

Race and Refuge: Why New York is Failing Venezuelan Migrants and What Should Be Done About It

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Yenis Andrade and her partner Alexis are Venezuelan refugees seeking asylum in New York (Castillo and Taladrid 2023). They had fled to Colombia for a better life but soon found little chance for socioeconomic mobility so long as they remained there. Alexis' cousin had successfully traveled to the United States by crossing the notoriously dangerous Darien Gap to Panama. The United States symbolized hope for a safe and prosperous future for Yenis and Alexis, so the couple and eleven other family members made the difficult decision to leave everything behind and travel to the United States. They risked rape and kidnapping and often crossed paths with people – dead or alive – that had the same aspirations as they did. Family members who could no longer afford the journey were left behind while crossing Central America. At this time, the U.S. Border Patrol began to detain more Venezuelan refugees than was previously done. Just six weeks after Yenis and Alexis entered the United States, the Secretary of Homeland Security implemented a harmful policy in which any Venezuelans who miraculously survived the dangerous journey and attempted to cross the border would be sent back to Mexico. Yenis and Alexis were lucky, but many others were not. The couple was assigned a hotel in Manhattan where they hoped to find a job and move out of temporary housing (Castillo and Taladrid 2023). However, it has proven to be extremely difficult for many Venezuelan refugees to achieve the freedom and security they long for, as local and federal policies fail to address the real issues with real solutions, all the while, thousands of Venezuelan migrants deal with the looming possibility of deportation.

Yenis and Alexis are two of hundreds of thousands of Venezuelan migrants who have been sent to New York City by the border states, and their struggle is something shared by many of their peers. Anyone living in New York City, has been there frequently, or who has followed the news knows that this issue has been discussed since the summer of 2023. This issue first came to my attention during my internship with the American Red Cross in Manhattan. The Red Cross was, at the time, sharing a building with an organization that was helping migrants apply for refugee status and seek asylum, and so, every week from June to August, I had to walk past a long line of dejected Venezuelan migrants with a guilty smile stretched across my face and the weight of my utter privilege pulling on my shoulders. Upon hearing Mayor Eric Adams speak on the topic, I knew that the migrants were not being given the proper protections, and New York City lacked the proper policies to do so.

Conversely, as of February 2022, Ukraine and Russia have been at war, causing large numbers of displaced people. Tens of thousands of Ukrainian refugees have come to New York, seeking the same security and peace as the Venezuelan refugees seek today. In response to this, the federal government provided twenty one million dollars for the state of New York to be sent to seventeen refugee service providers, so as to help them resettle (Reisman 2022) When discussing the influx of Ukrainian refugees, it was rightfully described as a struggle and a catastrophe for those who had to uproot their lives, not for those who live in the receiving area. Articles discuss ways to help the Ukrainians find a home, while the impression of Venezuelan migrants is that they are imposing upon the inhabitants of New York City. Where is this empathy and financial support for the Venezuelan migrants?

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It has become clear that New York is not fulfilling its obligation to the Venezuelan migrants due to the prejudices tied to people of color in the U.S., and the inaccurate and pernicious narrative that they will cause more harm than good to the city and country. Furthermore, there is a lack of support and action on the part of the city, state, and federal governments. It is the obligation of the local and federal government to ensure the rights of the refugees and asylum seekers. Focusing on the local level, this can be achieved through reducing inflammatory rhetoric from local politicians and implementing/adapting the Income Generation Strategy for Migrants from Venezuela and Host Communities to New York City, Venezuelan migrants can become more autonomous and receive the support they require to meet basic needs, thus creating less stress for the city's budget and ensuring the basic human rights promised to the refugees and asylum seekers.

How Structural Inequalities Have Shaped this Problem

The Venezuelan migrant crisis in New York City is, in fact, not a crisis. Mayor Adams has claimed that the city will need twelve billion dollars to continue supporting the refugees. While his estimate is often contested, even if that were the case, twelve billion dollars is minimal regarding the city's budget. New York City is home to some of the wealthiest people in the country, so it is no wonder that if twelve billion dollars need to be allocated to meet the basic needs of the refugees and ensure their human rights, it can be done. Twelve billion dollars is only 3.7% of New York City's total budget of one hundred and seven billion dollars. Adams, being somewhat stubborn, refuses to retract his claim that the migrants will destroy the city. The Mayor's alarmist attitude toward the Venezuelan migrants is only supplying more ammunition for the anti-migrant rallies that are present all over the country, thus threatening the ability of local, state, and federal politicians to provide the necessary support and relief to the migrants. Furthermore, the city does not need to support hundreds of thousands of refugees, as 40% of them have left.

