



Compassionate Migration and Regional Policy in the Americas

Steven W. Bender and William F. Arrocha (2017), 300 Pages, Palgrave
Macmillan, London
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Abstract

Steven W. Bender and William F. Arrocha's "Compassionate Migration and Regional Policy in the Americas" is timely and strategically situated to withstand the current chaos, crisis and challenge of global migration concerns, especially within the Americas. The edited volume comprises 19 courageous and thought-provoking chapters, examining policy issues around "exclusionary framework," "power of exclusion," "visibility and invisibility of undocumented migrants," "nightmare of U.S. deportations," and "care ethics" (to name a few). Even though the concept and precision of compassionate migration seems vague and undefined, this book provides a meaningful contextual boundary to draw upon. That "compassionate migrations" embodies the core of our existence as we move from one place to another, in search of food, water, safety and survival, indeed, the essence of life. In times like these, where the Trump government's negative migration sentiments and austerity measures flood the media; xenophobia, hate crime and hate speech against immigrants spew across Europe; and Australia's incessant violation of international refugee law persists with off-shore detention of refugees and migrants; Bender's and Arrocha's book is an honest invitation to embrace humane, moral and dignified migration.

Keywords

Compassionate migration, deportation, displaced migrants, the Americas, immigration policy, law

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Steven W. Bender's and William F. Arrocha's "Compassionate Migration and Regional Policy in the Americas" is a timely piece that is strategically situated to withstand the current chaos, crisis and challenge of global migration concerns, especially within the Americas. Precisely, in times like these, where the Trump government's negative migration sentiments and austerity measures flood the media; xenophobia, hate crime and hate speech against immigrants spew across Europe; and Australia's incessant violation of international refugee law persists with off-shore detention of refugees and displaced migrants; Bender's and Arrocha's book is an honest invitation to embrace humane, moral and dignified migration. The edited volume comprises 19 courageous and thought-provoking chapters, examining policy issues around "exclusionary framework" (p17), "power of exclusion" (p21), "visibility and invisibility of undocumented migrants" (p143) "nightmare of U.S. deportations" (p129) and "care ethics" (p237) (to name a few).

In chapter one, Bender and Arrocha introduce the book by painting a bleak, sad and disheartening picture of migrant experiences in diverse forms and shapes. The death toll of migrants surpassed 300 deaths in 2016, the majority of which occurred at the US-Mexico border. Survivors of the treacherous journey are relegated to "3D" ("Dirty, Dangerous, and Demeaning") jobs (p2), as they are humiliated, denigrated and criminalised in Trump America. Titled "So Far From Compassion: The U.S.-Centric and Exclusionary Framework of Current and Past Immigration Policy", chapter two, a three page summary of chapters 1-6 written by Bender, critiques the U.S.' "comprehensive immigration reform" (p24). It is argued that the policy is anything but "comprehensive", with Bender asserting that border fortification, internal enforcement and deportation based on protectionism and restriction are not features of a compassionate policy. In chapter three, "The Power of Exclusion: Congress, Courts, and the Plenary Power", Victor C. Romero cites his personal experience of being an international student when he examines the constitutional protection of non-citizens in the U.S. based on compassion.

Karla McKander's chapter four, "The Subnational Response: Local Intervention in Immigration Policy and Enforcement", emphasises the inability of the U.S. Congress to enact comprehensive immigration policy in the face of increasing numbers of forcibly displaced migrants from the Northern Triangle. The crux of chapter five, "Federal Regulatory Policymaking and Enforcement of Immigration Law", by Bill Ong Hing, is the examination of the U.S. Congress's plenary power to use race, gender, sexual preference and speech as a basis for exclusion in immigration legislation. Notwithstanding, the executive can, with use of its discretionary powers, enforce immigration laws comparable to that of Congress's plenary power. Titled "Short-Hoeing the Long Row of Bondage: From Braceros to Compassionate Farm Worker Migration", Gilbert Paul Carrasco's chapter six examines the history of systematic human rights abuses and various legislative proposals aimed at reducing such abuses.

In chapter seven, Arrocha summarises the next section of the book, which deals with the challenge of forcibly displaced migrants caught between the failed "war on drugs" (p91) and criminal networks desperate for "markets" (p91), by identifying institutional failures to protect unauthorised migrants. Arrocha's chapter eight, "The Need for a Compassionate Migration Regime for North and Central America: Restoring and Extending Universal Human Rights to Migrant Workers, Their Families, and 'Survival Migrants'", laments the thousands

of human rights abuses and unnecessary migrant deaths at the U.S., Mexico and Central American border, which come mainly as a result of securitizing migration. Since such measures do not address the structural concerns of mixed migration, the result is more violence and the criminalisation of irregular migrants, many of whom are forced to leave homes. Examining the *International Convention on the Protection of Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families* 1990, Raquel Aldana's chapter nine, "The Challenges and Potential for a Universal Human Rights Regime to Manage Migration in the Americas", explores the likelihood of U.S. and Canada ratifying the treaty as receiving nations that promote regional economic integration yet have not been able to create policies that support the dignity of migrant workers when crossing borders.

