

Cooperative Approaches



#19. April 2024



**Immigration/integration:
problem or opportunity?**

"The only path offering humanity hope for a better future is one of cooperation and partnership."
Kofi Annan

«Contrary to what some people say, we are not currently facing a wave of immigration. [...] The subject of immigration should therefore not worry the French people. [...] We must not lie to our fellow citizens: immigration is not something we can get rid of. What's more, immigration is an opportunity in economic, cultural and social terms. In all theories of growth, it is one of the positive determinants. But only if we know how to deal with it. When we know how to integrate and train them, women and men renew our society, giving it a new impetus, a surge of inventiveness and innovation».

Emanuel MACRON (Réforme, 2017 March 2)



Cooperative Approaches, a quarterly journal, is published free of charge in digital format by the Association for the Promotion of Cooperative Approaches (APAC). APAC's mission is to promote cooperative approaches in key areas of social life: youth and adult education, social action, organizational management, economy and culture, citizen participation, international solidarity.

English language edition editor: Larry CHILDS

English language edition Editorial Board: Biorn MAYBURY-LEWIS, James ITO-ADLER, David BULL, Karol QUINN, Dominique BENARD

Subscribe to our newsletter to be informed of new releases.

<https://www.approchescooperatives.org/>

CONTENTS

Immigration dynamics in France and the US : striking parallels	4
EDITORIAL by Larry CHILDS	
A history of migration through a French lens	9
DECIPHERING by Dante MONFERRER	
Destiny's destiny	15
INTERVIEW WITH A YOUNG NIGERIAN REFUGEE by Dante MONFERRER and Philippe BLANC	
The city of Rennes: Citizen action for dignified migrants reception	22
CITIZEN INITIATIVES. Interview with Xavier DESMOTS, Deputy Mayor of Rennes by Dominique BENARD	
La Fédération des Acteurs de la Solidarité.....	26
A MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PLATFORM by Dominique BÉNARD	
How the French view migration	29
CURRENT DYNAMICS AND CHALLENGES by Dante MONFERRER	
Non-profits coordinate state-wide support network for new immigrants	50
MASSACHUSETTS IMMIGRANT COLLABORATIVE by Janey TALLARIDA	
Escaping Prison of the Mind	53
BY THE IFSI IMMIGRANT NAVIGATOR TEAM	



Education is key to advancement so the state level community college system is dedicated to creating access and pathways for immigrants

EDITORIAL

Immigration dynamics in France and the US : striking parallels

By Larry CHILDS

Comparing immigration dynamics in the US and France is not a common curiosity among immigrants, service providers, policy-makers nor those with strong anti-immigrant sentiments. Rather, most are laser focused on challenges unfolding within their respective nations, from local cities and towns to points and ports of entry. Yet examining and comparing experiences, especially the parallels, across our two nations can help dispel myths while informing organizing strategies and services.

Common histories as powerful nation states

To explore parallels between the US and France looking back upon our histories is needed. Under colonialism and later neo colonialist and imperialist capitalist domination, exploitation of the global south was a central strategy for building our respective economies and achieving global domination. Arguably the wealth and power each nation exerts



Looking hopefully towards a better future for their children - that is the ambitious message of this recently unveiled mural commissioned by the Brazilian Worker Center in Boston.

today would be diminished without these past practices of domination resulting in southern countries governed by puppet regimes thereby relinquishing considerable material wealth and opportunity. The losses and chaos during those times were so severe that their capacities for future productivity, even with more equitable international

cooperation, remain severely eroded.

Just as colonial exploitation impeded economic development in countries of the global south, so did later neo colonial structures. So much was structured to limit reinvesting profits locally, while maximizing movement of goods and/or capital back to our wealthier countries. To this day

many former colonies (of France) and client states/'trading partners' (of the US) in the Americas remain impoverished having been stripped of raw materials, suffered irreparable environmental degradation, cash cropped away from subsistence farming, and/or drained of their brain trusts or 'human capital'. Losing many of their best educated citizens, too many southern nations face massive unemployment and approach failed state status.

For others, pervasive violence is on-going. Causes range from their status as client state to super power proxy wars (a US specialization), subject to corrupt authoritarian rulers, and/or targeted by terror networks, drug cartels and criminal gangs. These conditions all directly link to historic legacies of past exploitation and are too often forgotten or parsed out of present day analyses.

Today, as in the past, in the face of on-going inequitable trade relations and war, hot or simmering, desperate southern citizens reasonably look to their northern 'super powers' for solace and a new home. The choice is sometimes fostered by their having acquired the language, shared some cultural affinities (ie.the baguet and bureaucracy) or fostered familial relationships through international diaspora communities or the American/French expats they worked with at home.

In addition to humanitarian traditions and laws which govern our two countries there are also



Basic adult education (BAE) programs are not always contained to the classroom. This group of recent Haitian arrivals work on their English while spending an afternoon at at Boston's Franklin Park Zoo. They are supported with service by Immigrant Family Services Institute IFSI-USA

wider moral obligations felt by governments and citizens alike to welcome immigrants. These sentiments become more complicated when, for instance, one may feel complicit in having destroyed another's' nation!

Shared destruction was the case for Vietnam with France (starting back in the 1850's and later 1940's) which they then passed the torch to the US (starting in the 1960's). Haiti suffered a similar Franco American fate. There was also some collaboration around the Gulf war in Iraq and later Afghanistan. In such instances locals having been aligned with, or in service to, a departing super power can be a death sentence such that attempting to flee with one's family is the only option. France has developed these

kinds of obligations to failed state victims across much of Francophone Africa and the US across Latin America.

It is within this backdrop of history that the displaced and disposed, identified today as migrants and refugees, continuously weave their way north across treacherous terrain and as many as a dozen countries. Their reception, over the decades, has been and remains varied, confusing and very complicated. This is in part due to government policies and populist citizen reactions which range wildly from welcoming to hostile. This mass global migration, estimated to have doubled in the past 10 years, continues despite the half-century multilateral humanitarian and development aid initiatives designed to correct



Migrants received on the premises of France terre d'Asile. France terre d'asile is a French solidarity association whose main aim is to support asylum seekers and defend the right to asylum in France. It campaigns "for a Europe of migration that is protective, supportive, fair and socially responsible".

the governance issues and vast inequities.

Analysis of present-day social dynamics

In this English edition of Cooperative Approaches/Approches Coöperative, the articles and interviews by our team have been selected from the lengthier French edition. We explore historic context, migrants journeys, national identity, polarizing politics and the role of immigrant service organizations and collaboratives. To help frame these articles, the following cross-cutting themes examine the social constructs dominating immigration dynamics similarly expressed in France and the US.

Workforce engagement

While immigrants arrive with a wide ranging expertise and professional qualifications, the more vulnerable in

France and the US typically assume labor roles in industries such as construction (laborer), hospitality (cleaners), healthcare (home health aids), agriculture (farm workers) and food processing (meat packaging). These are jobs that residents commonly shun regardless of unemployment statistics. Yet many residents still believe immigrants are coming 'to take our jobs' despite compelling evidence to the contrary.

Immigrants are eager to work and often accept these grittier menial jobs on which our economies are entirely dependent. During COVID many were classified as 'essential workers' risking their lives and those of their family members all living together in cramped dwellings. This they endured in hopes that their children would enjoy more prosperity - and all while more privileged residents could work from home and receive COVID relief funds not generally available to

the undocumented.

Political polarization

Polarization in both countries leads to politicians and pundits each seeking an advantage by distorting wedge issues that rally a base and vilify opponents. Immigration in both countries serves as this sort of convenient punching bag. More than other controversial issues it is visual and susceptible to selective misrepresentation, fake news and omission of facts in reporting. Given the spotlight and politics involved, immigration services organizations have attracted increased funding in both countries. This has allowed for stepped up delivery of social services, public benefits, education and advocacy initiatives including legislative action. In the US legislation is paralyzed nationally, though active at the state and local levels. In France, a far more centralized country, adaptive legislative initiatives pass frequently at the national level.

Networks, collaboratives and faith communities: Another shared response across our two countries due in part to intensive and divisive politics, is increasing coordination of immigrant advocacy and services organizations through formation and further development of immigration networks, coalitions and collaboratives. There is power in such alignment and these initiatives are helping to better welcome migrants, research and reframe the issues, and reallocate funding all in the interest of creating more functional immigration systems. Some of these efforts, distinctive to each country, are reported on in this edition. Coordination around common affiliations of faith traditions was an

early expression of coordination and one which has expanded to inter-faith.

Identity-centric frame

To some French and US citizens, their own national identities and cultures are ever evolving with immigrants an exciting and vital source of new energy, business innovation, determined workforce labor, and inspiration for cultural fusion. They also take seriously their nations' constitutions affirming the right to asylum for those having experienced persecution in other lands. In fact many of their own ancestors, especially in the US, immigrated due to inhospitable conditions elsewhere. To these citizens, the refrain, 'We are a country of immigrants', informs how they self-identify and their welcoming-to-newcomers position. Our national pledges proclaiming 'liberty, fraternity and justice for all further' affirm these convictions as tradition.

Yet, to those holding a more provincial or fixed notion of national identity, each new wave of immigration feels like an invasion; one that diverts scant public resources and dilutes what it means to be American or French. Delayed language acquisition by some immigrants or insistent retention of their native tongue and culture provides further provocation to those who subscribe to a 'great replacement theory'.

Population pressures

As evidence of replacement in action its proponents point to faith traditions such as Islam which is too often interpreted as an assault on a



A next generation of highly educated and motivated immigrants, having arrived in the US as young children, now provide a key to 'charting a path forward' for their people

'Christian' (US) or 'Catholic' (France) nation. Conversely, to others' holding secular convictions, religiosity in general can seem like a retreat from science towards superstition, and towards a God whose Will among believers supplants individual agency. This is the case with religious resistance to family planning whereby large families provoke simmering resentment for their perceived drain on public benefits and use of numbers to sway elections. Other active concerns is elevated criminal or terrorist risk potential due to too many restless unemployed young men who seek meaning and influence through violence,.

Population dynamics, still a controversial subject often taboo to discuss, is an on-going source of simmering resentment within both countries. These pressures, especially with unemployed young men, spill over from the global south where population relative to employment

opportunities causes safety concerns forcing families who are able to flee. Consider the population displacement and migration caused by gangs in Haiti, extreme Jihadist recruits in the middle east and child soldier fueled conflicts in many African countries.

Racism & population

The left and far right both tend to exaggerate the significance of skin color and race to either further justify calls for solidarity or vilify for their differences. While the left decry as racist any who object to upholding liberal immigration policies, the right interpret 'open door' immigration as a liberal conspiracy designed to cultivate votes for their interests or to 'dilute the blood'. The concern for an end of 'white people' and their cultural heritage is too readily dismissed by the left as alarmist, yet since it is genuinely felt by many this dismissive stance only intensifies their resentment.



Ready to fly - These young Haitian immigrants equip themselves with butterfly wings at Boston's Franklin Park Zoo

Climate change

The immediacy of growing displaced populations in need along with polarized politics often obscure the elephant in the room. Climate change places intense pressures on the ecosystems supporting food production which cannot accommodate these increasingly severe weather and climate conditions. While addressing climate change would diminish stress on food systems, civil conflict, war and resulting migration, the international cooperation required for such action is seriously compromised by all the climate related urgencies. This Catch 22 may be the most daunting but addressing it may be the only real hope for a livable future.

Hopeful trends

Assimilation and integration

While on-going new immigrant oppression on the one hand, and

erosion of white domination on the other are both real and alarming depending on perspective, the resilience of immigrants is the bigger story. In both France and the US, within a single generation children of immigrants commonly integrate quickly, often bolstered by hard working parent(s). They also slough off attempts from the left to label them as oppressed or from the right as receiving undeserved benefits. These young people often experience less racism than their parents and less conflict with their host country peers. Rather cultural gaps with their own parents can be more the friction point as parents fear their children integrating too quickly, absorbing the new language and values while abandoning attributes of their own. The cultural adoption is even evident in how young people carry themselves. In their walk and talk a confident American swagger becomes visible or audible

such that it can be evident from a considerable distance. In this sense classically 'American' attributes are strengthened and expanded rather than eroded as some mistakenly attribute to immigration.

Cultural fusion

Meanwhile, young nationals, call them multi-generational citizen counterparts, in France and the US often witness and admire this second generation. Their respect is earned not only for making this rugged journey and immersing themselves in the language and culture, but for sharing attributes of their own heritage. Adoptions of music, fashion and food foster a rich multiculturalism in our countries. It is refreshingly 'fusion', all while still distinctively French or American in feel. In that sense there is a complexity and something new evolving such that neither culture is actually getting lost.

Recent conversations with leaders in immigration services have touched on their own roles in addressing conflict with immigration opponents more often with curiosity and respect than outright defiance. This involves modeling the dignity they seek for their immigrant constituents. It also requires their seeking to understand the resistance or fear underlying their concerns. How can we do better and more continuously learn through these challenges? This newer, perhaps healthier refrain may need to be better embraced as a work around, counter or perhaps complement to the more familiar assertive activism as resistance to xenophobia. Knowing how and when to turn on which skill set is an essential discernment.

[Back to contents](#)

A history of migration through a French lens

By Dante MONFERRER

Like many species on our planet, humans have always been on the move. Ever since our distant ancestors, the first hominids who stood up on their hind legs, humans have been migrating. From the earliest movements of earlier hominids in Africa at least two million years ago, to the later waves of migration involving “modern man” 200,000 years ago, we have spread across the globe and are now planning to colonize other planets.

Every continent bears traces of these different currents. Whether to conquer and develop new territories, escape poverty, oppression, overpopulation and, very soon, the devastating effects of climate and environmental change, build a better life for ourselves, or simply discover what lies beyond the horizon, human beings are eternal migrants.

Homo Sapiens¹ capacity for adaptation to different natural environments colonized along our long march explains our physical diversity. Yet we all belong to the same species and are all descendants of migrants.

The history of migration merges with human history

We only have the work of paleontologists and archaeologists to offer a glimpse of human movements in distant times: Transhumance, climatic changes, trade relations, the search for opportunities, conquests, famines, conflicts, etc., were all the common lot of human experience, as Homo-sapiens gradually replaced Neandertal, and hunters/gatherers supplanted by agropastoralists.

The different continents on our planet are undergoing multiple

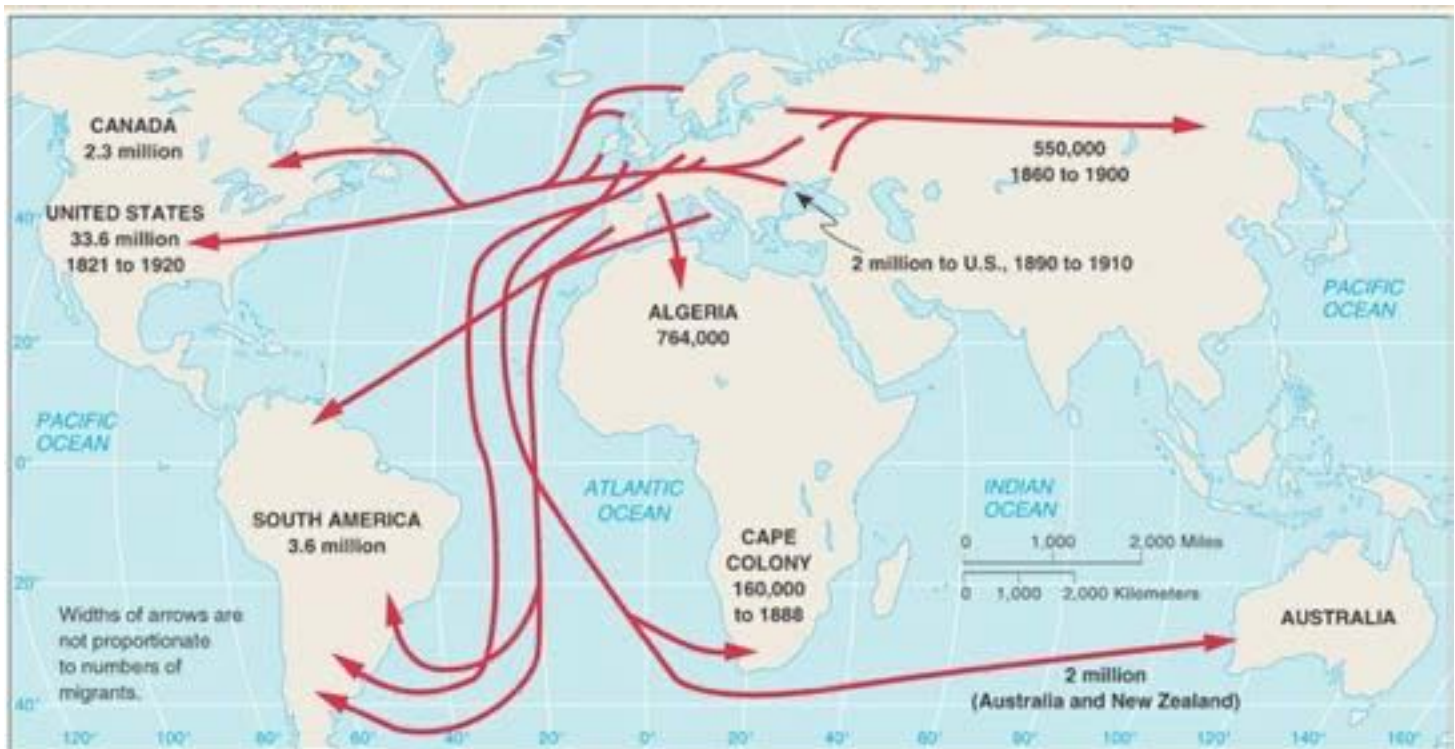


upheavals. In Europe, and more specifically in what was to become France, the Bronze and Iron Ages saw the settlement of various peoples: Celts, Gauls, Greeks, Iberians, Basques and many other groups of diverse origins.