Much can and has been done to provide assistance and relief, most notably the federal government extending Temporary Protection Status for Venezuelan refugees. However, it has had a rather limited effect, and only one policy will not make a significant change. There needs to be an orchestrated effort among the multiple governmental levels. For example, Governor Hochul must compel suburban and upstate New York to accept migrants, and Mayor Adams can work to acquire the two billion dollars in uncollected fees and fines to support the refugees (Louis 2023). There are an abundance of ways in which the displaced Venezuelans can be supported, and yet only a few of these paths have been followed. The question then becomes: why is New York City failing these migrants, when they clearly have the capability to help them? Mayor Adams is surely part of the problem, but the blame cannot be placed solely on his shoulders. In fact, it is part of larger systemic issues that have plagued the United States since its conception: racism and xenophobia. In order to understand how this applies, one can look at Weber's analysis of the way in which one's race and ethnicity ties into one's status. Being an ethnic minority, according to Weber, means that one is excluded from all personal intercourse, which results in a situation in which one's legal identity and rights are always questioned and in danger. When an ethnic or racial minority is considered to be economically indispensable, the group will most likely be tolerated. However, if they are not considered to be contributing to the economy, legal avenues have been and can be taken to penalize them with less security and less rights. This is the case with the Venezuelan migrants. In being part of a minority, the group will also have reduced status privileges. Status stratification can often be defined by the access one has to goods and opportunities, and, since minorities are systematically denied those goods and opportunities, they are immediately barred from having a higher status.

This also means, once again, that high status groups have a monopoly over the legal system and thus low status groups are at a legal disadvantage (Weber 1968). The social and legal system are therefore structured around racism and xenophobia, thus resulting in migrants from the global south being at an immediate disadvantage when it comes to securing their right to have rights.

Despite this, the United States still holds international obligations to protect the rights of asylum seekers and refugees. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Article Thirty-Three, which was created in 1951, there is an international policy of non-refoulement. This means that any state or nation cannot send a person back to a place in which they will most likely face persecution. In the case of an increased influx of asylum seekers, the U.S. still must meet a certain number of minimum requirements, which include granting temporary asylum, ensuring non-discrimination, providing access to the legal system, establishing refugee camps, promoting voluntary repatriation, and providing the UNHCR with unrestricted access to the asylum seekers. The United States would also go on to create and sign two important documents that discuss the rights of asylum seekers. The first was the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man (1948), which states that asylum seekers are not required to leave the United States unless they wished to do so, asylum seekers have the right to be recognized as a person with rights no matter their location, and they have the right to asylum and nationality. The second document was entitled the American Convention on Human Rights (1969), and according to this document, non-refoulement is to be applied to any migrant, but it does not constitute grounds for granting asylum. The migrant can be expelled for national security reasons, but the collective expulsion of a group of migrants is prohibited (Yundt 1989). Despite these guarantees to asylum seekers, they seem to be unevenly applied, as displaced people from the global south often face greater difficulties in not only acquiring the legal protections, but simply entering the country, than their white counterparts.

The disparate treatment of racially white and nonwhite migrants is a direct violation of multiple principles of equality. According to the principle of formal equality, if two people are equal in one normatively relevant aspect, they must be treated equally in that aspect. Therefore, refugees, no matter their race, should be given equal treatment and support – with consideration taken solely into the number and specific needs of the refugees. Despite the fact that there are significantly more Venezuelan refugees, they have received significantly less support than the Ukrainian refugees, and this can largely be attributed to the stigma surrounding non-white migrants in the United States. Furthermore, with regards to equality of resources, humans should have the same initial expectations of 'basic goods,' and more resources would be provided to those with the least advantage (Gosepath 2021). In every way that matters, the Venezuelan migrants are those with the least advantage – they are entering a country with little to no financial resources, with few family members, and with little to no real protection from human rights violations and the inherent racism that has been directed towards them as non-white migrants. As members of a society with the least advantage in resources and as an ethnic minority, one can see that status hierarchies, as Weber describes, shapes the social, economic, and legal treatment of migrants; the Venezuelan migrants are being forced to face inherently unequal circumstances and treatment from not only civilians, but also law-makers due to their status as non-white migrants. They do not receive protection under the law, and are further stripped of human dignity through punitive immigration laws.

