Age of Displacement

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ABSTRACT

This research analyzes the global trend of displacement of two groups that face the most of this mass displacement: the unhoused and refugees. There are parallel causes to their displacement and their treatment in society. Both are subject to laws that prohibit their movement and are effectively denied their dignity tied to the right to housing under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality". This research paper is divided into three key parts:

(1) I identify the ultimate causes of their displacement, which are neoliberal globalization, wars, conflicts, and social violence, the social exclusion, climate crises both groups experience, and provide evidence of similarities. (2) I provide evidence of the ways in which both groups have been historically criminalized and are comprised of vulnerable populations that are often disproportionately denied access to housing.

(3) Concluding, I provide three solutions that would end the displacement of both groups are presented. The solutions I present are creating housing for all, ending carceral practices, and addressing the exploitative economies.

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

At the end of 2019, 79.5 million people (about twice the population of California) were forcibly displaced, globally (UNHCR 2020). Refugees often end up living in neighboring host countries facing urban destitution, in camps relying on infrequent aid from NGOs, or forced to make dangerous journeys to global North countries to seek asylum and even then, refuge is not a guarantee. They face detention, deportation, and xenophobic policies restricting their movement. In his book, *Migrating to Prison*, Garcia Hernandez reports the increased rates of detention and deterrence strategies that migrants face attempting to immigrate into the U.S., "from 1892 to 1984, federal immigration officials formally barred from the United States 633,918 people..." (Cuauhtémoc & Hernández, 2019). Within the global North, across the U.S. and Europe, the instance of houselessness, housing insecurity, and poverty is equally disturbing. The National Alliance to End Homelessness highlights the overall rate of homelessness in the U.S during 2019, which was 567,715-this includes families, individuals, chronically unhoused people, veterans, and unaccompanied youth (State of Homelessness, 2020). Why is this mass displacement happening today?

Displacement is a global condition, be it in the global North in the staggering instance of houselessness and housing insecurity or in the outflows of refugees from the global South. This fact often goes unnoticed because society does not see the displacement of unhoused people and refugees because of this global condition. Collective consensus often reflects this notion with referring to the global condition of displacement as the "homeless crisis" or the "refugee crisis." These are not separate issues because their displacement looks different, but they are parallel situations produced by the same factors.

This parallel is also noted in the definition of "homelessness" under international organizations that account for the various forms of displacement that refugees and unhoused people experience, "persons living in the streets, in open spaces or cars; persons living in temporary emergency accommodation, in women's shelters, in camps or other temporary accommodation provided to internally displaced persons, refugees or migrants; and persons living in severely inadequate and insecure housing, such as residents of informal settlements" (OHCHR Homelessness and Human Rights, 2016). This definition provides a closer look at the underlying causes of displacement; what are the deeper causes of this displacement? Poverty, violence, and/or disaster. Unhoused people and refugees are forced from their homes for similar reasons and the way they play out are also parallel.

PROPOSED SOLUTION/RECOMMENDATIONS

Housing First
A housing first approach can be used to efficiently triage refugees fleeing disaster, political persecution, economic deprivation, and violence. Refugees that resettle into either the global North or South should have the option of Temporary Protected Status with a pathway to citizenship or citizenship upon processing of an asylum claim, which could be contingent upon collaboration between nations in peace negotiations, disaster relief, and reconstruction efforts with the direct involvement of refugees in these processes. Refugees trying to reunite with family in a country, acclimation efforts need to be conducted by social workers assisting refugees in reuniting with their families, attaining housing, and/or employment. Unhoused people would benefit from this approach because it would effectively eliminate barriers to accessing housing, such as criminal records and poor credit. As well as making housing available to people fleeing domestic violence and including input from unhoused populations in rebuilding in disaster relief efforts.

Ending Carceral Practices
Ending carceral practices means re-imaging better and humane alternatives to detention centers, prisons, offshoring, criminalizing policies, and deportations. In her essay, Carceral Humanitarianism, Kelly Oliver challenges carceral language and actions, rescue politics, and provides a more collective based ethic surrounding refugees, "Rather than a rescue politics that requires perilous escape and lifeboat scenarios, we consider our ethical obligations beyond national borders and beyond mere physical proximity (Oliver, 2017). Creating community-based organizations involving both the unhoused and refugees in their relocation would ensure that the efforts to end these carceral practices benefit populations at large and establishing necessary infrastructure to respond to conflict and disaster. In addition to ending carceral practices, there must be an implementation of strong social safety nets such as a universal basic income, publicized health care, accessible education, safe and adequate housing.

Addressing Exploitative Economy
Neoliberal globalization has fueled the proposed necessity of austerity (cuts to and the privatization of state public services, such as public utilities, education, healthcare, to social welfare, public space, and other services) in the global North and exploitation, extraction, and expropriation of labor and resources in the global South. The reliance on this exploitative economy approach leads to the criminalization and restrictive policies, neoliberal globalization, wars, conflicts, and social violence, the social exclusion, and environmental & climate crises that gives way to forced migration and houselessness. This dependency on the market has also eroded nation's ability to form meaningful partnerships that would be beneficial to its displaced citizens in times of disaster or conflict. If these partnerships were formed between and within the global North and South, then it would create a community focused on care, at the global level. When established, cooperative relationships between nations could be used to eliminate the exploitative financial programs and focus on mutual commerce through localized economies, eliminate the social and economic exclusion that refugees and unhoused people face, and creating collaborative action for resolving conflict, disaster relief, and rebuilding.

METHOD(S)

This research project was a part of a research component of a international relations class with a focus on border studies, called *Refugees, Migrants, Borders, & Walls*. While trying to figure out my research topic, I was drawn to the class discussion on the effects of neoliberal globalization on both the global south and global north.

I wanted to write about how unhoused people and refugees are similar, so I asked myself three questions (Are there parallels between unhoused/housing insecure people and those forced to migrate? Why is this displacement happening (ultimate causes)? What are some solutions to these ultimate causes?) and if I could answer and back up my responses with evidence, then I could write my research project on the topic.

I was inspired by sociologist Saskia Sassen's book, *Expulsions*: *Brutality & Complexity in the Global Economy*, in which Sassen argues income inequality, displaced and imprisoned populations, destruction of land and water, and today's dislocations cannot be understood in the usual terms of poverty and injustice-they should be called expulsions from "professional livelihood, from living space, from the very biosphere that makes life possible". Other text used in my research are from independently researched articles and assigned class materials.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is my hope that this project is conducive in inspiring a shift in the vitriolic narrative that refugees and unhoused people face from elected officials and the general public. In the U.S., I think the national conversation we have about the most vulnerable among us lacks a key component: empathy.

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CONCLUSIONS

There is a global condition of displacement in the global north and the global south. The displacement of the unhoused and refugees are not seen as a deeper issue and collective consensus clouds this fact by referring to the global condition of displacement as disparate societal issues, such as the "homeless crisis" or the "refugee crisis." These issues are not separate because their displacement looks different, but they are parallel situations produced by the same underlying factors.