Roman domination

Europe underwent major upheavals in antiquity. Rome extended its domination over the entire continent and its margins. Gallo-Roman civilization flourished on the old Celtic and Gallic foundations. The fall of the Empire ushered in a period of great instability, with invasions by numerous populations from Eastern Europe and even Asia.

¹. Remember that today, despite the different skin pigmentations, there is only one human species on earth: “homo sapiens sapiens”.



European migration in the 19th century. © 2005 Pearson Prentice Hall, Inc.

Numerous population influxes in the Middle Ages

The Middle Ages, which lasted almost 1,000 years, also saw a large influx of people: Germanic peoples (Franks, Visigoths, Burgundians, Alamanni), Helvetians, Belgians, Bretons, Vascons, Arabs, Vikings, Jews, and English.

Economic globalization in the 19th century

From the 15th century onwards, the progressive development of economic globalization became the essential determinant of migratory phenomena. Mercantilism, the precursor to capitalism, launched its fleets of ships seeking wealth in the new worlds. Subsequently, the conquest and colonization of these territories led to major population movements. Following the virtual destruction

of Amerindian societies, over 20 million Africans were enslaved when deported from Africa to the Americas over nearly four centuries.

Invention of the nation-state

From the French Revolution onwards, the question of immigration really emerged with the invention of the nation-state. In such a context, it became essential that nothing should thwart the unity of the country, and that the conditions for belonging to it should be clearly defined.

Immigrants raise questions about France's identity, and about the nation-state as a unique reference point and place of belonging for the individual citizen. Having had to eradicate its internal cultural diversity after bitter and heavy struggles, France will require

its immigrants to renounce their culture in order to settle permanently. French integration has always been coupled with assimilationist pressure².

The 19th century saw migration on an unprecedented scale, with industrial development, urbanization, rural exodus and improved means of communication and transportation. During this period, migratory phenomena were primarily internal, with the rural exodus from the countryside to urban centers. In 1800, 10% of Europeans lived in towns, by the end of the century, this figure had risen to 40%. At the same time, the population

². Paragraph from : "The process of unification and integration" Ritimo / Association de Solidarité et d'Information pour l'Accès aux Droits des étrangers extra-communautaires (ASIA) and M'Bodje Mamadou / March 18, 2013.

of the old continent more than doubled to 400 million on the eve of the Great War.

European emigration to the New World

60 million Europeans migrated to the New World, which comprised the main migratory flows. Europe's demographic growth was the main driving force, and the reasons for leaving were primarily economic. Many fled misery (great famine in Ireland, impoverishment of the peasantry in southern Europe, low wages and unemployment in industrial regions, etc.). The political upheavals of the 19th century also contributed to these movements (revolutions and repression in France, Ireland and Italy, persecution of Jews in Russia and Germany, etc.).

The first half of the 20th century saw the continuation and amplification of these population movements. Economic migration from Italy and Poland, political upheavals in Turkey, the Armenian genocide, population movements following the 14-18 war. Rise of Nazism and persecution of Jews, Spanish war and Republican exile,

After the 1939-1945 war, in a battered Europe with redrawn borders, millions of people were on the move. The Cold War also caused its share of population movements (Eastern European countries, Vietnamese boat people, etc.). Europe, a

continent of emigration until the mid-twentieth century, became a region of immigration as successive waves of immigrants arrived, particularly from the southern hemisphere.

France, an old country of immigration³

France's location at the crossroads of Europe has meant that, throughout its history, the country has experienced a large influx of immigrants. It's safe to say that we're all descended from these movements, which have traversed our country over the centuries.

However, it was only with the emergence of nation states that we really began to talk about immigration, and to distinguish between nationals and immigrants. This was particularly true from the 1880s onwards, when France experienced strong industrial development, relied on a large foreign workforce and introduced nationality law.

Three major immigration cycles

Throughout its recent history, France has experienced three major immigration cycles, corresponding to periods of industrial development and labor demand. The first was during the Second Empire, the second in the 1920s, and the third between 1960 and 1975. Each of these phases

3. Paragraph taken from : "La France, un vieux pays d'immigration" interview by Séverine Nikel with Gérard Noiriel, spécialiste de l'histoire des migrations / L'HISTOIRE-Collections 46 / January - March 2010.

gave rise to strong migratory movements, followed by phases of stabilization or decline, at the time of the economic crises of the 1880s, 1930s and 1980s.

This recourse to immigration at the end of the 19th century was linked to the lack of manpower for the fledgling industry. Indeed, the rural exodus came later and was less significant in France than in other countries (England, Germany, etc.), as the Revolution of 1789 had favored the maintenance of small family farms.

Thus, at the start of the Third Republic, peasants still represented more than half of the working population, and in 1950, there were proportionally more peasants in the working population in France than in England in 1840.

Low population growth

Demographic growth in France is also lower than in other countries. Whereas it was Europe's most populous nation at the time of the French Revolution, it was only fourth before the 1914-18 war. Neighboring countries fueled migratory movements (Belgians in the north, Italians in the southeast, Spaniards in the southwest). Agriculture, metallurgy and mining were the sectors that mobilized most of these foreign workers.

Before 1914, immigration flowed by traditional migratory networks, and there was no real policy or border controls. From 1888 onwards, migrant workers were required to register in the communes where

they lived. This lack of migration management led to competition between French workers and immigrants in certain sectors. The competition was often organized by employers to drive down wages, and led to violent confrontations in times of crisis.

The first French nationality law

In 1889, the first law on French nationality was passed. From then on, children born in France to foreign parents who were themselves born in France automatically became French at birth. The aim was to turn foreigners into nationals and encourage naturalization. At a time when the prospect of revenge against Germany, following the defeat of 1870 and the loss of Alsace and Lorraine, was at the forefront of the political scene, the falling birth rate was seen as a real handicap, and the naturalization of foreigners as a necessity.

Distrust of migrants

It was also at this time that the mistrust of the State, certain politicians and some of the oppression directed towards migrants began to be expressed. In Marseilles in 1881, an incident between natives and Italian immigrants led to a veritable manhunt, resulting in 3 deaths. This event was widely commented on in the press, which was quick to question the willingness and ability of the Italians to assimilate, as well as their numbers and conditions of entry and residence.



« Interdit aux chiens et aux italiens » (“Forbidden to dogs and Italians”) was the sign posted on the door of some cafés in the first half of the last century. “Forbidden to dogs and Italians” is also the title of the film currently being made by Alain Ughetto, an animation specialist from Marseilles. It’s the story of his grandparents’ migration from Italy to France.

These two themes, still today and along virtually the same terms, structure the issue of immigration: border control and integration. From then on, the “immigration problem” became a political issue, and more fundamentally questioned everyone’s conception of the nation, its identity and its construction.

In 1883, a parliamentary report⁴ defined foreigners as “enemies of the interior and criminals”, taking the work of the French and burdening welfare budgets. Many considered the country to be invaded by “shady people from all over the world”. The irony and persistence of prejudice is that what applied 130 years ago to Italian immigrants applies today, and in virtually the same terms, to migrants from southern countries.

⁴. Pradon report, Radical Party MP for the Ain department.

The most serious “progrm” in our history

In 1893, this poisonous climate led to the most serious “progrm” against immigrant workers in recent history. At Aigues Mortes in the Gard region, a quarrel between French and Italian workers degenerated into a fight between “us” and “them”. A hundred people were injured, a dozen killed and around twenty disappeared.

These events provoked a serious diplomatic crisis between Italy and France, whose image in Europe was severely damaged.

On the judicial front, and under pressure from the nationalists, the accused were exonerated despite the heavy charges brought against them. This event is a good illustration of how the exacerbation of national sentiment by the press and politicians can have dramatic repercussions, which are unfortunately still with us today.

After the First World War, a call for foreign labor

The First World War marked a new phase. With the shortage of manpower during and after the war, immigrant labor was needed: Italians, Spaniards and Poles arrived en masse. Many of them settled in France, where they played a decisive role in the country's second industrialization and the revival of agriculture in the 1920s.

The Great Depression of the 1930s brought immigration to a screeching halt. Tens of thousands of foreigners left France⁵, often forcibly repatriated. With the profound political changes (emergence of Nazism and Fascism, rise of nationalism) experienced by many European countries, many refugees flocked to France.

At first, the welcome was quite warm, but from 1933/1934 onwards, France experienced a nationalist upsurge. The far right blamed these foreigners, and Jewish refugees in particular, for all the country's ills. The term "undesirables" appeared in political and even legislative vocabulary⁶. Xenophobia and anti-Semitism were unleashed, fanned by the crisis and competition on the job market.

⁵. In 1931, 450,000 foreigners left the country (see parliamentary report).

⁶. Decree-law of May 2, 1938; summary of laws governing the residence of foreigners and affirmation of the Daladier government's desire to set up a system for monitoring "welcome" foreigners and expelling "undesirables".

With the advent of the Vichy regime, not only were foreigners harshly repressed, but racist laws were put in place, "denaturalizations"⁷ were carried out, and - an indelible stain - the French state collaborated in the genocide of Jews and various other minorities.

The "Thirty Glorious Years"

After the war, the reconstruction and modernization of the economy led to a new recourse to immigration. The "trente glorieuses" (thirty glorious years) triggered a huge surge in immigration. Immigrants from formerly colonized countries, accompanied in the 60s and 70s by Spaniards and Portuguese, took over many of the jobs abandoned by the French.

In France, as in Western Europe, the two oil crises of the 70s and 80s triggered a long-lasting economic crisis. Borders closed in the mid-1970s, and incentives for immigrant return were introduced. But the situation had changed: the fight against xenophobia, international legislation and the right of asylum meant that administrations could no longer act as they had in the 1930s. At the same time, the left became involved in the fight against racism and violence against immigrants. In the 1980s, the economic crisis led to a resurgence of talk of national identity, spurred on by the far right, who saw immigrants as a "threat" to France.

⁷. Law of July 22, 1940, two weeks after Pétain's vote for full powers, ordering a review of naturalizations acquired since the law of August 10, 1927. 15,000 people were "denaturalized" between 1940 and 1944.

With the economic crisis, rejection of foreigners resurfaces

This situation has persisted since the 70s and 80s, with the far right once again gradually imposing its favorite theme on the national debate, as economic, social and political crises impact the country and a tense society. While the usual hints of racism and xenophobia are as present as ever, the "targets" have changed, and Italians, Jews and Spaniards have been replaced by people from the Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa.

Indeed, the waves of immigrants from Spain, Italy and then Portugal in the 50s/60s/70s have been followed by those from the Maghreb and, more recently, sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. In 2022, 48.2% of immigrants living in France were born in Africa and 32.3% in Europe. The most common countries of origin for immigrants are Algeria (12.5%), Morocco (11.9%), Portugal (8.2%), Tunisia (4.7%), Italy (4%), Spain (3.5%) and Turkey (3.3%). Nearly half of all immigrants come from one of these seven countries.

The question of integration

A new development is the emergence of the "second generation" debate, almost at the same time as the Islamist threat. The classic figure of the "immigrant worker" is being replaced by that of the "Muslim". The question of the integration of the "second generation" of North African and sub-Saharan origin, despite their French nationality, took center

stage. Both the right and the left take up this discourse, the only difference being that some suspect this generation of Islamist sympathies, while the others try to make the most of the contributions made by this population. But with the effects of the economic crisis and the eruption of Islamist terrorism, it's the negative image that prevails. This has had a dramatic effect on this generation.

“The 1990s were one of the darkest periods in the history of the evolution of representations of immigrants. The term ‘immigrant worker’ disappeared, leaving only ‘immigrant’. It’s as if the term no longer refers to a journey, but to an essence. People are locked into a category and their appearance becomes stigmatizing, which has a direct impact on work and housing⁸.”

In fact, our country is one of the leaders in terms of welcoming foreigners⁹. One million lived here in 1881, 2.7 million in 1931, 4 million in 2010 and 5.2 million in 2021.

Through a continuous process of integration, a significant proportion of these foreigners have acquired French nationality, and today it can be estimated that between a third and a quarter of the French population has at least one great-grandparent who migrated from a foreign country.

This integration of foreign populations is a long-standing and constant fact. Even the issue of illegal immigrants and undocumented immigrants, the subject of much fiction, is a long-standing phenomenon, stable over time and undermining the idea of “migratory invasion” and “grand replacement”, the common fantasies of the extreme right.

France is also in line with the European average: in 2021, of the 447.3 million inhabitants of the 27 EU countries, 37.5 million are foreigners and 55.4 million were born in a foreign country, i.e. 8.4% and 12.4% of the European population respectively.

Despite the restrictions of recent decades, between 80,000 and 100,000 foreigners settle in France every year. But rarely in our history have immigration, nationality acquisition and even asylum policies been so restrictive, calling into question the possibilities for harmonious integration of migrants who throughout the centuries have enriched and nurtured our society and its diverse, multicultural character.



Far-right Front National poster: “3 million unemployed, that’s 3 million immigrants too many! France and the French first!”

⁸. Ibid note 2.

⁹. Paragraph taken from : “Trajectoires et Origines 2” / Institut national d’études démographiques (INED) / Cris Beauchemin, Julia Descamps and Pascale Dietrich-Ragon.

[Back to contents](#)

A JOURNEY INTO EXILE

Destiny's destiny

Interview with Destiny ONUOHA and Philippe BLANC, former AFVP Delegate in Niger, by Dante MONFERRER

Dante MONFERRER - Destiny Hello!

Destiny ONUOHA - Hello.

DM - Could you please introduce yourself?

DO - My name is Destiny ONUOHA, I used to live in IDO in Nigeria, which is in the south, not far from Lagos.

DM - Can you tell us a little about your family?

DO - My father is a farmer. He grows plantains and pineapples. He lives in a small village. I have three brothers and three sisters who still live with my parents.

DM - And did you go to school?

Gangs at the university

DO - Yes. I went to primary and secondary school and passed the university entrance exam. I wanted to study economics at university. But I had problems with gang members who wanted to extort money from me. They're students, they are in the classrooms and they threaten other students like me in order to extort money. Since I'd received good marks

on the exams I told them I didn't need their help getting in. So then they started molesting me, telling me that if I didn't give them money, I wouldn't be admitted. I refused and I didn't get in.

DM - But you couldn't get help from the police or the teachers ?

DO - No, the police don't do anything. They don't protect you at all.

DM - What about the teachers ?

DO - My uncle was a professor at this university, which is why I wanted to go there. I went to see him, I talked to him, he told me he was going to help me, but in the end, he didn't do anything.

DM - And aren't the students organized to react against the gangs ? Isn't there a student union or student organization that tries to set up mutual protection ?

DO - Actually, to be protected, you have to join a gang. There are different gangs: black, blue, red, yellow... (see box)



Destiny is a member of the Saint Maximin rugby team

DM - The gangs are so powerful that everyone is afraid. If you're not in a gang, you're defenseless. It's unbelievable! That means the gangs control the university! So, what did you do? Did you go back to your village?

Nigeria: "Cultists" keep terror alive on campus

Extract from an article by Michael Pauron, published on February 1, 2018
(Jeune Afrique)

Some of the country's universities are being cut to shreds by the "cultists", veritable ultraviolent mafias which operate with complete impunity. We are now witnessing a veritable "cultists war" whereby gangs compete for control of the extortion rackets, drug trafficking and prostitution that take place on campus.