Ana Stern Leuchter's chapter 10, "The Response of Government and Organised Civil Society to the Nightmare of U.S. Deportations of Mexican Migrant Women", draws on more than four years of empirical data to illustrate structural and cultural violence against migrant women in the Mexico border city of Tijuana when they are deported and repatriated. As victims of abductions, human trafficking, robbery, rape and murder, surviving migrants often endure aggression and human rights abuses at the hands of Mexican authorities. It is against this backdrop that Rodolfo Casillas's chapter 11, "Visible and Invisible: Undocumented Migrants in Transit Through Mexico", assesses the processes, policies and hardships that migrants face. "The best way to redress the gap between the aspirations to protect all migrants and the application of those protections is for the state to ensure all migrants have access to all legal recourse, including direct legal counsel" (p154) is the proposal suggested by Evelyn Cruz in chapter 12, "Challenges in Building Institutions to Protect Transmigrants' Human Rights: The Mexican Case". Moving "Toward a More Compassionate Regional Migration Regime in South America" is Juan Artola's chapter 13. In conclusion, Artola suggests that in spite of challenges, the "South American vision" (p178) for migration embraces a positive phenomenon rather than posing a problem or threat to those compelled to leave their place of abode.

In chapter 14, "Envisioning Compassionate Migration: From Canada to Desert Trails and the Cities in Between," Bender summaries the final section of the book (chapters 15-19). This final section questions how and where to implement compassionate migration. Beginning with the question, "Is Canada a Model for Compassionate Migration Policy?", in chapter 15, Sasha Baglay examines Canada's fluctuating approach to selecting immigrants for economic purposes in the face of an increasing immigration uptake from 250,000 in 2015 to a target of 305,000 in 2016. John Shuford's chapter 16, "The Compassion of 'Compassionate Migration'", is informed by moral psychology, social and political philosophy, conflict resolution and hate studies. It outlines various conceptual frameworks, suggesting that "all people as individuals and groups, and through organisations, can choose to become more compassionate, or differently so, by cultivating emotional-cognitive precedents of compassions" (p230).

Maurice Hamington's chapter 17, "Social Readiness: Care Ethics and Migration", opens with the heartbreaking story of Ivonne who came to the U.S. when she was just a few months' old. At the age of 20, she is still awaiting her papers. It is within the context of Ivonne's story that Hamington introduces care ethics as a competency framework applied to issues of hospitable migration. Rather than being perceived as a burden, migrants are received as guests in an authentic hospitable culture that enriches lives; a shift made possible through the lens of care ethics. In chapter 18, "The Role of Arizona Desert Humanitarians in Compassionate Migration", Rebecca A. Fowler asserts that "[u]nder Obama's watch, the number of Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE) workplace raids and neighborhood sweeps increased nationwide, earning him the moniker 'deporter-in-chief'" (p62). Notwithstanding, compassionate immigration policies grounded in human rights do not discriminate between citizens and non-citizens. Therefore, a much-needed reform of the U.S. immigration policy

based on compassion, and which expands upon the consciousness of human connection to others, can go a long way to protecting 12 million undocumented immigrants.

In the final chapter, chapter 19, “Sourcing Compassionate Migration Policies: Searching for Venues of Humanity”, Bender concludes that “[t]he ultimate goal of this volume, and the vision of ‘compassionate migration it articulates, is to transform the coercive and punitive climate of current migration law and policy, particularly of the U.S., to a kinder and more tolerant migration regime” (p177). Indeed, although the concept and precision of compassionate migration may seem vague and undefined, this book provides a meaningful contextual boundary to draw upon. The phrase “compassionate migrations” embodies the core of our existence as we move from one place to another, in search of food, water, safety and survival, indeed, the essence of life. In a biblical context, it was out of sheer compassion that the Good Samaritan assisted a traveler who was beaten, stripped of his clothing and left for dead. In modern times, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), born out of the need to transport and resettle an estimated 11 million people uprooted and displaced by the Second World War, believes that “humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society.” It is against this backdrop that Bender’s and Arrocha’s *Compassionate Migration and Regional Policy in the Americas* is a sober reminder, critical and reflective, at a time when the discourse on global migration is hateful, humiliating and dispassionate. The book will attract the likes of academics, researchers, policymakers, activists, advocates and humanitarian workers interested in humane, dignified and respectful migration.