The struggle for ensuring human rights for Latino migrants is not an entirely new concept, but what is often not discussed is the toll that this struggle takes on their mental health. Studies have shown that Latinos not only struggle with their mental health during the process of migration but also after and before. Prior to journeying to

the United States, most Latinos come from a challenging background. As they often have a low income, a low level of education, and a low socioeconomic status before migrating, they are less likely to be able to support themselves on a safe journey to the U.S.; their situation tends to start with struggle from the beginning. During the journey, as was seen in the story of Yenis Andrade and Alexis, the Latino migrants face hazardous conditions, and many struggle to make it past this point. Not only are the conditions dangerous, but Latinos tend to face traumatic experiences, such as sexual abuse, physical abuse, robbery, disease, exploitation, and the stress of trying to keep a family together during unsafe travel. These are levels of trauma that people should not have to face, but it is all too common for Latinos trying to travel to the United States in search of security. The struggle continues for those who successfully make it into the United States. Even after entering and getting the proper citizenship status, racial/ethnic discrimination, a lack of a support system, the language barrier, and isolation further complicate an already complicated situation (Ornelas and Perreira 2011).

All of these factors result in significantly higher rates of mental health issues among Latino migrants, and it can rightfully be assumed that this applies also to the Venezuelan migrants. Some like to depict Latino migrants as people who want to move into the United States and, as many like to put it, 'steal American jobs.' However, in reality, they are involuntarily uprooting their lives, hoping to secure a better future, which often means basic security for themselves and their families. This, as one has seen, comes at the cost of facing treacherous conditions and then arriving at a country that treats most Latinos as second-class citizens. The treatment of Latinos can be better understood in relation to the panopticon theory. A panopticon is an architectural model of a prison in which the supervisor could observe any cell at any time from the watchtower without the prisoner knowing that they were looking. In this way, the prisoner is placed into a state of heightened consciousness, with the fact that they are always visible looming over their mind. Power thus becomes both visible and unverifiable. If anyone could enter the watchtower, the prisoner would be even more anxious about their position. Power is, therefore, established without the use of force. The panopticon thus can be used to change the prisoners' behavior, in addition to training and correcting them as the viewer pleases (Foucault 2008).

Latino migrants, including the Venezuelans, are living in a sort of panopticon, in which they are the prisoners. Their appearance, as happens in the United States with most non-white minorities, immediately causes them to be watched and observed carefully by their white counterparts. Even if their looks do not call them out, the moment that they have to speak English and they either fail to do so or speak with any sort of accent places them right back into the position of the prisoner. This is only exacerbated by impoverished living conditions, a lack of a support system, and a lack of education. This experience results in the discrimination and isolation previously described. Especially in areas where there is not an already established Latino migrant community, the migrants experience the unverifiable power tied with prejudiced whites; an intangible yet ever-present feeling of inferiority results in tangible exclusion and discrimination.

The treatment of Latino migrants is directly related to racial hierarchies. There is a process of racialization of Latinos that mirrors that of African Americans, and Latinos are placed on the low end of the U.S. racial hierarchy. The racialization of Latinos is frequently done through discourses on immigration. It is indeed true that there are large numbers of Latino immigrants in the United States, and this can largely be attributed to the lack of security in Latino countries that the U.S. helped cause. However, the conversations surrounding Latino immigration ignore that critical factor and, instead, claim that they are stealing jobs and smuggling in drugs in an attempt to support their

argument that these non-white migrants do not deserve a place in the United States. Many news outlets focus on both the ‘criminality’ of Latinos and, at the same time, the mistreatment of Latinos. There is a narrative of Latinos being a racial threat, and this conversation is displayed as being an issue of public safety when, in reality, it is just another way to attempt to support racially discriminatory ideas surrounding Latinos. It is for this reason that many people in the United States assume that any undocumented immigrant is inherently a criminal. The use of pejorative labels, such as ‘illegal’ immigrants or ‘aliens,’ further dehumanizes the migrants, making them seem to be nothing more than intruders. Instead of considering the presence of migrants – who are often referred to as aliens and illegal immigrants – as an issue relating to the law or human rights, it is instead related to crime. This, therefore, allows people to ignore and even advocate for the punishment of people attempting to cross the border. The idea of one group being inherently criminal is a process of racialization very similar to that of the African-Americans, with the exception being that for Latinos, it is intertwined with the conversation of immigration (Brown, Jones, & Becker 2018). The tension surrounding Latino migrants directly correlates to the reason why the Venezuelan refugees are not being given the same support and empathy as racially white refugees; their presence is viewed as a burden and a danger, thus resulting in people from the U.S. and policy makers failing to even find reason to provide the assistance that they promised in their declarations and conventions.