Each gang has its own political "godfather" for whom it does its utmost to defend. Machetes and AK-47s are used to settle scores.

The cultists have become so powerful that they often impose their rule and control over the professors. "They decide who gets a good mark and who passes their exams. To oppose them is to risk your life," says Stella, a professor in Port Harcourt.

Cultist students are all the more untouchable as they are often armed and financed by politicians who use them to get rid of troublesome rivals. The cultists also impose their candidates for management positions within student institutions.

Founder of the Sahara Reporters website, Omoyele Sowore was a student at Unilag, the University of Lagos, in the 1990s. Having committed the imprudence of opposing them, he was beaten, tortured and forced to leave the country.

"They consider that all the girls belong to them and that it's up to them to decide who they sleep with," recounts one student.

When the clashes turned into a massacre, the army landed on the campuses. But the federal authorities are finding it all the more difficult to eradicate the phenomenon in part because and for the past twenty years they have also shown little interest in improving the working conditions of professors. Delays in payment of salaries can span several years. Financially strapped, professors tend to give up and let parallel powers take over.

"Yes, I too dream of going to the USA or the UK, especially to escape the cultists," admits one young woman. *"But you have to have the means to do it and get a visa, which I don't have. So, for the time being, I'm staying in Lagos and trying to be polite to the cultists so they don't come after me!"*

Some headlines over the year on this subject:

Brutal murders on Nigerian campuses (source BBC)

- 1 killed at Enugu Institute of Technology in 1997
- 2 killed in their sleep at the University of Jos in 2002
- 14 shot dead at the University of Nigeria in 2002
- 5 axed at Rivers State University in 2006
- 2 decapitated and used as goalposts at Abia University in 2016
- 13 massacred at Kogim State University, 2019
- 2 decapitated and used as goalposts at Abia University in 2016
- 13 massacred at Kogim State University, 2019

The itinerary of exile

DO - Yes, I went back to my village and worked with my father for a year. But I didn't want to work with my father, I wanted to continue my education, so I packed my suitcase and left.

DM - And where did you want to go ? What were your plans ?

DO - I didn't have any specific plans. I just told myself that I couldn't stay in Nigeria because I was threatened at university and I felt I had no future in my country. I met a lady who said to me, "I'm going to Libya, if you want, can you come with me?" I followed her, because I wanted to go to Libya and then on to Europe.

DM - Tell us about your journey to Libya. How did it go ? How long did it take ? You came via Niger, I suppose...

DO - Yes, I came via Niger, and it didn't take long. I arrived first in Agadès, Niger. I stayed there for about two weeks and paid a smuggler to get me into Libya. It cost me around 300 euros. I traveled by truck, and there were at least twenty or twenty-five of us on the truck. The desert crossing was difficult. It took 3 days because of the checkpoints. At the Libyan border, in Sabha, we were stopped by police. They asked us to raise our hands, searched us and took all our money. When you arrive in Libya, you have nothing left. I stayed in Sabha for two or three months, working a bit... Then a lady said to me, "You should go to Tripoli now!" I followed her and when we got to Tripoli, I was kidnapped. It was

the lady who had advised me to come to Tripoli who had organized everything.

DM - Was she Libyan ?

DO - No, she was Nigerian! I was kidnapped; they threatened to call my father and ask him to send money. I said I didn't have the number, so they beat me every day. Then one day passers-by heard people crying and called the police. The police arrived to see what was going on, and discovered that it was an organized kidnapping site. They arrested everyone, including me. I was saved from being kidnapped, but I was put in prison. I was treated fairly well there, we got a meal twice a day. But I was imprisoned because I was an illegal immigrant. I was in prison for about 4 months. One day a contractor came and said he needed a worker for his company, so I volunteered. He put me to work for a week, I finished the job, but contrary to the promise he had made me, he didn't release me. He took me back to prison. Then another contractor came looking for workers, and I volunteered again, working for him.

DM : What kind of work did you do ?

DO-I moved around bricks and did small jobs around the house.

DM - And this employer freed you ?

DO - Yes, he freed me.

Philippe Blanc - Destiny came across an exceptional guy, and he kept in touch with him. This guy helped him get out of Libya. There are also decent, humane people in Libya. It's important to underline



African migrants crossing the Sahara

that, because the current view of Libyans is very negative.

DM - And then you embarked on the project of crossing the Mediterranean... How did you do it ?

DO - I was working for this gentleman as a shepherd, looking after his sheep, and one day he said to me, "The country is not

stable, there's war everywhere". He offered to pay for my trip to Europe.

DM - Did you leave quickly or did you have to wait a long time before leaving?

DO - I had to wait a long time, at the seaside, it was about a month. We took an inflatable boat, and there were at least 150 of us on it.



Migrants at the Zawiyah detention centre, Libya. Credit...Taha Jawashi/Agence France-Presse - Getty Images



African migrants near Lampedusa, Italy. February 2014. | Photo: Picture Alliance / dpa/
Italian Navy Press

DM - Were there people of all nationalities?

DO - Yes, Nigerians, Malians, Senegalese...

DM - Who was piloting the boat? A smuggler?

DO - Yes, and he was caught by the police, he's in Nigeria now. When we arrived in Europe, a helicopter flew over us, they took a photo of the smuggler, they didn't even put him in prison, he was just immediately sent back to Nigeria.

DM - And how did the crossing go?

DO - Oh, it wasn't easy. We left in the evening, around 6pm. And we arrived the next day at 6pm too. No, actually, we arrived at noon, but they kept us on the boat until 6pm.

DM - And on the boat, did you have enough food and water?

DO - No, there was nothing to eat or drink. We were stuck, we couldn't move.

DM - Were there women and children too?

DO - Yes, of course.

DM - You were on your way to Italy, to Lampedusa?

DO - Yes, that's right.

DM - How did you get to Lampedusa?

DO - We were picked up by a Canadian boat. They gave us something to drink. They took us to Lampedusa, but they couldn't dock. So they got in touch with the Italians, who picked us up a day later. It wasn't a police boat, it was an NGO. But they weren't allowed to dock either. We waited for almost another full day. They finally put us on another boat to go to Lampedusa.

DM - And when you got there, what was it like?

DO - Everyone was searched to see if any of us had a bomb (laughs) and then they put us in a hostel.

DM - Did they make you feel welcome?

DO - Yes, they welcomed us. It was the Red Cross who took us in.

DM - Did the police register you too?

DO - No, no. I didn't even see the police. The first time I saw the police was when they came to take us to the plane and deport us.

DM - Oh yes, they wanted to send you back to Nigeria?

DO - Yes, we were taken from Lampedusa to Sicily, to Palermo, to be deported, but in Sicily there was no room for me on the plane. The plane left, leaving a lot of people behind, so they said, "You're on your own, but you have to leave the country!"

DM - And from there you arrived in Italy, on the mainland?

DO - Yes, we took a bus ticket and the bus got on a ferry to the mainland.

DM - When you got to Italy, what did you do?

DO - I arrived in Rome and tried to apply for asylum, but they told me it would be a bit complicated. So I said to myself, if that's the way it is, I can't stay here. They gave me a month to leave the country.

DM - So you left Rome for the North, for France?

DO - Yes, I only stayed in Italy for a month and a half.

DM - Did you work there?

DO - No, no, I didn't work. I still had some money on me. In Rome,



Destiny's perilous route across the Sahara, then the crossing from Tripoli to Lampedusa in an inflatable boat and finally the long journey to Marseille and Saint Maximin. Nearly 7,500 km in all.



Destiny and its rugby team

I took a ticket to go straight to Spain. When the bus entered France, after Ventimiglia, it was stopped by the police. The police saw that we had no papers, so they took us off and sent us back to Italy. I tried to cross again on foot, but they stopped me again. In all, I made four attempts to cross. The first three I failed, but the fourth time in Ventimiglia, I gave money to a smuggler and he was the one who got me through to France.

DM - And did you go over the mountains?

DO - I tried to go over the mountains once, but they stopped us too. No, I went by car, and we weren't checked. I arrived in Menton. With the last money I had left, I bought a ticket to Marseille. When I was in Italy, my father had sent me some money, 150 euros. In Marseille, I made an appointment to apply for asylum. I stayed there for two weeks, sleeping at night in a small church. The priest let me sleep, but in the morning I had to leave and go outside.

The Welcome Association and meeting Philippe Blanc

One day, I met a lady in the street and she asked me where I was sleeping. I explained that I didn't have any accommodation and that I slept in the church, and that I was on the street during the day. She asked me if I'd go with her in case she might help. I agreed and she found me a place in Saint-Maximin, with a lady called Marie-Cécile: she was a member of an association called Welcome, an association that helps migrants. And then I was introduced to Philippe Blanc.

PB : Yes, that's how I met Destiny and got arrested myself. We, Destiny and I accepted a job with caterers but I didn't know they were from the Rassemblement National. They reported me to the police. So one day, two policemen showed up and told me they'd come to investigate a presumed concealed migrant worker and showed me photos of Destiny making a phone call in the garden. After a quarter of an hour, one of the two policemen

received a phone call, so he left the room and the other policeman said to me: "Sir, you're not risking anything with me. What you're doing is great! If I could do the same thing, believe me, I would? And he adds: "The prosecutor, he's worse (more supportive of migrants) than you."

And that's how, in the end, I wasn't bothered any more. I was summoned to the gendarmerie. When it came time to take my DNA sample and photograph, the gendarmes were called away for an 'emergency' and as departing they said, "We'll see you later", but they never summoned me again.

DM- And how did you take charge of Destiny ?

PB - The representative of the Welcome association, Marie-Cecile, who introduced me to Destiny asked if I would take him in. In a book I published, I wrote that when I was twenty and a Volunteer for Progress, in Niger my eyes opened to the realities of the world, and that I owed credit to Niger for some extraordinary years of my life.

So the Good Lord said to me, *"Well, since you've published this, now you're going to take care of Destiny and make sure that going forward he has the same life journey and happiness as you"*.

Still no residence permit, after 4 years of integration!

So now I've got no choice but to help him. That was 4 years ago. For the past 4 years, we've been debating the number of articles and pages he's been covered

in the newspapers. He's had a remarkable integration process: he's learned French, he's on the rugby team, all the rugby players love him. When he scored the decisive score against Brignoles, the whole crowd stood up and shouted: "*Destiny! Destiny!*" He also does a lot of volunteer work.

I wrote to the President of the Republic, who told me to speak to the Prefect. The Préfet never lifted a finger, neither himself nor the Sous Préfet of Brignoles whom I know personally.

We have yet to obtain a residence permit with the right to work. In spite of everything including Marie-Cécile who took the risk of hiring him as a night watchman at her home for young migrants. We're now waiting for Destiny to accumulate a certain number of payslips so that we can perhaps use this documentation to obtain a residence permit with work.

DM - An asylum seeker can't work. It's a total aberration! When we let people go for years without working, it's intentional, it's to discourage them, and push them down the path of delinquency. How much longer will Destiny have to wait?

PB - Now he's overstayed by five years, but as long as he can prove he's been here for five years, I think things will change. We've had at least five pages of articles in Var-Matin recognizing his full integration. You have to remember that we're in a department where 6 of the 7 deputies are from the Rassemblement National. The atmosphere is not at all favorable to welcoming refugees. That's why

I'm trying to fight for change. People live in fear. When you talk about the Harkis, for example, there's a colony of Harkis in Saint-Maximin, which is superbly well integrated and poses no problems... When you tell them that, people respond: "It's not the same, they had the FLN after them!" But it's exactly the same, it's the same problem for Destiny.

DM : It's a total aberration, all the studies show it; I was listening to the Pascal Herran video you sent me, all the studies consistently show that if people have work, if they're welcomed normally, they integrate without any problem.

PB : Destiny didn't come to France to live on welfare, he wants to become a crane operator, and I can tell you that we're currently looking for crane operators for our building sites! We need people to meet our labor needs, yet we refuse to let these people integrate.



Philippe Blanc (3rd from right) and Destiny's friends come to the Prefecture to support his application for a residence permit.

[Back to contents](#)

The city of Rennes: Citizen action for dignified migrants reception

Interview with Mr. Desmots, Deputy Mayor of Rennes, and Ms. Poppe, Rennes Head for Europe

Approches Coopératives met with Mr. Xavier Desmots, Deputy Mayor of the City of Rennes, responsible for Local Democracy and Citizen Participation, and Ms. Stéphanie Poppe, Head of Europe in the International and European Department of the City and Metropolis of Rennes, to learn about the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) launched by the City of Rennes to guarantee dignified migrants reception in Europe.

AC - Good morning, Mr. Desmots and Ms. Poppe. Can you tell us why the city of Rennes has launched this initiative, and what its aim is?

XD - Like many cities in France, and in Europe, the municipality of Rennes is encountering a number of difficulties in welcoming with dignity migrants who arrive on its territory, especially families with under-age children. We don't receive enough support from the State, whose responsibility it is, to deal with this problem. But the decision to take an initiative in this area was not taken by the Municipality alone, it was the fruit of a collective participatory approach with our citizens.



AC - Yes, I noticed that you are specifically in charge of local democracy and citizen participation. This is a subject of particular interest

to "Approches Coopératives", and in July 2021 we will be publishing an issue of our magazine devoted to participatory democracy and citizen



Xavier Desmots

involvement. Can you tell us what the Municipality of Rennes is doing in this area?

Involving residents in policy-making

XD - A pioneer in citizen participation, the City of Rennes has been experimenting with new solutions since 2014 to involve an ever-increasing number of residents in shaping its public policies. That's why we've created a website specifically dedicated to citizen participation: the "Fabrique citoyenne": <https://fabriquecitoyenne.fr/>. If you visit this site, you'll see that it provides for numerous consultations with the people of Rennes on a wide range of subjects: the production of renewable energies, urban planning, neighborhood development, participatory budget, etc. Of course, we also increased the number of physical consultation meetings with residents, support for residents' initiatives and the right of

interpellation (meaning recognition by one's chosen identity).

The European Citizens' Initiative

AC - And it was as part of this dynamic that the consultation with residents led to a European Citizens' Initiative?

XD - Yes. In order to mobilize local citizens and players around a common cause, and to sustain local dialogue and debate on European issues, the city's departments and Labo Europe have devised an unprecedented participatory process which started in 2021.

A laboratory of European citizenship

AC - Let's stop here for a moment. Ms. Poppe, you are responsible for Europe engagement within

Rennes' International Department. Can you tell us about "Labo Europe"?

SP - We believe it's important to promote European citizenship and to examine its founding principle which is essentially building a collective sense of belonging based on adherence to shared values and a common project. That's why the City of Rennes strives to nurture public debate about European engagement and public affairs.

Indeed, with the rise in electorate voting abstentions and the expansion of far-right voting, there is a risk that democracy will be weakened. This is further aggravated by a European Union struggling to lend more meaning and substance to European citizenship which is perceived as disconnected from everyday life and overly technocratic.



Stéphanie Poppe in Brussels

With Labo Europe, a laboratory for European citizenship, the City of Rennes aims to explore ways of talking about Europe differently, to talk about Europe to everyone and with everyone. You can find out more about the Labo's activities at <https://sites.google.com/view/laboeurope-rennes/accueil>.

As part of the Fabrique citoyenne, the Labo aims to design innovative tools and methods for citizen dialogue. The Labo is first and foremost a place for experimentation. It serves to test, identify, collect and disseminate experiences which promote Europe and citizen participation.

AC - It's a truly original and exciting approach! Ms. Poppe, can you tell us how the idea of your associated European Citizens' Initiative to welcome migrants came about?

An idea proposed by schoolchildren

SP - First of all, the European Citizens' Initiative is a participatory democracy tool introduced in 2011 by the Lisbon Treaty, enabling one million European citizens from a quarter of member countries to call on the European Commission to legislate a subject close to their hearts. The city of Rennes seized on this opportunity by launching a three-stage participatory process:

1. June 2021 - Collection and voting of ECI ideas on the local authority's website dedicated to citizen participation: la Fabrique citoyenne
2. October 2021 to February 2022 - Organization of 6 participatory workshops that enabled citizens to exchange and debate around

the ideas submitted, and to identify in particular whether they are legally admissible, and under what conditions, by the European Commission. This stage enabled citizens to draw up 12 ECI proposals.

3. Implementation of a majority voting campaign in spring 2022 to choose one of the 12 ECIs. On the occasion of Europe Day in May 2022, Rennes announced that the ECI "Guaranteeing dignified migrants reception" received the assent of the people of Rennes, with 392 votes in favor out of 971 total votes cast.

AC - Who specifically proposed this idea?

