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Book Review

Border and Rule: Global Migration, Capitalism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism

Walia, Harsha. (2021). Fernwood Press. ISBN 9781773634524 (paper) CDN$27.00; ISBN 9781773634531 (e-book) CDN$26.99; ISBN 9781773634555 (pdf) CDN$26.99. 320 pages.

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If ever a book raged against borders, this one does. Harsha Walia's *Border and Rule: Global Migration, Capitalism, and the Rise of Racist Nationalism* takes popular, liberal depictions of migration to task, and in doing so brings the accelerating crises of our time into sharp relief: namely, globalized capitalism, racist nationalism, exclusionary borders, and a warming planet. Together, these intersecting crises have created a cycle of displacement, detainment, deportation, and death, all the while masquerading as the status quo. Such outcomes, Walia argues, are far from inevitable. The book culminates with a call not to open, but to dismantle borders entirely, and to "transform the underlying social, political, and economic conditions giving rise to what we know as the 'migration crisis'" (p. 213). A must-read for scholars and comrades in the struggle for the freedom to move or to remain, this is a book by which future critical work on borders and migration will be measured.

Chapter One explores the creation of the US-Mexico border as a violent technology of white supremacy. Looking to recent history, Walia shows the border's *modus operandi* to be twofold: the unilateral protection and elevation of Whiteness, and the simultaneous entrapment of Black and Indigenous labour. She exposes the anti-Black roots of border policing, whose first patrol members came from the ranks of the notoriously racist Texas Rangers and the Klu Klux Klan (KKK), and the lengths to which the

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US government and elites went to keep Black communities from recovering following the horrific injustices of slavery. Walia contends that "by excavating mutual histories and interlocking logics, we replace narrow frameworks of immigration with a more expansive analysis, illuminating the border as a tool of population management and racial ordering that is at once domestic and global" (p. 37).

The policing of US borders at home occurs in tandem with the expansion of US militarism abroad. In Chapter Two, Walia details the sharing of practices, technology, training, and bodies-on-the-ground across police, border, and military forces. In the Americas, the funding and training of violent paramilitary groups and the proliferation of free trade agreements has led to the displacement of millions of people who flee north only to be met with hostility at the US-Mexico border. Meanwhile, in the United States, the criminalization of Blackness creates consent for policies which "gr[o]w the carceral state while shrinking the welfare state" (p. 41), leading to the targeted defunding of social services with a disproportionate impact on marginalized groups, especially women and mothers. Ultimately, the problem, writes Walia, is not a border crisis, but a "crisis of displacement generated by US policies" (p. 39).

There can be little doubt that US foreign, trade, and "security" agendas are among the leading causes of displacement. In Chapter Three, Walia examines the role of neoliberal exploitation across export processing zones and environmental shock in driving people from rural communities into urban slums, and frequently into unfree labour schemes. She calls readers' attention to growing global inequality, noting that while billions of people around the world are housing-insecure, the real estate market in many parts of the West/North has reached astronomical heights. The implications of housing insecurity during a pandemic are dire: while some of us safely self-isolate in the comfort of our homes, this option is not available to all. Just as someone does not simply lose their home and livelihood, Walia asserts that "migrants and refugees don't just appear at our borders; they are produced by systemic forces" (p. 62).

Chapter Four takes us from the causes of displacement to four specific techniques of border governance: exclusion, territorial diffusion, commodified inclusion, and discursive control. Perhaps the first technique to come to mind when one imagines the border is *exclusion*, which includes physical barriers such as walls or fences whose purpose is to keep out "undesirables" and protect the purity of a positively racialized community. *Territorial diffusion* functions as internal bordering which follows migrants once they have crossed into the sovereign territory of another nation-state, frustrating their access to public services and daily lives, and promoting their self-deportation. She characterizes *commodified inclusion* as the differential inclusion and exploitation of people with precarious status and who have reduced bargaining power under threat of deportation. Finally, via *discursive control*, Walia explains, borders facilitate the division, categorization, and

management of people on the run, most notably in their differentiation between migrants and refugees, or "bogus" versus "true" refugees.

These four techniques form the brick and mortar of much contemporary migration policy, as Chapters Five and Six illustrate. Walia first explores practices of border externalization, taking Australia's offshore detention centre on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea as her case study. She shows how the seemingly disconnected banishment of Pacific Islanders, exclusion of Chinese labourers, and dispossession of Indigenous peoples are, in fact, deeply intertwined, and form part of a larger project to keep Australia white. Turning to the European context, whether via border externalization, so-called migration management programs, harmonized surveillance systems, or policies of "rescue and return," the end goal is the same: to contain Black migration within Africa. Walia details the efforts of European powers to block various migration routes over land and sea to prevent African migrants from reaching the borders of the continent and claiming asylum. Migration blaming, according to Walia, is like rape culture: in condemning migrants for freely opting to undertake dangerous journeys, we exonerate our willful efforts to make their journeys unsafe, when we could easily do otherwise. Such rhetoric, as well as that which compares migrant trafficking to slavery in order to bolster consent for anti-migration policies, masks the role of the state in manufacturing violence and coopts Black struggles for freedom of movement.

