, [*Borderlands /La Frontera: The New Mestiza* \(1999\)](#)

Achille Mbembe, [“Scrap the Borders That Divide Africans,” *The Mail & Guardian* \(blog\), March 17, 2017](#)

Suketu Mehta, [“Opinion – Why Should Immigrants ‘Respect Our Borders’? The West Never Respected Theirs.” *The New York Times*, June 7, 2019](#)

Saúl A, [“Documenting the Undocumented: How the US-Mexico Border Shaped My Mother’s Life,” *Media Diversified*, June 21, 2018](#)

My Escape/Meine Flucht: [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) (2016), produced by Elke Sasse

Noted theorists and activists Gloria Anzaldúa and Achille Mbembe weigh in on borders – both physical and internalized – while distinguished author Suketu Mehta provides a sharp critique of common assumptions about borders and migration in the U.S.A. Finally, then-undergraduate student Saúl A. assembles a multimedia, personal-political account of borders, family, trauma, and hope, and Elke Sasse collects footage shot by refugees crossing into Europe from Syria, Afghanistan, and Eritrea.

ON MONEY: TWO “NON-STANDARD” INTERPRETATIONS OF WHAT FORCED MIGRATION CAN LOOK LIKE AND HOW TO ADDRESS THE PROFIT MOTIVES THAT FUEL IT

Aryn Baker, [“The Best Way to End Modern Slavery? Enable Legal Migration,” *Time*, December 2, 2019](#)

Matthew Desmond, [*Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* \(2016\)](#)

- See also University of Richmond Digital Scholarship Lab, [“Renewing Inequality: Urban Renewal, Family Displacements, and Race 1955-1966,” American Panorama.](#)

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American journalist Aryn Baker and American sociologist Matthew Desmond offer incisive analyses of the slow-building, deeply entrenched crises of evictions and what is known as “the new slavery,” tracing the webs of money and profit that tie together labor markets, rental income, and forced movement. The “Renewing Inequality” project maps displacements of families, primarily of color, by “urban renewal” development projects in the mid-twentieth century.

ON “DESERVINGNESS:” THE WORDS WE USE AND THE JUDGMENTS THEY
CARRY

Dina Nayeri, [“The Ungrateful Refugee,”](#) *The Guardian*, April 4, 2017

Steine Ravn, Riilke Mahieu Milena Belloni, and Christiane Timmerman, [“Shaping the ‘Deserving Refugee:’ Insights from a Local Reception Programme in Belgium,”](#) In *Geographies of Asylum in Europe and the Role of European Localities*, edited by Birgit Glorius and Jeroen Doomernik, 2019

Carol Farbotko and Heather Lazrus, [“The First Climate Refugees? Contesting Global Narratives of Climate Change in Tuvalu,”](#) *Global Environmental Change* (May 2012)

Dina Nayeri and Steine Ravn et al approach the expectation of gratitude placed on resettled refugees and migrants — Nayeri from personal experience and literature, and Ravn et al from European policy — and take to task the “othering” that happens in subtle ways to people newly arrived in Western societies. Academics Carol Farbotko and Heather Lazrus examine how Western categories of mobility (“refugee,” “migrant,” “climate refugee,” etc.) are projected onto people facing steep challenges like climate change in other cultural and political contexts, and illuminate some of what is missing from policy conversations.

ON BELONGING: LOSING AND GAINING HOMES, AND MAKING POLITICAL
DEMANDS

Riham Alkousaa, [“Returning to Nowhere,”](#) *The Point Magazine*, June 12, 2020

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Jose Antonio Vargas, *Dear America: Notes of an Undocumented Citizen* (2018)

Rachel Aviv, "The Cost of Caring: The Lives of the Immigrant Women Who Tend to the Needs of Others," *The New Yorker*, April 4, 2016

Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*, (2010)

Viet Thanh Nguyen, ed, *The Displaced : Refugee Writers on Refugee Lives* (2018)

Luis Fernández and Joel Olson, "To Live, Love and Work Anywhere You Please," *Contemporary Political Theory* (August 2011)

Syrian journalist and graduate student Riham Alkousaa offers a searching reflection on what a "homeland" can look like, and where (or who) it can be, while journalist Jose Antonio Vargas chronicles his life as an undocumented person in the U.S.A. alongside a history of American immigration policy. Journalists Rachel Aviv and Rachel Wilkerson focus on individual human stories of transition from one place to another, and how Filipina care workers and Black Americans moving northward in the 20th century experienced the trials of losing one home and building new ones. Lastly, author and academic Viet Thanh Nguyen assembles a standout group of refugee writers to define and reflect on "refugee lives" as they live and understand them, and theorists and activists Luis Fernández and Joel Olson argue for a way of understanding belonging apart from citizenship.