SP - The ECI "Guaranteeing dignified migrants reception" was proposed by schoolchildren: 3rd year students from the Collège Rosa Parks, situated in the Villejean district, in autumn 2021.

Sensitive to this cause, these young people launched a humanitarian appeal for the dignity of every person set onto the paths of exile from their countries towards France and Europe. Their enthusiasm and mobilization helped convince citizens and associations (Mediaparks, Europe Rennes 35, Maison Internationale de Rennes, Maison de Quartier de Villejean...) to support their proposal and elevation to the European level.

The ECI was developed in consultation with students from the University of Rennes. As a result, the people of Rennes were able to draw up a European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) calling on the European Union to guarantee a dignified reception



for migrants in Europe. While ECIs are usually put forward by NGOs, Rennes is the first community in Europe to take up such an initiative.

The aim of the ECI

AC - What exactly is the aim of this ECI?

XD - With this ECI, the people of Rennes are denouncing the lack of respect and human dignity often directed towards migrants within the European Union, and calling for new asylum legislation with two objectives:

- Respect fundamental rights by making reception standards binding on member states in terms of food, health, housing, education and work, and guaranteeing asylum seekers dignified living conditions that are comparable throughout the European Union;
- Revise the Dublin Regulation by introducing a new mechanism for distributing asylum seekers

within the European Union, based on their free will and effective collaboration among member states. The challenge now is to obtain one million signatures by April 14, 2024, so that the ECI can be examined by the European Commission, which would then provide responses to the concrete demands made.

Public response

AC - How has the ECI been received by the public?

SP - Many citizens and associations got involved in the campaign, including Garance Foglizzo, a 24-year-old student who helped draw up the ECI. She completed a 35-stage tour of Europe by bike and train. This project, called Dignitour, enabled her not only to meet people from all over Europe (decision-makers, NGOs, experts, associations, etc.) but also to compare different ways of welcoming migrants and understand the obstacles to dignified reception. To date, over 10,220 people have signed the ICE.

International recognition

AC - I understand that this initiative by the City of Rennes has received international acclaim...

XD - Yes, the City of Rennes has won two awards for its commitment to citizen participation:

- The 17th “Good Practice in Citizen Participation” award presented on Tuesday November 7 in Rio de Janeiro by



On Tuesday 18 July 2023, 23-year-old Garance Foglizzo will be setting off from Rennes on a five-month tour of the European Union to promote the European Citizens' Initiative Guaranteeing a dignified welcome for migrants in Europe, supported by the City of Rennes. © OUEST-FRANCE

the International Observatory of Participatory Democracy (IOPD);

- The jury's “coup de cœur” for the 8th Trophée de la participation & de la concertation, awarded by the Décider Ensemble association and the Gazette des communes on Wednesday November 8 in Paris.

These awards recognize the City of Rennes, the first local authority in Europe to launch a European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) on the dignified reception of migrants.

AC - Thank you, Mr Desmots and Ms Poppe. No doubt our readers will be keen to support your initiative and sign the petition. We can only pay tribute to the City of Rennes

for its commitment to participatory democracy and human rights.

To sign and share the ECI: dignity-in-europe.com

Photo caption: Garance Foglizzo, 23, gets on her bike this Tuesday, July 18, 2023: she sets off from Rennes to survey the European Union for a period of almost five months promoting the European Citizens' Initiative Guaranteeing a dignified reception for migrants in Europe, supported by the City of Rennes. © OUEST-FRANCE

[Back to contents](#)

La Fédération des Acteurs de la Solidarité

<https://www.federationsolidarite.org/>

By Dominique BÉNARD

Approches Coopératives met with Adèle CROISE who leads the Fédération des Acteurs de la Solidarité, Soildarity Federation in English, to learn about this major organization's work on behalf of refugees and migrants.

The inadequacies of the migrant reception system in France

Refugees and migrants are often the target of lies and posturing by demagogues in the public sphere far removed from the realities experienced by the people and associations who support them on a daily basis.

The Federation's members strive to accommodate and support people through their asylum applications, integration processes and emotionally when in distress, all regardless of their legal status. In this they have a front-row seat to observe shortcomings of the French immigration system.

While European (EU) directives require conditions that ensure asylum seekers an adequate arrival

reception as well as basic standard of living with guaranteed food, shelter and protections for their physical and mental health. Yet only 50% of asylum seekers in France are received in dedicated national reception facilities. The remainder are housed in non-specialized centers from hotels to the squalid camps that have sprung up in many towns and cities in recent years. From the complexity of the administrative procedures required for an asylum application, to scant resources devoted to integration of those recognized as refugees, the reception infrastructure in France all too often places migrants in a precarious situation.

Migrants in Europe suffer the consequences of restrictive migration policies which sometimes infringe on their fundamental rights and make it difficult to integrate. More than a migration crisis, it is rather a crisis of welcoming policies and practices that we have witnessed since 2015.

In France, the law governing foreign nationals and the right of asylum has been the subject of numerous



successive reforms, most recently in September 2018. Some measures were aimed at promoting the integration of foreigners, but its main effect has been to restrict reception conditions for immigrants and asylum seekers.

Facts and figures

123,625 asylum applications were registered in 2018 (excluding asylum seekers placed under the Dublin procedure). Only 50% of asylum seekers are received in the national reception system. The total number of people benefiting from international protection in France as of December 31, 2019 is estimated at around 315,277 (Source: Ministry of the Interior and OFPRA Activity Report - 2018). The main reasons attracting immigrants to France

and for issuing residence permits are for conducting studies, family reasons, economic pursuits and then humanitarian issues.

The Federation's position

Every person, whatever their administrative status, must be able to benefit from dignified living conditions, including accommodation within the asylum or general system, in accordance with the principle of unconditional reception, and appropriate support enabling them to assert their rights: formulating a request for protection, accessing healthcare, being regularized, etc. The policy of welcoming and integrating foreigners must be an integral part of a social policy, not a security policy.

The Federation's priorities

- Promote the integration of foreign nationals upon their arrival in France. This looks like access to permanent residence permits, employment authorization (right to work for asylum seekers), housing, and learning French. This includes regularizing the conditions of people in precarious administrative situations.
- Guarantee access to physical and mental health care regardless of administrative status.
- Guarantee a dignified reception and rapid access to basic needs such as housing and food for all asylum seekers, including the thousands of CADA placements.

FAS

The Fédération des Acteurs de Solidarité is a general network dedicated to the fight against exclusion. It brings together over 870 associations and organizations working in the field of solidarity. These structures represent some 2,800 establishments and services, including 90% of CHRS (Centres d'Hébergement et de Réinsertion Sociale) shelters, a large number of day centers and housing facilities for the most vulnerable, the majority of places for asylum seekers and refugees, and over 500 structures for integration through economic activity. The Federation also has 17 national members, including major national associations such as CIMADE, Aurore, Fondation Abbé Pierre, Caritas France, Salvation Army, Banques Alimentaires, Ordre de Malte, Amicale du Nid and others. The Federation's members are responsible for welcoming, supporting and integrating people in precarious situations, taking a holistic approach to the individual and dealing with the many problems associated with exclusion: accommodation and housing, health, integration and employment, access to rights, access to culture, social ties, etc. They also directly manage their own accommodation, housing, healthcare services and social and solidarity economy activities carried out by employees on integration schemes (organic market).

The Federation works in three main areas:

1. Representing and defending common positions. By advocating the fight against exclusion, access to fundamental rights, citizenship and a return to autonomy. The Federation is a member of associations (link to partners page), and can therefore organize, alone or with its partners, public events and mobilization campaigns on all its areas of expertise. It also contributes to the development of public policy, by proposing solutions to public authorities based on the experience, needs and ideas of its members.
2. Accompanying and supporting its network. By producing analyses, studies and expert reports, as well as offering meetings and exchanges, training courses and methodological tools for professionals and volunteers in the field of social intervention.
3. Support experiments and social innovation projects. These include SEVE Emploi, a program to combat long-term unemployment, and Respirations, which gives homeless children and families access to the arts, leisure activities and scientific culture. This mission contributes to improving the solutions offered to people in precarious situations, gardening, recycling centers, solidarity garages, personal services, etc.) through ambitious and innovative training initiatives or the creation of partnerships.

Since September 2020, the Federation has been chaired by Pascal Brice, Conseiller Maître at the Cour des Comptes and former Director of the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons.

FAS and the most recent immigration law

FAS member associations, regional and national federations are reeling from the passage of the Immigration Act on December 19, 2023. Coming on the heels of a slow but steady deterioration in the means and conditions of intervention by immigration services associations over the last few months. The passage of this law is a type of tipping point, the extent of which will only be fully evident once examined by the Constitutional Council, expected at the end of January.

It includes a whole series of provisions that undermine access to basic rights (work, healthcare, housing), further undermining the prior intended unconditional nature of French immigration reception, and seriously degrading the working conditions of social workers and volunteers. These decisions forge realities and a message hostile to immigrant reception and integration and contrary to our republican principles.

Under these conditions, the Federation took a public stance on the evening of December 19, and decided to engage in 'constructive resistance'. This means resistance to the unacceptable, and constructive regarding our effort to address societal tensions and relations with public authorities.

This position has been voiced, through the Federation's extensive media presence, as the refusal of the National President to take part in a meeting under the aegis of a member of the government - the Minister of Solidarity - the day



Pascal BRICE, Chairman of the FAS

after the vote, the preparation of legal notes for the network and the preparation, following the referral, of "contributions or so-called narrow doors" to the Constitutional Council.

FAS is already taking the necessary steps to ensure that the Constitutional Council examines these measures, which are contrary to the fundamental principles of solidarity and fraternity which are inseparable from our Republic.

Gravely concerned about respect for the principles of solidarity, and in particular unconditionality, the situation of individuals and the conditions under which poverty can be combated by social and health workers who are already under strain, and clear about the fragility of the country, FAS has spared no effort to promote proceedings that are in the general interest.

It deplores the fact that cynical political calculations of all kinds have prevailed, in defiance of social cohesion and the values of our Republic.

In this context, FAS is determined

to amplify its actions to ensure that the imperatives of solidarity prevail. It is immediately launching a consultation with all those involved in the solidarity movement (people affected, social workers, volunteers, management and partners) to determine how we can mobilize collectively and be of full use to them in the forthcoming phase of constructive resistance.

[Back to contents](#)

How the French view migration

By Dante MONFERRER

Throughout human history migration has always been a variable impacting socio-political development and conflict. Consider its various movements and modalities from nomadism, slavery, and colonization to the emergence of diasporas, rural exodus, industrial revolution, and populations displaced by war and more climate induced famine.

Migration is one of the major challenges of the past and present with a considerable rise facing our century in particular. Understanding the ins and outs of migration, and deciphering what's at stake, is essential if we are to grasp this issue in all its complexity. This is just what I humbly invite you to do in reading this edition.

Demographic challenges and migration

Demography is a major determinant of migration. This is particularly the case for maintaining population levels, which, to be ensured in a given territory via natural growth, must have a TFR



Italian rescuers from non-governmental organisations help migrants off the coast of Libya. Emilio MORENATTI, AP

(Total Fertility Rate)¹ of at least 2.1 children per woman. Worldwide, this index is 2.31, and is falling steadily².

However, disparities between continents are marked: in Africa, the TFR is 4.18, followed by

Oceania and Asia (2.13 and 1.93), then South and North America (1.84 and 1.64), and finally Europe with 1.5 children per woman³. The demographic weight of Africa⁴ and aging in Europe have, and will continue to have, major repercussions on global trends. By 2050, Africa's working population

¹. Number of children a woman would have during her fertile life (15 to 50 years) if she behaved in accordance with the age-specific fertility observed in a given year.

². It was 2.35 in 2020, 2.59 in 2010 and 2.73 in 2000. "De la démographie en Afrique: les faits et l'expertise face au commerce des angoisses". RFI / Gilles Yabi / July 8, 2023

³. "De la démographie en Afrique : les faits et l'expertise face au commerce des angoisses" ("Demography in Africa: facts and expertise in the face of commercial fears") RFI / Gilles Yabi / July 08, 2023.

⁴. Africa is home to 1.4 billion people today (1 in 6) and 4 billion by 2100 (1 in 3).

will be five times larger than Europe's, and larger than that of India and China combined.

For an aging Europe, which can no longer maintain its population and will lose 95 million workers by 2050, the consequences for its economic development, its social safety net model, its vitality, and global influence will be significant.

Employers are not mistaken: the President of the MEDEF recently warned that the French economy would need nearly 4 million migrant workers by 2050, and expressed concern about the economic and social consequences of the recent immigration bill⁵.

For a youthful African continent⁶, which has just begun its demographic transition⁷, with its many handicaps, is struggling to meet the essential needs of its people. How can we meet the aspirations of young people who are looking to other horizons and taking to the road? So the big question is how to turn this demographic dividend into an asset, rather than a contentious handicap?⁸

The demographic question is one of those complex issues that needs to be tackled comprehensively, over a long period of time, with expert analysis, and choices made on well-informed data. It also requires cooperation between States and

specialized bodies along with public trust in policy-makers all of which is largely lacking today.

So instead, we are witnessing a series of lies and alarmist comments designed to stir up discontent, foster divisions, and conjure the notion of an active "migrant invasion".

The reality of migration today

Migratory flows are going global⁹. All countries are more or less affected by departures, arrivals or transits increasing worldwide, and their nature is changing too. The "migratory couples" inherited from history have lost their strength¹⁰. Points and countries of departure areas are diversifying often with no apparent link to host countries¹¹.

In the world¹², In 2020, of the 7.7 billion people in the world, there were around one billion migrants, of whom 75% moved within their own country and 25% migrated abroad. In 1965, there were 77 million migrants leaving their country, 175 million in 2000 and 281 million in 2020. 63% of them live in developed countries and 34% in developing countries. While the increase in transnational migrants is significant in absolute terms, their share of the world's population has

changed little, rising from 2.3% in 1970 to 3.6% in 2020.

There are different types of migration:

- **Seeking work** - Migration motivated for economic reasons.
- **Fleeing violence** - Forced migration, which, between 2012 and 2022, more than doubled due to increased international instability¹³, with the number of those appealing for asylum increasing six-fold.
- **Changing conditions in rural zones** - There is a rural exodus which generally occurs under duress and due to factors such as industrialization of agriculture, desertification, and famine.
- **Pursuit of studies** - Most student migration is aspirational and heads toward OECD countries¹⁴,
- **Seasonal workers** - This form of migration is mainly in agriculture with farm workers from Africa and Central America headed primarily to Spain, Italy, France, and the United States.

In this landscape, Africa¹⁵, the presumed source of Europe's

⁵. « Immigration law: employers sound the alarm about jobs in short supply ». La Tribune/Grégoire Normand/20 Dec 2023.

⁶. The median age is 17 in Nigeria, 18 in Guinea, 15.5 in DR Congo and 15 in Chad. In India, it's 28, compared with 38 in China and the United States, 42 in France and 49 in Japan.

⁷. 45% of the population is under 15, and this ratio will be 30% in 2050. The median age will be 23 in 2050, compared with 17 today.

⁸. Underdevelopment, governance, environmental problems, political, social and security crises...

⁹. Paragraph taken from : « Aujourd'hui des migrations mondialisées » / dossier Ritimo / 19 oct 2023.

¹⁰. France / Algeria, Germany / Turkey, United Kingdom / Commonwealth countries, ...