Even in the face of abhorrent anti-Blackness, capitalism demands expendable labour, particularly for the dirty, dangerous, and demanding work that landed elites and citizens reject. Chapter Seven thus invites readers to think critically about the relationship between capitalism and the border *vis-à-vis* temporary labour migration. While the "proletarianization of displaced peasants into migrant farmworkers" may be one of capitalism's "cruelest ironies" (p. 131), the permanency of so-called "temporary" migration is another. Walia exposes nation-states' structural reliance on circular labour migration, deemed a success for ensuring that racialized workers return to their countries of origin, and thereby maintaining their perpetual precarity. She delineates five key features of migrant labour regimes: first, state-sanctioned indentureship; second, legalized segregation "outside the nation-state and outside the bounds of belonging" (p. 139); third, neoliberal insourcing; fourth, a distinct mode of racialization; and fifth, carceral regimes. In closing, Walia notes the profound undervaluing of domestic and care work – gendered labour that is mostly performed by women of colour globally.

Gendered dimensions of migrant labour remain in focus through Chapters Eight and Nine, as Walia narrows in on two infamous migrant labour schemes: the kafala system in the Gulf States and Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP). As many as 30 million migrants laboured under the kafala system in 2017, and some 20 thousand domestic workers flee their places of employment each year. The customary, legal transfer of

migrant workers between sponsors facilitates a horrific gendered violence, particularly against domestic workers, in the form of super-exploitation, carceral surveillance, rape, and murder. Walia notes that while the media is quick to blame Arab culture, migrant justice would be better served in denouncing globalized capitalism and nationalist borders.

A case in point, despite its global reputation as a model program, Canada's TFWP is renowned for wage robbing, inadequate and crowded housing, deplorable working conditions, and poor legislative oversight, among other sins. In the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia, a region known for its fresh fruit and award-winning wine, farmworkers from Guatemala, Mexico, and Jamaica live in wasp- and mouse-infested trailers, without electricity or potable water, surrounded by trash; employers pass off refurbished chicken coops and granaries as "housing," and workers sleep on haybales instead of mattresses. In too many instances, they are not permitted visitors and must ask their employer for permission before leaving the farm premises. Migrant women report intensified employer surveillance, often via camera, and many become targets of sexual violence (Weiler & Cohen, 2018). Despite formidable evidence of such injustices, March 31st, 2021 marked 55 years of the agriculture stream of Canada's TFWP, one of the world's oldest such programs still in use today. Dismally, labour regimes like these are liable to continue in a context of rising fascism.

Zooming out yet again, in Chapters Ten and Eleven, Walia takes the far right to task, calling out its reliance on a "glaring convergence of racist nationalism and border imperialism" (p. 194). She notes increasing transnational alliances between right nationalist movements and the world's most powerful militaries. Although they take distinct forms across various geographies – white nationalism in the United States, Hindutva in India, and Zionism in Israel – the racist violence they condone and propagate is one and the same. In Brazil and the Philippines, penal populism functions to criminalize the poor and justify the extrajudicial killing of land defenders and Indigenous peoples. Meanwhile, overtly racist anti-immigration rhetoric sweeps the European continent, with migrants serving as scapegoats for myriad homegrown worries. "The problem", contends Walia, "isn't foreign workers, it's capital: the problem isn't *foreign* workers, it's labor segmentation" (p. 204). Rather than prioritizing either race or class, Walia reminds us that just as they congeal around one another, our critiques – and our responses – must account for both.

As Nick Estes argues in his compelling afterword, "migration crisis" is a misnomer. Rather, what we are experiencing is a crisis of humanity. In displacing Indigenous peoples and peasants through free trade agreements only to close borders, lock up children, criminalize livelihoods, and deport those seeking better lives to regions either warming or militarized (or both), the North shows itself – and its immigration politics – to be morally bankrupt.

This is not to say that there is no hope, no just future to cultivate for which to till onward. In defiance of border controls and migration management

policies everywhere, migrants themselves are on the forefront of global struggles for freedom of movement. Walia identifies the movement of migrants and refugees against the bolstering of fortress Europe as "a form of decolonial reparations" (p. 122). Such a corrective does not apply to fortress Europe alone, but to the entire "gated globe" (Cunningham, 2004). Just as justice for climate refugees today requires that their claims be accepted as such, reparations for Black asylum seekers, migrant farmworkers, displaced Indigenous peoples, and so many others demand "a politics of repair" (p. 214). As this book remarkably illustrates, this is a justice that only a world without borders can offer.

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