As has been proven, time and again, the underlying reason why Venezuelan refugees are not getting the proper support from the local, state, and federal governments can be tied to the stigma surrounding non-white immigration and, thus, the racialization of Latino migrants as criminals and inherently dangerous people. This process is directly related to the theory of biopolitics. Biopolitics is the principle in which governments rationalize an issue by attributing the problem to an inherent characteristic of the affected group of people. According to this theory, the rationality of the market is applied to society in the name of liberalism. Thus, governmental power is extended and applied outside of the realm of politics, reaching and dictating the treatment of certain populations. This power is reliant upon arguments based in biopolitics (Foucault 2003). The racist ideologies supported by theories of biopolitics therefore help to properly explain the failure of the multiple levels of government to ensure the basic rights of the Venezuelan migrants. It has not been explicitly stated that Mayor Adams feels that the Venezuelans are inherently criminal or that their racial inferiority is the reason for their present struggle in New York City, but racism has still been expressed in more discreet terms. This is why Adams proclaimed that the Venezuelan refugees are going to “destroy” New York City. There are clear racial undertones in that statement, and it only further emphasizes the prejudiced idea of Latino criminality. It must be emphasized that race is not real. Race is a social construct, and thus the treatment of the Venezuelan migrants can be identified as discriminatory, for it is not equal to the treatment of white migrants. The existence of racial prerequisite cases is a clear example of the construction of whiteness, and thus also the construction of non-whiteness. In racial prerequisite cases, the U.S. courts struggled to define whiteness in court, and often resorted to referring to the presumed personality characteristics of being white, such as being intelligent, law-abiding, and sociable, thus disparaging those who are considered to be non-white. In other words, whiteness exists as the worthier opposite of non-whiteness (Haney-López 2006). Therefore, both governments and the law have worked in a concerted effort to not only entrench a system in which non-white people are placed below white people, but also maintain that system in the present day. It is thus essential that this cycle is broken, and one way to do so is to ensure the equal and humane treatment of such people as the Venezuelan refugees, who are presently at the mercy of a system that does not favor anyone without

white status.

Identifying the Problem

For myriad reasons, many people in the United States remain ignorant to problems outside of the country, particularly with regards to issues occurring in the global south, until it directly affects them. With that being said, there are unfortunately many who are completely oblivious to the ongoing crisis occurring in Venezuela, which is considered to be one of the largest mass exoduses in the world. The willing ignorance towards this issue can largely be attributed to the pervasive belief in American exceptionalism, whether it be in a passive or active manner. It thus becomes imperative to provide a brief background of the issue so that one can better understand the possible solutions.

While the Venezuelan government holds a large part of the blame for the Venezuelan crisis, one could not possibly talk about instability in South America without discussing U.S. interventionism. The United States has been practicing interventionism since the creation of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, in which they announced that only the United States could intervene in affairs of other countries within the Western Hemisphere. It must be noted that this was clearly stated and implemented without the consent of the other governments in the Western Hemisphere. Therefore, for the past 200 years, no decisions in Latin America have been made without the involvement of the U.S. This has been done through direct military intervention and occupations, diplomatic interventions, and, as seen in the case of Venezuela, economic interventions. In order to justify these policies, the United States has used two rationales: 1) the country that they are intervening in has an economic system that is a threat to the United States and the government is thus protecting the U.S. through intervention and 2) the United States has a right to protect its citizens from the crises occurring in Latin America through intervention (Dietz 1984).

The Venezuelan government, at the time of U.S. intervention, was steering away from capitalism and towards more socialist policies that were beginning to be successful, thus posing a threat to the U.S. capitalist model that has become so popular around the world, in addition to being considered dangerous for U.S. interests in the context of the Cold War. That, coupled with the fact that if Venezuela's oil economy was handled properly the country would have been very prosperous, resulted in U.S. interventionism. It is the same people from the U.S. who promote interventionism that become angered when the people actually affected by these policies migrate to the United States looking for stability and safety away from the mess that the U.S. helped create.