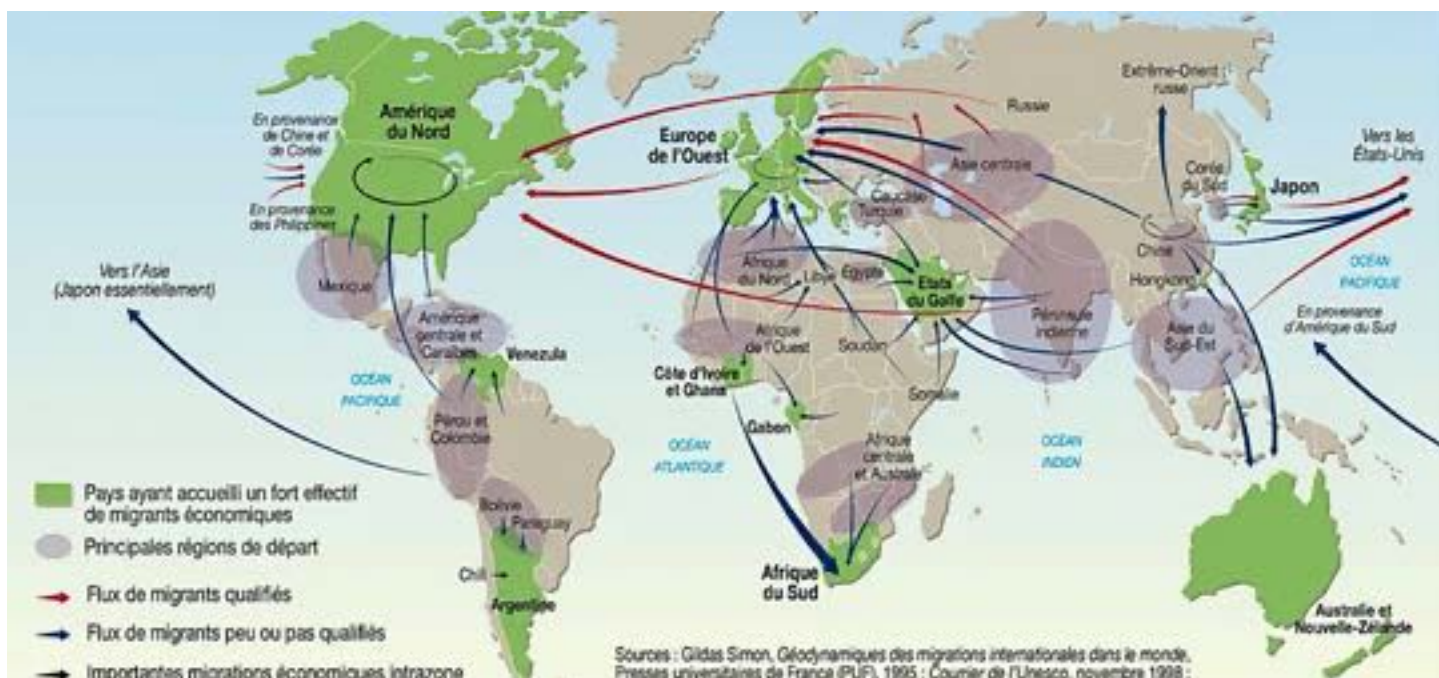
¹¹. Iranians in Sweden, Romanians in Germany, Vietnamese in Canada and Australia, Bangladeshis in Japan, North Africans and Egyptians in the Gulf States and Libya.

¹². Ibid note n°7.

¹³. By 2022, Turkey hosted 3.6 million refugees, mostly Syrians, followed by Iran with mostly Afghans, Colombia with 2.5 million Venezuelans, and finally Germany with 2.1 million refugees.

¹⁴. 2/3 of migrant students come from countries in the South, and nine out of ten study in a country in the North.

¹⁵. Paragraph taken from : « Tendances migratoires à surveiller en Afrique en 2023 ». Centre d'études stratégiques de l'Afrique/30 juin 2023. And Flore Gubert, IRD research director and deputy director of the Convergences Migrations institute.



problems, represents 16% of the world's population yet only 14% of migrants, compared to 41% coming from Asia and 24% from Europe itself where just 10% of the world's population resides. Often overlooked, most migration takes place within a given continent. Of West Africa's 8.4 million migrants, barely one in ten heads for Europe, since urban-rural, intra-regional and inter-state migration has always existed on the African continent¹⁶. Projections indicate an *"internal migration of around 86 million people by 2050 if no action is taken to reduce the impacts of climate change"*¹⁷.

¹⁶. « Migrations africaines au-delà des frontières » / IRD le Mag / January 31, 2022.

¹⁷. Ahmed Reda Chami / former Moroccan Ambassador to the EU, President of the Moroccan EESC, President of the African Union of Economic and Social Councils.

In Europe: In 2022, the EU had 23.8 million non-Europeans out of a total population of 446.7 million, or 5.3% of its total population, with significant differences between countries¹⁸. Of these, 36% come to Europe for family reasons, 20% for professional reasons, 9% are asylum seekers and 4% are students¹⁹.

Between 2000 and 2020, the proportion of immigrants relative to the European population rose by 60%. France, considered by some to be open to all migratory winds, has seen its immigrant population rise by 36% over the same period, a far cry from the 60% average and well below that of almost all other EU countries²⁰.

¹⁸. 47% in Luxembourg, 8% in France, 0.8% in Romania...

¹⁹. Ibid note 13, dossier Ritimo.

²⁰. Southern European countries (+181%), Nordic countries (+121%), United Kingdom and Ireland (+100%), Germany and Austria (+75%) in "Le débat public en France sur l'immigration est sans rapport avec la réalité" / Le Monde April 27, 2023 / by François Héran professor at

France totaled 7 million immigrants²¹ in 2022 (10.3% of its population), 2.5 million of whom (35%) have become French citizens while the foreign population totals 5.3 million²² (7.8% of the total population²³).

Over time, immigrants represented 5.0% of the population in 1946, rising to 7.4% in 1975, 8.5% in 2010 and then 10.3% in 2022. Since the 2000s, their numbers have been growing faster than the total population. In 2020, France ranked 77th in terms of the number of immigrants in its population. It is also a country of emigration, with 2.5 million French nationals living abroad.

Collège de France, Migrations et sociétés chair.

²¹. Paragraph taken from : « L'essentiel sur...les immigrés et les étrangers » / INS-EE Chiffres clés / 10 janvier 2023.

²². 4.5 million non-French immigrants and 0.8 million foreigners born in France.

²³. The number of migrants increased by a factor of 1.6, while the total population increased by a factor of 1.1.

This is the situation in France: An increasing number of immigrants, with a slow rise since 2009 yet far short of the predicted flood or what some Americans term for their context as 'invasion'. France also has an aging population and with a projected increase of just 0.3% by 2022 net migration has become the main engine of population growth. Other features include family immigration contained, international students on the rise, 'regularized' applications few and far between, the right to asylum limited to the strict minimum, and illegal immigration estimated to be in the region of 800,000.

In light of these facts, set against the backdrop of our country's long history, it is hard not to notice the gap between the reality of migration and the hysteria of public debate it provokes.

Who are the migrants²⁴

The face of immigration to France is changing: In the 70s, immigration from neighboring European countries was succeeded by immigrants from more distant origins: The Maghreb, sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.

The migrants of the 70s from sub-Saharan Africa were mostly farmers and nomads from across the Sahel forced to a massive rural exodus towards major population centers largely due to drought, consequent loss of livelihoods and governments unable to manage the disasters.

²⁴. Paragraph taken from : « More immigrants from more diverse backgrounds: immigration in France in seven infographics » / Radio France / Manon Derdeve / 31 mars 2023. And from « The essentials about ... immigrants and foreigners » INS-EE chiffres clés /10 juillet 2023.

Today, climate change continues as a major factor though political instability and associated conflicts have increased. For motivations and demographics, today there are more women than in the past²⁵. Many have immigrated for family reasons²⁶ whereas men tend to come to find a job²⁷. The proportion of female students is also rising, almost equal to that of men.

Immigrants are increasingly well educated: 33% of those who arrived after 1998 have a higher education diploma, compared with 21% of those who arrived before that date²⁸. If we look at immigrants arriving in 2019, half are under 26, and 43% of those aged 15 or over have higher education qualifications. Four out of ten immigrants speak little or no French at the time of their first job in France. A third of those having secured employment consider themselves overqualified.

67.5% of irregular African migrants²⁹, come from the west of the continent. Their average age is 24 with 77% male so higher than the broader gender split, 43% have completed secondary school and 8% have higher education. France remains the leading destination country in the OECD, but its share is shrinking³⁰.

²⁵. Women account for 58% of working-age new arrivals since 2007.

²⁶. In 2014, 62% of those arriving after age 15.

²⁷. 39% for men, versus 12% for women.

²⁸. Even though 38% of immigrants have no qualifications, compared with 16% of the non-immigrant population.

²⁹. « African migration to Europe: data from the UNDP report » /Vie Publique / 25 nov 2019.

³⁰. 38% of immigrants in 2001 and 30%

Once in Europe, even if they come up against legislation prohibiting them from work, many find low-skilled jobs. 93% report having experienced danger during their journey, but would leave again, even if they had been aware of the risks beforehand.

Immigrants are victims of inequality, first and foremost in the labor market, from which they are further removed than the rest of the population. More frequently unemployed³¹, they work in lower-skilled, lower-paid jobs. They are over-represented in "front-line" jobs³² and many continued to work during the health crisis. Their lower level of education partly explains these disparities on the job market³³.

Immigrants are twice as likely to live in poverty³⁴. They are less likely to own their own home³⁵, are most often tenants in the social sector, and 23% live in a priority urban district. More than one immigrant in four lives in overcrowded accommodation, compared with around one in eight for the population as a whole. Many suffer from health problems, particularly mental health challenges.

in 2016.

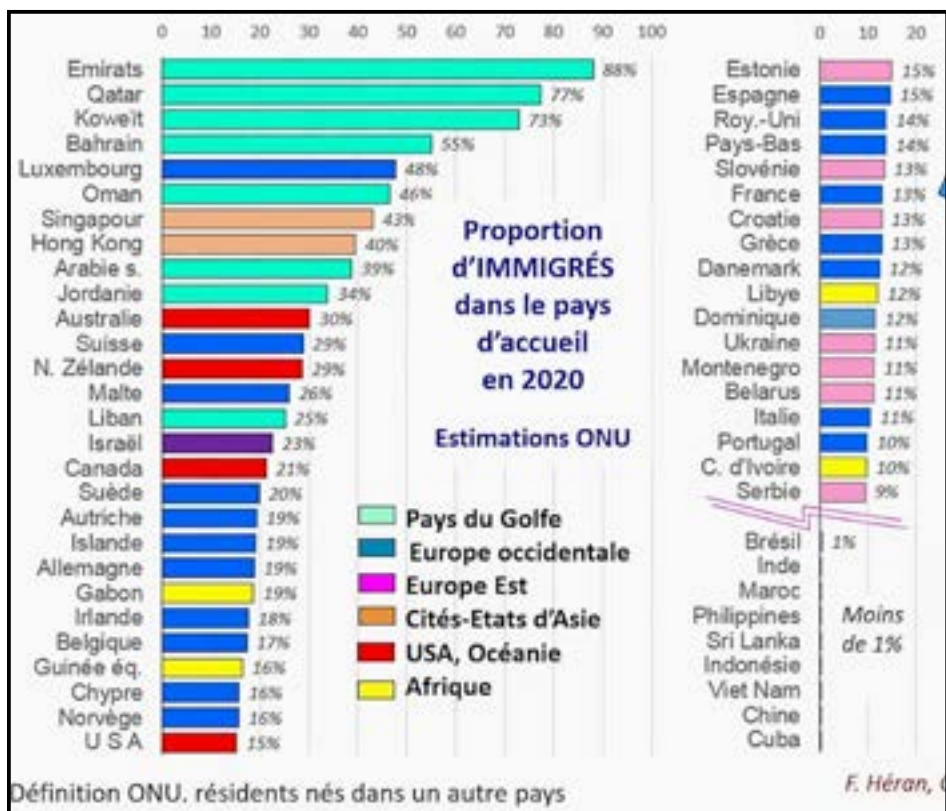
³¹. 14% of immigrant women and 12% of immigrant men among working people aged 15 to 74, versus 7% of women and men in the rest of the population.

³². 39% of employed immigrants are blue-collar workers, compared with 29% of the rest of the population.

³³. Some immigrants have foreign qualifications that are not recognized in France.

³⁴. The monetary poverty rate among immigrants is 32%, twice that of the population as a whole.

³⁵. In 2019-2020, 32% of immigrants will own their own home, compared with 59% of the rest of the population.



The percentage of residents born in another country (UN definition of immigrants) is 13% of the population of France (this figure includes nationals of other European Union countries). Compared with other countries, France is far from being “invaded by uncontrolled immigration”, as the far right claims (source: François Héran’s lecture at the Collège de France “L’immigration en débat : rhétorique et arguments, disputes et polémiques”, 29 October 2021).

The 25,000 unaccompanied minors face numerous administrative hurdles that restrict their schooling, losing 6 months to three years of schooling on average, accentuating their learning delays³⁶. and making their integration more difficult (Unicef report).

Migrants are over-represented in the metropolitan areas of Paris, Lyon and Marseille. Their proportion reaches 20% in Paris, 32% in Seine-Saint-Denis, and 13 départements (neighborhoods)

³⁶. “En France, l’accès à l’école des mineurs isolés gravement entravé” (“In France, access to school for unaccompanied minors is severely hampered”) / Le Figaro with AFP / 20 sept 2023.

account for half of these populations.

Social mobility is high among the descendants of immigrants with precariousness declining for those born and educated in France. In 2019-2020, 33% of the descendants of two immigrant parents, aged 30 to 59, have higher education qualifications, compared with 5% of their parents. Yet for both immigrants and their descendants, employment rates are lower and unemployment higher. The jobs held by the second generation are virtually identical to those of the rest of the population. Though their average pay remains slightly lower, but

this gap disappears for equivalent levels of qualification.

Immigrants of non-European origin continue to feel discriminated against, and their descendants even more so. In 2019-2020, 41% of descendants of immigrants from Sahelian Africa aged 18 to 59 and 46% of those from Guinea or Central Africa said they had experienced unequal treatment or discrimination in the last five years.

In 2014, 34% of immigrants aged 15 to 64 acquired French nationality. 59% of those naturalized declare that they have retained their original nationality³⁷. Less than half (45%) say they acquired French nationality to find a job more easily.

What factors drive people to migrate?

“In the Western imagination, emigration is often associated with poverty, but this is less and less true, and it’s no longer the poorest who leave. It takes money to migrate and for young people, who are often well educated and want to make the most of their potential, which is difficult to do at home given the many constraints. For example they are less attracted by the informal sector in which many of their elders work. So it’s among these most educated young people that we find the highest under and unemployment rates. In Africa, if you have education credentials you have a very high probability of being poorly employed and if you have a higher degree in

³⁷. 82% of immigrants born in the Maghreb, 54% from sub-Saharan Africa, 41% from Southern Europe, 42% from Asia, combine French nationality with nationality of origin.



physics, you have no chance of finding a job commensurate with your qualifications. Hence the desire of educated young people to seek employment elsewhere (...). Yet in Europe, the correlation between migration and development remains impossible to recon. Effectively, we need to support development on the African continent to reduce extreme poverty, before asking Africans whether crossing the Mediterranean still makes sense³⁸."

A further complication and contrary to popular belief, population mobility still tends to increase with development in Africa where demographic growth is not a brake on development. Though fertility rates are falling³⁹

³⁸. "Africa: assets and perils" / Questions internationales n° 115 / Sept et oct 2022 / Cheikh Tidiane Gadio - Vice-President of the National Assembly of Senegal, President of the Pan-African Institute of Strategies (peace-security-governance) / Lionel Zinsou - Economist, former Prime Minister of Benin.

³⁹. Fertility rate of 4.18 children per woman in 2023, compared with 4.36 in 2020,

life expectancy increases for a net population gain⁴⁰.

Over and above these considerations, there are many causes linked to people's individual situations that can trigger migration: asylum seekers and refugees who face danger, isolated women who no longer fit in and aspire to economic and personal independence; those highly educated (brain drain) who want to leave a country where job opportunities are not commensurate with their ambitions and skills; young and low-skilled men who have no hope of improving their living conditions so seek a job to help their families or start one of their own; international students who want to acquire skills and chances for success; family reunification joining others in their diaspora . . .

4.86 in 2010 and 5.18 in 2000 / World Sociological Atlas.

⁴⁰. Between 2000 and 2019, life expectancy "in good health" fell from 47 to 56 years, compared with 64 years for the global average / le Point Afrique (citing a WHO study) / August 17, 2022.

In the first instance, it is most often the living conditions in the countries of departure, desire of individuals to build a better future for themselves, and the opportunities for work, that drive the decision to migrate.

While sharing a language and family networks are still incentives that attract migrants to France, the country has lost some of its allure particularly for Africa. The main contributing factors are identity-based tensions with increased stigmatization of foreigners, tightening of reception policies and diminished welcoming and integration services even for future elites such as international students. These constraints not only negatively impact immigrant families but the broader economy as Europe's population is aging such that maintaining a vibrant working population is a vital concern.

What impact does migration have on countries of origin?

There is a brain drain along with a drain of skilled workers⁴¹ both of which are an impediment to development as investment in training and production potential both drop. By January 2021, 85 countries were hosting over a million students from India, more than half of them in North America. In Zimbabwe, the entire healthcare system is in jeopardy, with thousands of nurses leaving for the UK⁴². In Mbour, Senegal's major artisanal fishing port, faced with the overexploitation of fishery resources by Russian, European or Chinese fishing vessels, all the young people want to migrate to the EU via the Canary Islands.

Remittances from migrants to their countries of origin are expected to reach nearly \$660 billion in 2023, after \$647 billion last year⁴³. This amount exceeds official development assistance flows (around \$205 billion) and foreign direct investment (FDI) in developing countries (around \$500 billion)⁴⁴.

Another long-term more positive effect is how the descendants, children of 2nd or 3rd generation migrants, are becoming increasingly involved in their parents' or grandparents'

⁴¹. Ibid note n°7.

⁴². This phenomenon is common to OECD countries, whose healthcare workforce will include an average of 24% foreign doctors and 16% foreign nurses in 2019 (16% and 7% respectively for France).

⁴³. « Remittances Remain Resilient but Likely to Slow » The World Bank /13-07-2023.

⁴⁴. "Immigrants have never sent so much money back home". / Les Echos /Richard Hault /Sept. 27, 2023.

countries of origin, helping to forge stronger ties between France and these countries⁴⁵.

Increasingly dangerous and deadly migration routes

"And indeed, perhaps nothing makes the tremendous setback the world has undergone since the First World War more apparent than the restrictions placed on people's freedom of movement and, more generally, on their rights. Before 1914, the earth had belonged to all. Everyone went wherever they wanted and stayed as long as they liked (...). There were no permits, no visas, no harassing measures, at the very borders where today customs officers, police and military posts comprise a system of obstacles. In the past these represented nothing more than symbolic lines crossed as carelessly as the Greenwich meridian⁴⁶."

This quote from Stefan Zweig shows that the world of barriers, borders and walls we know today is relatively recent. The paradox of our times is that, while there have never been so many people crossing borders, the migration control regime has hardened considerably since the 1970s, and even more so at the turn of the 21st century. Today, you have to be from a rich country or have money to move freely. Others, poorer people, who want to make a place for themselves in the sun and escape their condition, often have no choice but to take perilous illegal migration routes.

⁴⁵. In Senegal, descendants of migrants are investing in innovative businesses, while in Spain, the children of exiles are helping to recover democratic memory.

⁴⁶. "The world of yesterday. Memories of a European" / Stefan Zweig (1942) / Austrian writer (1881-1942).

In the past ten years it is estimated that almost 60,000 migrants have perished worldwide with nearly half of them in the Mediterranean. Numerous testimonies testify to the harshness of the dangers and violence suffered on migration routes. An article in Le Monde⁴⁷ describes the ordeal of eight asylum seekers who failed in Marseilles and were treated by Dr. Jérémy Khouani⁴⁸ who testified: "I don't want to assign hierarchy to suffering, but the violence experienced by women (...) is three times worse than that of men."

Sold, raped, exploited, tortured before departure, during the journey and in France too⁴⁹. While the testimonies collected are chilling, these women are not only victims, but also individuals who had the courage to leave, to resist and to extricate themselves from their condition.

Making these population movements possible requires a whole "ecosystem" in the countries of departure, transit and arrival. Families, often in the front line, mobilize to finance the passage, and diaspora mutual aid networks

⁴⁷. "Rape: eight migrant women tell their stories". / Le Monde / Lorraine de Fouchier / 19 sept 2023.

⁴⁸. General practitioner in a health center in Marseille's 3rd arrondissement, has conducted a public health survey measuring the incidence of sexual violence among women asylum seekers, (Assistance publique-Hôpitaux de Marseille/ aculté de médecine Aix-Marseille). Publication on Sept. 18, 2023 in the scientific journal The Lancet.

⁴⁹. 26% of them claim to have been victims of sexual violence during their last twelve months in France, and 75% before entering the country. They are eighteen times more likely to be victims of rape than French women in the general population. 40% have undergone genital mutilation.

are set up. But it is often mafia organizations that manage a vast and complex system of migrant exploitation.

At the same time many civil society associations and self-help networks have mobilized to help migrants and defend their often abused rights. Employment agencies, migrant services associations, state institutions (security forces, agencies, etc.) and international organizations are also involved in various capacities. Since the 1990s, given the difficulties of all kinds, journey times have become longer, and staged migration has become a frequent scenario. The distinction between emigration and immigration countries is also becoming blurred⁵⁰.

Once in France, the hardships are far from over: administrative hassles, lack of resources, inter-ethnic violence, overcrowded reception centers... these are the daily lot of migrants. Germany, which takes in many more migrants, takes better care of them in terms of language learning, training, job-hunting, housing, (...) and these initiatives all facilitate their integration. France, on the other hand, tends to deprioritize integration turning many migrants into 'illegals' and vulnerable people⁵¹.

For over thirty years, EU members have been trying to restrict the arrival of migrants through policies of control, forced return and externalization such that in the absence of legal channels, the

routes of exile are increasingly deadly and criminalized.

Pope Francis, on his recent visit to Marseille, had some powerful words to say to those who uphold Europe's Christian heritage:

"Let's reject the globalization of indifference: let's not get used to regarding shipwrecks as news items and the dead as numbers; no, they are names and surnames, faces and stories, shattered lives and shattered dreams... We are at a crossroads: on the one hand, fraternity, which nourishes the human community with goodness; on the other, indifference, which bloodies the Mediterranean. We are at a crossroads of civilizations."

Why does migration raise hysteria in public debate?

*"The old skins of history"*⁵², from which our imaginations have difficulty extricating, produce a more or less diffuse racism today, yet one that still continues to discriminate and cause harm. Though openly discriminating on the basis of color or presumed "barbarity" of those one may consider as "inferior" is becoming less frequent, it is still very much alive. Thus rejection and hatred advance somewhat masked such that cultural differences replace racial hierarchies still making the Other intrinsically unassimilable⁵³.

No longer able to dominate, we continue to exclude, as if being black, yellow, Muslim, or a swarthy

immigrant explained anything. Furthermore, all this is brashly proclaimed a problem without nuanced rationale or restraint. Even in the pseudo-scholarly theories of the so-called "great replacement" can't defend their case with well grounded social science.

The ethnicization of some generates the ethnicization of others. The little games of over-valuing differences and identities are spreading to other parts of society. The war of identities, just like the denunciation of racism or discrimination, can stray into a form of racism against all that is other and oppressive.

As a result of old and new fragmentation and hierarchies, racism continues to plague our societies warns Sophie Bessis⁵⁴ *"the rejection of the different always leads, in various forms, to the threshold of disaster"*⁵⁵.

Rejection and tolerance

Over the long term, all waves of migration have experienced rejection before integration or assimilation processes began to take effect⁵⁶.

History also shows that almost all immigrants gradually join the

⁵⁰. "Migrations between the two shores of the Sahara". / revue Autre-part /Année 2005.

⁵¹. "Immigration: the test of truth / Serge July / Libération 17 sept 2023.

⁵². Supposedly different relationships to work, knowledge, women, education, the sacred, violence, etc.

⁵³. Supposedly different relationships to work, knowledge, women, education, the sacred, violence, etc.

⁵⁴. Historian, teacher, Franco-Tunisian journalist, former editor at Jeune Afrique, associate researcher at IRIS (Institut des Relations Internationales et Stratégiques), Deputy Secretary General of FIDH (Fédération Internationale des Droits de l'Homme).

⁵⁵. Paragraph from the article: "How do we define racism?" / Mustapha Harzoune /Musée de l'histoire de l'immigration / 2022.

⁵⁶. Paragraph from : "Immigration: the great denial" / François Héran / La république des idées Éditions du Seuil / Mars 2023.



African migrants, tools of diversion and hostages of European political debates? - Jeune Afrique

“national majority”. “Minorities become the majority” and a “lasting infusion” takes place, even if the “denial of France”, of which many immigrants feel victims to, is real and many French people remain reticent about the growing number of immigrants. But time has always had the effect of reducing, then eliminating, prejudice against populations once integrated, thus validating the fact that national identity is a constantly evolving construct, one that has been enriched by successive contributions for millennia. Why should it be any different for people who have recently settled in France? Why should they not gradually become French while slightly shifting what that means culturally? So why if not to invoke incompatibilities of culture, tinged with racism, that the extreme right never fails to stir up “ad nauseam”?

Despite appearances, tolerance among the French is evolving, as demonstrated by the Longitudinal Tolerance Index⁵⁷ (ILT), rose from 50/100 in the early 1990s, to 65/100 in the late 2010s, then to 68/100 in 2022. Today, 76% of those questioned consider immigrants to be a source of cultural enrichment, compared with 44% in 1992; 58% support the right of foreigners to vote in 2022, compared with 34% in 1984; and the proportion of those who consider that there are too many immigrants in France has fallen from 69% in 1988 to

53% in 2022. For Vincent Tiberj⁵⁸, this decline in prejudice is linked to higher levels of education⁵⁹. Generational renewal also plays its part⁶⁰. Even if there’s still a long way to go⁶¹. “We’re living through a veritable paradox: for the past thirty years, French society has

⁵⁷. Index from 0 to 100, based on 69 series of questions and 878 points of measurement on immigration and xenophobia. Constructed by researcher Vincent Tiberj from the annual survey of the Commission nationale consultative des droits de l’homme (CNCDH), supplemented by an “extended” indicator combining 98 series of questions and 1016 data points from other surveys. A far more relevant snapshot of society than the cookie-cutter polls of the 24-hour news channels.

⁵⁸. University professor, researcher at the Centre Emile Durkheim, research delegate at Sciences Po Bordeaux. Publications include: *La crispation hexagonale. France fermée contre France plurielle*, 2001-2007, Plon/FJJ/2008.

⁵⁹. 50% of non-baccalaureate holders, born after 1977, feel that “France doesn’t feel like home anymore”, compared with 30% of baccalaureate holders. Among older people, born before 1955, this opinion is shared by 66%.

⁶⁰. Xenophobia is largely the preserve of older people, their prejudices a distant echo of the past. Young people, on the other hand, are growing up in a multicultural world.

⁶¹. CNCDH report 2021: 62% of French people feel that “in France, you don’t feel at home like you used to”, 73% think that “many immigrants come to France to take advantage of social protection”. Increase in racist, anti-Semitic and anti-Muslim acts of 38%, 27% and 54% respectively in 2019.

been increasingly accepting of racial and religious minorities, while the political scene has been sliding towards the extreme right. This contradiction is due to the spectacular rise in abstention among tolerant voters at the poles, and the intense strategic use of polarization on the immigration issue as pursued by the 'Front National' since the 1980s⁶².

The responsibility of elected representatives

Members of the political and media class, which so often pose questions and provide answers, interpret what it thinks are voters' aspirations, and too often cave to political calculations. As a result voters have shifted from being guided by their convictions on the economic role of the State or its role on social protection, to becoming more sensitive to cultural traits and values (secularism, gender equality, immigration, homosexuality, etc⁶³). As the decades have passed, citizens increasingly vote according to their positions on issues like gay marriage or Islam, rather than on the economics of nationalization or the level of the minimum wage.

In the France of the "trente glorieuses" (thirty glorious years), where representations of the past (hierarchy of races, mistrust of foreigners, latent racism, etc.) were pervasive, far-right ideas paradoxically did not make

much of an impression, and immigration had little presence in the political debate⁶⁴. The rise of the Rassemblement National today is partly due to the fact that the age groups most open to diversity are those who vote the least⁶⁵. This situation, widening the generation gap on the subject of immigration⁶⁶, distorts the political picture of France and puts the RN in a position to make this subject the alpha and omega of French society's ills. This polarization makes nuanced, realistic public policy impossible. One can only be "for or against", reason no longer has a place, and immigration has become a question of identity.

Many people believe that the far right is merely relaying a concern strongly present in French society. yet numerous studies have deconstructed and debunked this idea, showing that polarization circulates, not from citizens to elected representatives, but from elected representatives to citizens, and that it weighs heavily on the latter's vision.

From this point of view, there is an illuminating analysis of two events concerning young people

⁶⁴. "Post-war parliamentary debates made little mention of the migration issue, which was largely depoliticized. No immigration law was passed between 1946 and 1980". / Catherine Wihtol de Wenden, CNRS.

⁶⁵. Since the 1980s, abstention rates have risen by 156% for municipal elections and 138% for legislative elections.

⁶⁶. 59% of the over-60s think there are "too many immigrants in France", compared with 46% of the under-35s; 59% don't "feel at home", compared with 34% of the under-35s; 45% of the over-45s think it's very serious to oppose the marriage of one of their children to a black man, compared with 65% of the under-35s. / Baromètre CNCDDH / 2022.

from immigrant backgrounds. During the urban violence of 2005, the alarmism of elected representatives caused the CNCDDH's tolerance index to fall by six points, while during the jihadist attacks of 2015, their desire for national unity caused it to rise by eight points.

These facts highlight the gulf between the realities of immigration and the accusations of those who stir up fear, and should prompt many politicians to question their responsibility for more accurately reflecting reality⁶⁷.

The nation's identity

The issue of migration raises the question of national identity. Eternal France or multicultural France⁶⁸? Between the 17th and 18th centuries, with the transition from the Empire-State to the Nation-State, national identity, a recent invention, became a reality⁶⁹. During the 19th century, with the establishment of a common image or imagination, a fixed and univocal vision of national identity flourished, that of eternal France.

We all too often forget that the France of our good old history books was, in reality,

⁶⁷. Tristan Guerra quoting Daniel Bischof and Markus Wagner "Do voters polarize when radical parties enter Parliament?" / American Journal of Political Science, 2019. Larry M. Bartels in "Democracies erode from above", Princeton University Press.

⁶⁸. Paragraph from : "The French crisis must be situated in the complexity of a global poly-crisis and in the context of a retreat of democracies." / Edgar Morin sociologue, philosophe / Le Monde / 28 juillet 2023.

⁶⁹. "Migration, a revolution in the making" / Gustave Massiah, / Alternatives International / 20 mars 2023.



On Le Media, eminent demographer Hervé Le Bras denounces the “Great Replacement” theory promoted by the far right: https://youtu.be/kshFprMs364?si=bkUF7dAxaq_OIzR9

multicultural, with its mosaic of peoples, languages and customs: Bretons, Alsatians, Occitans, Basques, Corsicans, It wasn't until the early 20th century⁷⁰ that a French identity has taken root. This character was amplified and modified with the first waves of immigration. Stigmatized when they arrived, these foreigners became French in the second generation, through marriage or employment, while nourishing our identity with parts of their cultures⁷¹, and of their languages⁷².

⁷⁰. With compulsory secular and republican schooling, urbanization, rural exodus, industrialization, mobility, the Great War...

⁷¹. Couscous is France's favorite dish in 2022, while in 2023 it will be poulet-frites (Cosmopolitan).

⁷². Out of 35,000 common French words, 4,192 are of foreign origin: 25% come from English, 16% from Italian, 13% from Germanic, 6.5% from Arabic, 3.5% from

Later, other migrations arrived from further afield, with different colors, customs and so on. Integration was more difficult: racism, virtual relegation to the poor suburbs, failures to find work, the helplessness or delinquency of a youth with no future, etc. All these factors were obstacles to integration. All these factors were obstacles.

A new France slowly took shape. *“It draws on its historical roots and simultaneously acquires certain aspects of the American nation, one where the ‘melting pot’ (...) sees part of its population treated as sub-*

Turkish and Persian (Henriette Walter). As for “our ancestors the Gauls”, they are said to have passed on 150 words to us, i.e. 0.5% of everyday words (“Nos ancêtres les Arabes, ce que notre langue leur doit” Jean Pruvost / Lattès, 2017).

citizens. Yet all these humiliated people need to be recognized for their very humanity, at the risk of expressing themselves peacefully or, sometimes, violently”⁷³.

At a time when identities are “essentialized” and fears are stirred up⁷⁴, it must be said loud and clear that movement, exchanges, compositions and recompositions are at the heart of all human creation. Pure languages don't exist (no more than French or Arabic, ...). Cultures and identities, which are all equal and cannot be built without otherness (...), are part of the long journey of humanity and are not set in the

⁷³. Ibid note 75.

⁷⁴. Paragraph from : “Quand la langue française en voit de toutes les couleurs” (When the French language comes in all colors) Moustapha Harzoune 2022 / Musée de l'histoire des migrations.

cold marble of a fantasized history. As Édouard Glissant⁷⁵ and Patrick Chamoiseau⁷⁶, point out, every individual has multiple identities, and it's pointless trying to reduce them to a single one, even a national one..

Today, this borrowing movement continues with young French authors and Francophone writers. Thanks also to the creativity of the suburbs, so often despised: *"The housing estates are currently the most important hotbeds of lexical creation (...). In these "cités-créusets", French is as exotic a mosaic of Arabic, African and Gypsy borrowings as the population itself. (...) The city, is it a creative Tower of Babel or a place where French is impoverished? Far from being "savages", young people have a highly developed lexical and poetic inventiveness, according to linguists working in the field"*⁷⁷ ".