There are multiple additional causes for the crisis in Venezuela outside of U.S. interventionism, but they can generally be identified as to the deterioration of the government and the economy. What is often referred to as the Bolivarian Revolution occurred, and despite promises for better public services and human-centered policies, governmental corruption prevented this from occurring. The constant undermining of constitutional rule through electoral irregularities resulted in the weakening of the rule of law, and thus worsening the rights and freedoms of the Venezuelan people. Furthermore, the economy was extremely unstable, as it relied heavily on rents from foreign trade on only one commodity: oil. Under the government of Hugo Chavez, unsustainable economic practices paired with currency controls eventually led to it becoming practically impossible to continue producing the commodity upon which all of Venezuela's economy depended. The U.S., for reasons that will be explained shortly, placed sanctions on Venezuela at this time, thus further worsening the economy. This, compounded by the placement of control of key business sectors into the hands of unqualified and corrupt military officials drove the country to the brink of economic collapse. Between the years of 2013 and 2019, 62% of Venezuela's gross domestic

product (GDP) was lost, and an economic crisis ensued (Bull and Rosales 2020). Due to this, public services deteriorated and the living conditions for many Venezuelans became unbearable to the point of fleeing the country.

The question then becomes this: Why are so many refugees coming to New York City when it is so far from the border and already densely populated? It all starts with the stigma surrounding Latino migrants. The governor of Texas, Gregory Abbott, has a known dislike for the entrance of Latino migrants and is a strong supporter of increased border patrol. Therefore, as Venezuelan refugees entered the state, he began a policy in which he cruelly bussed the already stressed and exhausted refugees to other states. While there are multiple sanctuary states within the country, New York is slightly different, as in the state constitution it details that everyone who enters the state has the right to shelter. In the 1970s, New York City further solidified this provision by agreeing to provide housing to anyone who seeks it. Although it is derived from the state constitution, it has only been applied to the city as it was the city's courts that interpreted the provision in that manner. The law was not applied to migrants until now. Abbott used the refugees as a political tool, and instead of striking back by denouncing Abbott's cruel policy, Adams openly encouraged the refugees to come, even though he had no plan for what to do once they did come. Now that it has become an issue for New York City, Adams is evading his responsibility by placing all of the blame on the federal government, claiming that they need additional funding to provide housing. Some have claimed that the solution is to speed up the work authorization process, but there are other people who arrived before the recent influx of migrants waiting for work authorization, so it would take far too long for it to reach the refugee population (Chotiner 2023). The lack of action on all levels of government has resulted in New York City being utterly unprepared for providing the basic human rights that the refugees deserve, thus resulting in the present issue.

Adams has implemented useful policies, other than asking the federal government for more money, and they deserve being noted, such as allowing refugees to attend public schools in New York. The current plan is entitled "The Road Forward," and has some notable ideas. For example, Adams plans on finding new places to provide long term and short term housing. Included in this is partnering with SUNY Sullivan to offer both housing and workforce training for one hundred asylum seekers. Furthermore, he plans to implement a workplace rights campaign that aims to combat misinformation and provide a support system among the asylum seekers and established immigrants. However, there are some more vague and less active parts of the plan as well. While he calls for better connections to legal services for the asylees, he does not provide a step by step plan on how to do so. He also vaguely states that he will raise money and speak with New York's philanthropic organizations and stakeholders to determine next steps. Then Adams, once again, calls on the federal government for additional funding and the expediting of the work authorization process, which has already been proven to not provide the direct assistance needed at this moment ("Mayor Adams Releases 'The Road Forward,' New Blueprint to Handle Asylum Seeker Crisis Moving Forward," 2023). The policies are surely not harmful or useless, but they require refinement and expansion in order to move New York City's policies from passive support to active protection.