It's up to us to realize that we have deep roots, irrigated by centuries of successive contributions, and that we are also a multicultural nation.

The difficulty of accepting the Other is part of our colonial history

To justify France's "mission civilisatrice"(civilizing mission), the colonial enterprise, from the outset, never ceased to demean the "indigène" (indigenous). This was a far cry from the rhetoric land of human rights. The contradiction between

republican rhetoric and colonial reality is obvious. In the decades that followed, archetypes about colonized peoples deeply permeated French society, and their effects still thrive today. Newspapers, cinema, school textbooks, popular shows, "human zoos"⁷⁸, for decades, advertising and its "Ya bon Banania" (...) repeated and popularized these stereotypes, but even more, science legitimized them, producing a racial hierarchy⁷⁹. which reached the height of its ignominy in the Nazi extermination camps.

A double discourse is thus constructed: one based on racial hierarchy and the supposed superiority of our civilization, which legitimizes conquest and domination and permeates society through a set of prejudices, and the other driven by the universalist and civilizational ideals of colonial propaganda.

But that's all in the past, say the historically oblivious. What is less so, for some, is the modern transposition of the colonial native into the figure of the migrant and their descendants.

⁷⁸. Pseudo-ethnological shows where "natives" were exhibited. During the period 1870/1930, there were thousands of exhibitions and a billion and a half admissions. These forgotten facts fed deep-seated racism. By highlighting the savagery of some and the superiority of others, they legitimized colonization. (See "L'invention de l'indigène dans le système colonial français". Nicolas Bancel and Pascal Blanchard / 2022).

⁷⁹. In the colonial racial hierarchy, the Kanak is relegated to the extreme limit of the human race, with the Indochinese (or Kabyle) at the top of the scale, a hierarchy instituted on the basis of the supposed proximity of the different races - biological and/or cultural - to the European.

In counterpoint to the "colonial native", Léonora Miano⁸⁰ points to another dimension of exclusion and domination: "color prejudice"⁸¹. (...) *It wasn't until Europe's relationship with the world evolved (...) that skin color took on political significance. Western Europeans, driven by a desire to conquer and appropriate the world (...) then conceived a vision of themselves that would enable them to avoid tormenting themselves by not respecting their own values. They decide that some people don't have the same rights as they do, that they are inferior, if not entirely human.*

(...) *To ensure the domination of the white world. Race, as a tool for exclusion, is forged by societies - like France and the United States - with ideals of freedom and equality. The idea (...) is to ensure that some people will never have access to wealth and authority. In France, we invented "color prejudice" to preserve the most rights for the category that called itself white (...) In France, people refuse to be designated as white. They want the benefits that come with it, but not the burden that goes with it. As soon as you're locked into this kind of appellation, it takes away all legitimacy to claim to be universal (...) When you're African, you're never universal*

⁸⁰. "There is a denial of whiteness by whites themselves" / Le Monde /10 Oct 2023 / Léonora Miano. (French-Cameroonian woman writer. Goncourt des lycéens 1976 for « Contours d'un jour qui vient »).

⁸¹. Establishes a hierarchy between the white, the quarteron, the mulatto, and finally the Negro - and among Negroes, a distinction is made between those who are free of color [freed blacks or mestizos] and those who are not.

(...). *There's an unthinking, even a denial, of whiteness by white people themselves.*

We'd like white people to be able to choose at any time, to refuse the historical legacy of power. This is a bit of a fantasy until large-scale asymmetry begins to be reabsorbed. When you're a white individual, nobody thinks you have evil in you simply because you're white. But whether you like it or not, it confers on you a comfort in being in the world that is not allowed to others (...) We should at least ask the question of how to get to the world that would suit everyone and how to one day manage to dismiss this question of race."

The prejudices

Prejudices about immigrants are hard to dispel.

Preconceived ideas about migrants are deeply rooted. In the 1930s, Italians "took the work of the French" and "the Spanish ate their bread"; today, African migrants are "swamping" France. Let's take a closer look at some of the assertions made in pubs and on news channels.

"They're invading France"

There are 7 million immigrants in 2022, 2.5 million of whom have become French. Foreigners number 5.3 million (7.8% of the population)⁸².

In 2021, net migration will be 201,000 people⁸³, 34% of the

⁸². Ten European countries have more than 10% foreigners, including Spain (11%), Germany (13%), Belgium (13%) and Luxembourg (47%).

⁸³. 246,000 entries and 45,000 exits, in: « Immigration bill: nine questions to understand the migration situation in France,



first residence permits granted to non-European foreigners were for studies (doubled in 15 years), 28% for family reasons (stagnated), 16% for economic reasons (increased the most), refugees and sick foreigners represent about 10% of the total⁸⁴.

By 2021, France will be Europe's third-largest immigrant-receiving country, behind Germany and Spain. In terms of population, with five new immigrants per thousand inhabitants, France ranks 15th among EU countries⁸⁵.

An obsessive focus of public debate, family reunification concerns twelve thousand people a year, or 4% of all permits, and has fallen by 10% since 2005, such is

before the opening of debates in the Senate » Yann Thompson/France Télévisions/ 06 nov 2023.

⁸⁴. "Immigration essentials: key figures"/ Ministry of the Interior-DGEF/ 23-06-2023.

⁸⁵. European Statistics Agencies, EUROSTAT.

the difficulty of obtaining it. Permits for "personal and family ties"⁸⁶ have plateaued at 11,000. These two categories have stagnated since 2012, with modest numbers.

For the right to asylum, in 2022 the 500,000 refugee mark was passed, and 131,254 applications were filed⁸⁷. Less than a third received a favorable response at first instance. 30,000 of these requests concerned minors with traumatic life histories, of whom almost 15,000 were covered by the departmental child protection systems⁸⁸.

Compared to Germany, very few exiles from the Middle East have been welcomed⁸⁹. In 2022, temporary protection was granted to 4% of Ukrainian exiles arriving in European countries not bordering Ukraine. A derisory proportion for a country like France, which accounts for 15% of the EU's population and 17% of its GDP⁹⁰.

Irregular immigration, which is difficult to count, fuels all kinds of fantasies. "*France has far fewer illegal immigrants than most European countries,*" asserts

⁸⁶. Valls circular and application of article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

⁸⁷. Same level as in 2019 before Covid-19, with 36% for Africa, 30% for Asia and 28% for Europe.

⁸⁸. "Rapport d'activité 2022". French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (Ofpra).

⁸⁹. Between 2014 and 2020, France will receive 3% of Syrians, 4% of Iraqis and 8% of Afghans who have lodged an application in Europe (36,900 Syrians, 14,100 Iraqis and 49,300 Afghans respectively). This compares with 53% Syrians, 48% Iraqis and 36% Afghans in Germany (see Eurostat figures).

⁹⁰. "Is France taking in more and more refugees seeking asylum?" OFPRA : Le vrai du faux.

Gérald Darmanin⁹¹, estimating their number at 600,000 / 700,00⁹². Other estimates⁹³, based on the number of AME⁹⁴ beneficiaries arrive at roughly the same result. These estimates suggest, without certainty, that around one in ten immigrants in France is in an irregular situation.

“They are better housed than the homeless”⁹⁵

Cette assertion fait référence au logement en hôtel de certains migrants, alors que des Français sans domicile seraient obligés de vivre dans la rue. Un Français aura en principe accès à un parc d’hébergement spécifique (hébergement d’insertion, places d’allocation logement temporaire, places de stabilisation...), en plus du logement social (intermédiation locative) et de l’hébergement d’urgence, partagés avec les migrants.

Les migrants suivant leur statut ont droit à différents types d’hébergement mais le plus souvent ils sont logés dans des conditions précaires : tentes et abris de fortune, comme en témoignent les camps de Calais, de Paris,

⁹¹. Statement by the Home Secretary in 2021 on Twitter (now X).

⁹². In Great Britain, the number of illegal migrants is estimated at between 1 million and 1.5 million.

⁹³. “Assessing the cost of care for illegal immigrants” / Assemblée Nationale / Rapport d’information N°1244 du 17 mai 2023 / Mme Véronique Louwagie, Special Rapporteur.

⁹⁴. Aide Médicale d’Urgence (emergency medical assistance); a healthcare access scheme for illegal immigrants.

⁹⁵. Paragraph from: “Received ideas about migrants” /Le Monde les décro-deurs / Mathilde Damgé/ 6 oct 2016.

“They come to France for medical care”⁹⁶

The conditions for benefiting from Aide Médicale d’Etat (AME) are relatively strict. Illegal immigrants are entitled to free medical care for one year (renewable), must prove stable residence in France and must not have earned more than €9,631 in the previous year. Mayotte is excluded from the scheme. The AME is granted unconditionally to minors whose parents are in an irregular situation.

Its budget for 2022 is €1.2 billion, or 0.5% of the Health Insurance budget. The AME is sometimes criticized for being a “medical vacuum cleaner”, with foreigners coming to benefit from medically assisted procreation or cosmetic surgery. These procedures, certain medicines and spa treatments are excluded from the scheme.

Migrants applying for asylum have access to the classic social security system and universal health protection. All working asylum seekers contribute to the general scheme, according to their income.

“They steal jobs from the French”⁹⁷

The French economy has and continues to develop in no small part due to the influx of immigrants as far back as the 1920s and “trente glorieuses”. This was widely acknowledged and exploited until the economic crises in the 1980s when immigrant rights, including work authorizations, became more constrained. To the notion that they negatively impact the economy by

⁹⁶. Ibid note 102.

⁹⁷. Ibid note 102.



“10 prejudices about immigration”: an Amnesty International publication

“stealing” jobs from the French, in fact the opposite is the case as our aging population needs to be offset by the influx of migrants to safeguard our economic and social model. Migrants already account for 38% of domestic workers, 25% of security guards, 17% of hotel and catering workers and 17% of hospital doctors. One of the challenges of integration is that almost half of them live in the Paris region, where they account for 60% of homecare workers⁹⁸.

Work permits for foreigners are issued on the basis of criteria such as unemployment in the sector of activity and the geographic area concerned. In addition, certain professions are closed to non-EU nationals⁹⁹.

⁹⁸. “Mistreating migrants won’t deter them” / Tribune de Muriel Pénicaud, former Minister of Labour/ La Croix / 3 oct 2023.

⁹⁹. Civil service, “regulated” professions requiring diplomas, certificates or ad hoc qualifications.

Europeans are exempt from work permit requirements, as are regular Algerian residents (an exception that is increasingly being contested). All other nationalities must provide appropriate documentation. Asylum-seekers can apply for a temporary work permit after one year's residence, but the prefect can refuse it "if the level of unemployment is too high for the occupation in the employment area in question".

Illegal immigrants are barred from entering the job market. But French law is not without its contradictions, as it allows them to be regularized after they have worked, albeit subject to a number of conditions¹⁰⁰. That said new laws are intended to make this type of regularization even more difficult.

"They come to take advantage of welfare state benefits"¹⁰¹

The conditions of access to social protection for migrants, even if they work and pay taxes, are restrictive, all the more so as, contrary to popular belief, many of them know little about their rights.

For asylum seekers, the European Reception Directive obliges states to offer "*an adequate standard of living which guarantees their subsistence and protects their physical and mental health*", and requires that they be housed and

¹⁰⁰. Depending on the situation, they must have worked for between 8 and 30 months, have been in France for between 3 and 7 years, not have disturbed the peace, and be able to integrate in France. Regularization depends on the goodwill of the prefectures.

¹⁰¹. Ibid note 102.

able to cover their basic needs¹⁰².

Unlike refugees, asylum seekers and irregular migrants are not eligible for family allowance or RSA¹⁰³, unless they have held a residence permit for at least five years. The proportion of non-EU foreigners receiving RSA has not changed, fluctuating around 13% of recipients.

Legal foreign nationals are also eligible for means-tested housing and family benefits¹⁰⁴.

With regard to the minimum old-age pension, some people complain that foreigners who have never paid contributions come to France to benefit from it. In reality, you have to be a regular resident of France (6 months/year) for at least 10 years.

Finally, let's not forget that the 7 million migrants pay contributions and taxes, while their country has paid for their education. They are contributors to solidarity.

"Immigration results in increased crime"

In the 19th century, the poor were seen as a danger to society. One hundred years later, the immigrant has taken their place.

¹⁰². "Aide aux Demandeurs d'Asile" (ADA) - Help for asylum seekers - pays an allowance of €14.20/day for one person. It is not automatic, and some people seeking protection have to wait to receive it.

¹⁰³. The "revenu de solidarité active" (RSA) "Active solidarity income" provides a minimum level of income for people with no means of support, which varies according to the composition of the household.

¹⁰⁴. According to figures from the Caisse Nationale d'Allocations Familiales (CNAF) in 2019, 10% of recipients were foreign (1.3 million people) and received 13% of the amount of aid.

The prejudices, tinged with racism and a civilizational divide, that accompany this "great replacement" of the poor by the immigrant are still with us today. While crime rates and insecurity remain relatively stable¹⁰⁵, the "feeling of insecurity" can increase, particularly among those who know foreigners only through selective and politically motivated media coverage of crime committed by immigrants. This portrayal of the "foreigner-as-culpable" is causing lasting damage to French public opinion's relationship with diversity.

The far right, and now the right as well, are making the most of it. "Almost 25% of prisoners and remand prisoners are foreigners¹⁰⁶. 50% of indicted offenders in major cities such as Lyon, Paris and Marseille are foreigners," says Eric Ciotti¹⁰⁷. These figures are accurate, but must be analyzed with care and hindsight¹⁰⁸. In addition, several studies¹⁰⁹ show that "*visible minorities of immigrant origin*" are subject to more controls and arrests. For the same profile and offense, foreigners are

¹⁰⁵. Homicides: 1,400 in 2002 vs. 800 in 2009, then stable over the last ten years. Assault and battery: stable from 2008 to 2016 (220,000/year), then rising sharply to 350,000 in 2022 (mainly due to tougher legislation: more and more offences are being counted as misdemeanors when they weren't before).

¹⁰⁶. They represent only 7% of the population.

¹⁰⁷. President of the "les républicains" party statement on France Info on June 14, 2023.

¹⁰⁸. The figures only refer to those who have been "implicated", i.e. not yet convicted. In fact, the proportion of foreigners convicted will be 16% in 2022, and therefore much lower.

¹⁰⁹. "Inequalities in access to rights and discrimination in France" / Rights Defender Jacques Toubon/ 2016.

more likely to be convicted, and the sentences they receive are longer. This over-representation is also the result of discriminatory treatment throughout the police and judicial systems.

A note¹¹⁰, this recently published article assesses several decades of international research on the link between immigration and delinquency. The conclusion is clear: "Studies unanimously conclude that immigration has no impact on delinquency."

And if there are instances of illegal foreigners having a higher probability of committing crimes in certain areas in France, might better access to the legal labor market close this gap? We know that the street can lead to delinquency, so shouldn't we first address the marginalizing of immigrants?

In France, two-thirds of people think there are too many immigrants. "What creates fear in the population is not the over-representation of delinquency among foreigners. It's the over-investment in this issue on the part of certain media and political leaders. In my opinion, what we're facing is a gigantic operation to manipulate public opinion. And it has to be said that, for the time being, it's succeeding¹¹¹. ».

¹¹⁰. "Immigration and delinquency: realities and perceptions" / La Lettre du CEE-PI Arnaud Philippe and Jérôme Valette / April 2023 / Centre d'Études Prospectives et d'Informations Internationales, (attached to the Prime Minister).

¹¹¹. « Immigration and delinquency: manipulation behind the figures » / Chronique France Info / Clément Viktorovitch / 18 juin 2023.

As Nicole Beaurain so aptly put it: *"If France is the country of human rights, it's sometimes up to foreigners to remind it of that fact."*¹¹²

What migration policies?

Every time a large number of migrants arrive in Lampedusa, on Greek beaches or in Polish forests, the same emotion grips official Europe and the media; emergency meetings, new measures¹¹³ (...).

The same ritual unfolds before our very eyes, and our governments, after a few martial declarations, reproduce exactly the same measures with their customary excitement.

The thirtieth law in ten years

In France, the thirtieth immigration law in forty years represents an unprecedented tightening of our migratory arsenal. The enthusiasm for such legislation has been inspired by the extreme right.

Who imagines this law will solve immigration problems any better than the previous 29? Who fails to see that the rhetoric, which is supposed to combine firmness and humanity, has been the same for four decades now¹¹⁴? Who

¹¹². "The French melting pot or the myth of gentle integration: Spanish Republicans" / Nicole Beaurain / Persée L'homme et la société.