What is harmful, however, is the lens through which the influx of Venezuelan migrants is being framed by Mayor Adams. In the same breath that he is discussing the mistreatment of the asylum seekers, he is also describing the issue mainly as it affects New Yorkers. This can be seen when he states that "New Yorkers did not create an international humanitarian crisis, but New Yorkers have been left to deal with this crisis almost entirely on our own" and when he asserts that "We were able to shield, for the

most part, the New York City public from the depth of this crisis. For a year we managed what we were going through night after night after night, and people were able to carry out their regular days because of how we managed that ("Transcript: Mayor Adams Delivers Address on Asylum Seeker Humanitarian Crisis and Takes Q&A," 2023)." Surely, New Yorkers are affected by the influx of asylum seekers and see the effects in their everyday lives.

However, the crisis is truly only for the people that uprooted and risked their lives to seek a better future. To make it through such a treacherous journey across Central America, get admitted through the increasingly strict and inhuman border patrol, and be bussed for an exhausting number of hours just to be treated and described as criminals and burdens on those living in one of the richest cities is cruelly ironic and ultimately detrimental. The focus must return back to them, or else Adams and the rest of New York risks the possibility of remaining oblivious and insensitive to the real struggles that the asylees face everyday. The New Yorkers might be able to "carry out their regular days," but the migrants have not had a regular day since the economic collapse of their homeland. Empathy must lead to policies, and as long as this is framed as an issue for New York and not an issue for the refugees, truly effective policies will fail to be implemented.

The Example of Colombia

New York City does not have to develop completely new solutions in order to create policies that will improve the situation of the Venezuelan refugees. While this issue is being viewed specifically with regards to New York, the mass exodus of Venezuelans is something that has been felt all throughout South America. It is only truly gaining attention in the US now that it is affecting a significant city here. The country most impacted by this, other than Venezuela, is Colombia. Despite still recovering from COVID-19 and an extensive civil war, in addition to dealing with their own large displaced population, Colombia has been internationally commended for their progressive and successful actions in integrating and assisting Venezuelans. At the same time, they have incorporated the Venezuelans in rebuilding the country after the multiple catastrophes described previously.

New York, with its far more stable and wealthy situation, should use Colombia's actions as precedent to create an action plan to deal with a migration crisis. There are many different policies that Colombia has used in order to address the situation and, although many would most likely not be supported in a country so averse to non-white migrants, there are some that have already proven to be applicable. For example, President Biden has recently implemented something similar to what Colombia has done many years ago: Temporary Protection Status. In Colombia, TPS meant a ten year regularization status for Venezuelan migrants entering Colombia in addition to access to formal work and healthcare services. While this policy alone provides limited support, if it is properly applied with other policies that ensure protection, even more positive outcomes would occur. Furthermore, there is also the Special Permit of Permanence, passed by Colombia in 2017, that provides 2 years of regular migration status for Venezuelans and open access to labor market and social services. This would have to also be an action taken by the federal government, but its concrete plan and positive results in Colombia should be reason enough for Mayor Adams to request this, as opposed to twelve billion dollars. The policy that Adams should look to implement himself will be based on the Income Generation Strategy for Migrants from Venezuela and Host Communities, created in 2019 by the Colombian government and with the help of the UN Development Program. The IGS focuses on facilitating integration of the refugees through the labor market and creating open access to health care, social

services, and education (Edwards 2022). Once again, Colombia's policies should be used as examples in any instance of any seemingly overwhelming influx of migrants, and the current situation in New York City is no exception. As stated by International Organization for Migration Director General António Vitorino, "The Government of Colombia has once again shown both great solidarity and leadership. Its decision serves as an example to the world (International Organization for Migration 2021)."

As mentioned previously, the policy that can best be adapted to New York City and can be implemented whether or not the federal government provides aid is the Income Generation Strategy for Migrants from Venezuela and Host Communities. One must take note of the title, as it does not say specifically Colombia, but "Host Communities," which means that this is intentionally made to be applicable to any place that is on the receiving end of the Venezuelan refugee crisis. IGS must be implemented with the help of both private and public institutions. The actions can be divided into three sections: employability, entrepreneurship, and financial inclusion. The idea of employability focuses on making regularization more flexible, increasing training offering, and working to end forced labor. Entrepreneurship relates to funding business projects, making it easier to start a business, and improve training and support. Financial inclusion can be achieved through simplifying the process of opening bank accounts and providing a financial education (Rossiasco and de Narváez 2023). The steps are laid out for the host communities, including New York City; all that is left to be done is to adapt it to the city specifically.

Policy Proposal

The following are the steps that Mayor Adams could and should take in order to uphold the United State's promises to displaced people through the application of IGS.

Step 1: Mayor Adams must stop and retract his inflammatory rhetoric. It has already been stressed how detrimental it is for the refugees to be referred to as a destroying force and how that relates to racialized ideas of Latinos. With that in mind, it is essential that, as the leader of one of the most prominent cities in the world, he must remain calm and collected. Being an alarmist not only hurts his own reputation as a leader, but also places the refugees in an even more dangerous position. Mayor Adams must not agitate a situation with pessimistic and incorrect statements. Furthermore, the anti-immigrant rhetoric that he has taken part in consistently overlooks the way in which refugees can contribute to the economic success of their receiving area. This is blatantly clear in Colombia, which utilized the influx of millions of hardworking and skilled refugees to help the country economically rebuild after COVID-19 through policies that encouraged social integration, the use of Colombia's services, and mobility within the country.

Step 2: Improving Employability. As has been discussed previously, Adams cannot make regularization more flexible, as that is more in the realm of the federal government. However, he can still increase training offerings, improve the labor intermediation system, and monitor any instances of forced labor. As workforce training is being provided with the help of SUNY Sullivan, Adams must work to continue to partner with private and public institutions to increase training offerings. This can and should be proposed in the conversations regarding pursuing interagency coordination and engagement as mentioned in "The Road Forward." Training offerings should become available in multiple public colleges and universities in New York City. This would also assist in the labor intermediation system by creating connections between the asylees and the institutions that provide the training. Furthermore, money and resources should be allocated to investigate and prosecute cases of exploitation of the refugees, thus combatting instances of forced labor. It is no secret that the refugees

come to the United States in a very vulnerable position, and unless the local government is vigilant in protecting their exploitation, instances of human rights violations could occur. It is essential that forced labor is consistently monitored and prohibited with the help of the legal system. This must be especially considered with regard to women, who are likely to be victims of trafficking and who thus often require additional protections in regards to human rights violations

Step 3: Expanding Entrepreneurship. There are no New York laws that prohibit migrants, no matter their legal status, from working for themselves. In order to become financially autonomous and thus place less stress on the New York City budget, Adams should allocate funds to support business projects, such as opening small stores and starting small businesses. This must be especially encouraged for women, as it so often occurs that training programs and small loans are overwhelmingly aimed at men. Considerations of gender disparities must be placed into consideration at every step of this process, as women are often at significant disadvantages when seeking protection and opportunities for success. Furthermore, once again emphasizing the importance of partnerships with private and public institutions, Adams should partner with companies based in New York City – and there are many – to provide training and potentially employ the migrant workers as entrepreneurs. In this way, the Venezuelan migrants could be given the opportunity for a better life that they hoped for, while also being integrated into and supporting the local economy.

Step 4: Financial Inclusion. Undocumented migrants are allowed to open bank accounts, but many banks refuse to do so due to their status. Instead of leaving them in a financial and social purgatory, Adams should partner with banks to allow the refugees and asylees to open bank accounts, thus encouraging them and providing a pathway for them to work towards financial autonomy, even while they wait for their asylum or refugee application to be confirmed. Furthermore, collaborating with business schools and public colleges to improve financial literacy is essential to ensuring the success of this plan.

Step 5: Transportation Support. The final step towards integration while the migrants attempt to seek opportunities and become successful is allowing them to move freely within the city and state. Within the city, Adams can allocate funds to provide the migrants with metro cards, so that they could attend the training previously mentioned and/or work towards employability. Furthermore, the transportation would allow the children to travel easily and attend public schools. Within the state, Adams should speak with Governor Kathleen Hochul to discuss ways in which to provide the migrants with a state drivers license. This would not only allow the migrants to move out of the city, but would also provide them with identification.

Conclusion

No matter one's immigration status, people are people who deserve and are entitled to rights. These rights have been outlined many years ago, but still the United States struggles to see past its own prejudices and work to ensure these rights. This is a fact of both past and present policies in the United States, but it does not have to be a fact of future policies. Mayor Adams must take the example of Colombia and work to help the Venezuelan migrants live lives that all humans deserve. If he does so successfully, he could not only win the petty political battle between himself and Governor Abbott, but he would also become a model leader who prioritizes human rights over racial prejudices. Through shifting the conversation and implementing concrete and effective policies, Mayor Adams could both work against the racism targeted at Latino migrants

and secure the Venezuelan migrants the rights and dignified life they deserve.

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