¹¹³. Tighter border controls, increased cooperation with departure and transit countries, tougher legislation, the fight against smugglers, more deportations, etc.

¹¹⁴. Paragraph from : "France's public debate on immigration bears no relation to reality" / Le Monde 27 avril 2023 / François Héran professeur au Collège de France, à la chaire Migrations et sociétés. And "How Lampedusa embodies European migration myths. » The conversation 22 oct 2023 / Antoine Pécoud ; Professor of Sociology, Université Sorbonne Paris Nord.

believes these restrictive policies are actually going to dry up the steady stream of migrants who come as if magnetized by our minimum social benefits? Who doesn't see that most migrants don't know our laws. know of APL or minimum social benefits?

Who doesn't understand that, in the face of despair, migrating represents the hope for a better, more dignified life, which is by far the more decisive reason to move versus the supposed airlift so dear to our politicians?

So our migration policies have been based on unchanging beliefs held for several decades with new law after law grounded in the same old assumptions, advancing the same strategies and setting the same unattainable goals. For example, it is folly to think that "selective" immigration will supplant "undergone" immigration¹¹⁵..., or that it we can drastically reduce this or that migratory flow, or suspend family reunification, or to convince our fellow citizens to devote themselves to manual labor, or call into question the international humanitarian commitments that bind democratic societies, or pretend that France would be more France without immigration (...). These are all immature dreams, doomed to failure because they ignore the most basic realities. "They reflect a veritable denial of immigration, just as denial that pregnancy leads to birth (...)"

Despite the repeated failures of our migration policies, many continue to dream of a perfect world where: borders are well controlled, the

¹¹⁵. A strategy that already failed under Nicolas Sarkozy's presidency.

distinction between migrants and refugees is clear, migrants fill the labor needs of sectors “under stress”, third countries prevent irregular immigration and welcome back their expelled nationals, and where development aid helps reduce migratory pressure, (...).

Wishful thinking and the real world

Of course, in the real world, all these wishes remain pious.

But this dream horizon is so desirable that we keep invoking it in hopes of making it happen; this is precisely how myths work. Each new migratory “crisis” is yet another reason for European societies to reiterate their belief in a utopian horizon where controlled migratory flows is a reality.

But even beliefs have to come to terms with reality. Charles Pasqua, the emblematic and inflexible Minister of the Interior in the 90s, had promised to achieve zero immigration very quickly, with highly publicized charter deportations¹¹⁶. Giorgia Meloni¹¹⁷, who was elected on the promise - which we now know to be a dream - of stopping the “migratory invasion”, had to acknowledge it as regularized to cope with the labor shortage of an aging country.

An ineffective and dangerous law

It's true that migration issues raise real contradictions - a need for “firmness and humanity at the same time” as some would say. Europe claims to be the cradle of human rights on the one hand, but with its heavy colonial

¹¹⁶. Reported by Serge July in Libération Sept 17, 2023 « Immigration: the litmus test ».

¹¹⁷. Italian politician, President of the Council of Ministers since 22 Oct 2022.

MIGRANTS : RETOUR EN TURQUIE .



“My son, learn their language well! I’d understood democracy to mean bureaucracy!”
<https://www.cartooningforpeace.org/>

past has also categorized people into us and them with structural distinctions between European and non-European individuals. It's not easy to come to terms with these two heritages, and so it's tempting to take refuge in a magical world where the contradiction disappears. This is, of course, to the detriment of the much-needed rethinking of migration policies and the visions on which they are based.

What better example than the new law on “controlling immigration and improving integration”?¹¹⁸ Ineffective and dangerous, it will contribute to increasing the number of tragedies, making migrants more precarious and feeding the factory of undocumented immigrants that already produces so much precariousness and exploitation. The provisions designed

¹¹⁸. Paragraph from : “Asylum and Immigration Act 2023: Insufficient, dangerous and counterproductive measures” Ci-made.

to promote integration were already limited, and are now merely cosmetic and counter-productive. As for security and repressive measures, they fuel the fantasies that associate immigration with delinquency, not to mention the questioning of the right to land, which jeopardizes social cohesion and the republican pact. As Boris Vallaud¹¹⁹ puts it « *it's nothing more than a simple law to control foreigners* ».

The tone is set by many constraints - to mention a few: There are language proficiency requirements for residence permits, use of threats to deny residency permits or deportation, cynical claims about jobs in short supply, uncertainties about state medical aid, a ban on access to work for asylum seekers, longer waiting periods for entitlement to social benefits, quota policies, stricter

¹¹⁹. Member of Parliament for Landes The integration machine has broken down, let's fix it”. Libération Dec 11, 23.

conditions for work authorization, tougher criteria and conditions for foreign students.

At the European level: A similar lack of vision

2015 saw a significant increase in arrivals, with one million people fleeing various conflicts¹²⁰, and brought the issue of migration to the forefront of public debate.

Since then, despite a significant drop in arrivals (less than 100,000 per year by 2020), the migration phenomenon has continued to be approached as a crisis. This is reflected in tighter border controls, and restrictive and repressive measures addressed earlier and that turn back the clocks on our history. There is preference to echo populist antiphons which evoke a situation that has 'spiraled out of control', and as if we need the old "Europe as a fortress".

Europe is therefore barricading itself: there are agreements with third countries for the detention of migrants, conditionalities for obtaining funds linked to migration control, reinforcement of Frontex, regressive redefinition with regard to the right of asylum, etc..¹²¹

Europe is also using an arsenal of measures to prevent the departure of migrants: an agreement with Turkey to retain refugees from countries in the sub-region in return for money, and sorting centers for asylum seekers at the Greek-Turkish border, where difficult living conditions¹²² are a disgrace for

the EU, strengthening Frontex for border control and interception of smugglers' boats, reinforcing the link between ODA (Official Development Assistance) and migration control, thus subordinating ODA to the Union's objectives.

We should also mention the lack of a common vision and solidarity between countries, particularly when it comes to the distribution of migrants arriving on EU territory. A new, necessary Pact is under construction, but hopes for a common framework respectful of human rights and European values are fading.

Migration policies, which are far removed from our values, are sadly ineffective, but the reality of the situation regularly comes to the fore. Germany, for example, with its aging population, welcomed 450,000 refugees and asylum seekers in 2015 and 1.4 million in 2020, with no negative consequences for a country that continues to be Europe's leading economic and political force.

These agreements with third countries jeopardize the rights of thousands of people fleeing wars, the consequences of climate change, food insecurity and misery. There is also the stigmatization of relief organizations in the Mediterranean, which has become the world's deadliest migratory route globally. Reforms that make it more and more difficult to obtain refugee status seem to increasingly resemble an obstacle course. « Migration policy is approached with the obsession of containing arrivals, reducing them or even stopping them altogether. Every

lack of doctors (physical and psychological after-effects),

policy response is guided by this obsession ».

Much more than a migratory crisis, it's a political crisis at play in Europe today.¹²³

Another vision of migration is possible

The world is fractured, where more cooperation is needed to regulate major global challenges (climate, biodiversity, social crisis, migration, underdevelopment, etc.). The international bodies charged with managing these issues no longer carry much weight, and many players are challenging the international order established in the wake of the Cold War. The development of an international framework for the joint management of migration is therefore a challenge. However, such a framework is more necessary than ever, as it would help to alleviate international tensions linked to migration, improve its management by making it more orderly and predictable, and meet the challenges of human mobility in the 21st century.

Given this context, addressing the issue regionally, so at the European level remains essential, even if there are strong dissensions within. Moreover, dialogue with Mediterranean and African countries is also crucial, even if difficult. Financial interests, the ambiguity of the migration/development aid nexus, different visions and cultures, and the weight of the colonial past are all intertwined. France

¹²³. Paragraph from : "Faced with the challenges of migration, Europe opts for withdrawal". / OXFAM / July 26, 2021.

¹²⁰. Afghanistan, Sudan, Sahel, Syria,

¹²¹. Repeated reform of the Dublin system, the new Asylum and Migration Pact, etc.

¹²². Lack of food, access to water, basic hygiene, basic health care, overcrowding, underfunding, lack of legal assistance,



Petition for a different migration policy: <https://actions.oxfam.org/france/une-politique-migratoire-plus-humaine-et-juste/action/>

can neither manage these issues alone, nor open its borders without limits. But for those we welcome, the integration effort required is considerable, and must navigate between the pitfalls of assimilation and something more communitarian where their distinct cultures and skills are also welcome.

It's a safe bet that any new law will produce no better results than its predecessors, and that it will likewise come up against the wall of reality. For it's not just a question of adding measures to measures, but above all of changing our outlook and promoting a different vision of immigration. Let's stop seeing migration as a problem to

be solved, a crisis to be contained, and instead see it as an intangible reality to be better organized and enhanced. Let's propose effective reception and integration methods, let's wage a constant, general and vigorous battle against all forms of discrimination, let's draw up a proactive policy for the geographic distribution of migrants and attend to their professional and social integration...¹²⁴

A few ideas

There's no shortage of ideas and experiences to advance such a change of direction, so let's hear what different players involved in

¹²⁴. Paragraph from : "Immigration: the great denial / François Héran / La république des idées Éditions du Seuil / Mars 2023.

these issues have to say.

Muriel Pénicaud¹²⁵ who is more than a little suspect of unbridled leftism :

"Some people (...) talk about the threat of "invasion". Fear-mongering is always easier than embracing the complexity of reality. The quantitative question of immigration flows (...) reinforces the challenge and necessity of integration.

Is integration generating an air draught? The excised woman or the hunted homosexual, the youngest son leaving his family with too many mouths to feed, the threatened journalist, the climate refugee, the victim of war in Ukraine

¹²⁵. « Mistreating migrants won't deter them » / Muriel Pénicaud, Former Minister of Labour / La Croix / 3 oct 2023.



or Sudan have no choice.... Will mistreating them dissuade them from doing so? (...) Today, not only are we not integrating enough, but we're breaking up successful initiatives in progress with the inhuman and absurd belief that this will discourage others. What a human, social and economic mess! Yet the levers for successful integration are well known: school and work, housing, sport, culture, language training, and psychological support for victims of extreme violence.

Let's start with the easy part:

- Professional visas for jobs in short supply (so many SMEs are saved by hiring migrants, and friendships are often formed);
- Work for asylum seekers after one month's presence instead of six (they want to work and contribute, not be assisted);
- Recognition of foreign diplomas, with training bridges if necessary (why force doctors to become delivery drivers?);
- Encourage unaccompanied minors to obtain a diploma (when they turn 18, they lose their status and have to give up training. France marginalizes these hopeful young people as many becoming

homeless);

- An end to Kafkaesque incoherence (many foreign workers, who have complied with labor laws, lose their residency permits).

(...) There is only one dignified and pragmatic way forward: a humanism of responsibility, cooperation and openness. To welcome others without fear, we must first know who we are. We are called upon to engage in an essential democratic debate: what kind of people, what kind of humanity, do we want to be?"

Luc Behaghel¹²⁶, drawing on a well-known study¹²⁷, concludes: "Migrants don't come to take our jobs. They take the ones we leave behind, and contribute (...) to national production and the financing of pensions. (...) For once, economists are speaking with one voice: immigration benefits the host country. By comparison, the debate on the benefits of international trade is far more heated (...).

¹²⁶. "Immigration benefits the host country" /Le Monde /8 avril 2023 / Luc Behaghel researcher at the Paris School of Economics and the French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and the Environment.

¹²⁷. Study of the arrival of 45,000 Cuban refugees in Miami in 1980 by Canadian economist David Card, / Nobel Prize 2021.

Another point of consensus¹²⁸ is that what drives migratory flows is not the attractiveness of our generous social systems, but the local crises that drive people to emigrate (...). Good-naturedness (...) leads some to argue in favor of a falsely balanced "at the same time" (...). Let's generously welcome the good, and firmly expel the bad (...), let's strengthen our capacity and that of the sending countries to police their migrants, and let's boost development aid so that everyone is happy to stay at home.

But this so-called "political realism" is no such thing. Realism (...), is understanding that France will benefit on a macroeconomic level from an influx of people younger than the average among us; realism, is knowing that pushing migrants back into makeshift boats means killing them, and that this is not enough to stop the attempts; realism, is recognizing that it would be much wiser to put our resources into measures whose positive effects on the integration of immigrants have been proven (. ...): rapid access to a residence permit and authorization to work, language training, rapid securing of housing, specific programs in schools, including for pupils from the host country, to help them "put themselves in the shoes" of the newcomer.

Let's take it to the extreme: once they have governments that make good use of them, we'll have to pay Mali, Senegal, Afghanistan and Syria, not to keep their nationals, but to thank them for the gift they're giving us. A gift that will bear fruit in proportion to our efforts to welcome them. France has just shown that it can welcome

¹²⁸. Abhijit Banerjee et Esther Duflo : Prix Nobel d'économie 2019.

100,000 Ukrainian refugees. Convergence of the heart and true realism? Such a convergence must go beyond the peoples of Europe (...): justice demands it, realism is far from forbidding it.”.

A welcoming migration policy

The RITIMO association¹²⁹ imagines a welcoming migration policy, everywhere municipalities, elected representatives, associations and ordinary citizens are sketching out solutions to implement a different migration policy, based on solidarity and respect, and which envisages Europe as something other than surrounded by a barbed wire wall:

- Direct access to European funds for associations and local authorities innovating in the fields of reception and integration.
- Networking cities¹³⁰ making the choice of hospitality and joining forces to weigh up against the states. *“There are many places in France where the arrival of migrants is going very well, where the mayors and the population are very welcoming”*¹³¹.
- Distribution of applicants according to the power of the states, their population, but also the preferences of applicants

¹²⁹. Dossier : “Migration: Faced with the politics of hatred, international solidarity on the ground” / Article : “Without barbed wire, racism and deportations: what could a different migration policy look like?” / RITIMO par Basta et Rachel Knaebel/ 28 mai 2018.

¹³⁰. Calais, Alpes-Maritimes, Paris, Lesbos, Lampedusa, Grande-Synthe, Italy with the 250 municipalities of the “Rete dei Comuni Solidali” network of solidarity towns)

¹³¹. Marie-Élisabeth Ingres, head of mission at Médecins sans Frontières (MSF).

(place of residence of family members)..

- Humanitarian visas to prevent shipwrecks: Europe doesn’t want them, but Canada, for example, has granted around 40,000 such visas to Syrians.
- Rehabilitation of economic migration: *“We need to re-establish legal access routes to the EU (...), those who apply for asylum risk their lives to get here, and those who come for economic reasons also apply for asylum, since there is no other access route! (...) The difference between “economic” migrants and asylum seekers is not easy to establish (...). For example, those who are in Libya to work are then victims of torture and violence, and become asylum seekers*^{132”}.

On the occasion of Pope François’ visit to Marseille, Cardinal Aveline outlined a number of proposals: the launch of a Mediterranean ecclesial assembly bringing together lay people and clerics; the creation of an academic research network to “strengthen Mediterranean awareness”; plans for a Mediterranean youth meeting on ecology, and for a peace boat to contribute to youth dialogues¹³³, etc.

In 2016 a German newspaper¹³⁴

¹³² Francois Gemenne, political scientist, Belgian researcher, lecturer at IEP Paris, director of the Hugo Observatory of Environmental Migration at the University of Liège. Co-author of the sixth IPCC report, he specializes in environmental migration issues.

¹³³. « Welcoming migrants can be tough, but it makes you happy » / La Croix 1 oct 2023 / Jean-Jacques Pérennès Director of the French Biblical and Archaeological School in Jerusalem.

¹³⁴. Sächsische Zeitung, newspaper distributed in the Saxony region.

decided to mention the origin of the perpetrators in its articles. When they were foreigners, but also when they were Germans. The result: in this region, in just a few years, concern about immigration dropped significantly. Other similar research, notably in Switzerland, points in the same direction.

In Toulouse, the association AVEC (Actions pour Vaincre l’Exclusion de Citoyens), which aims to combat prejudice, organizes meetings where local residents come to listen to the life stories of exiled people, told directly by themselves¹³⁵.

In schools, educational campaigns (on development, international solidarity, anti-racism) are an integral part of teaching guidelines, as is the distribution of various tools: the “Demain le monde” campaign, “Les migrations pour vivre ensemble”, etc.¹³⁶

These few examples, among many others, show that another path is possible. So why should we make affirmation of a fantasized French identity the sole horizon of our existence, our relationship with the world and our place in the concert of nations? Why should we be afraid of the Other and lock ourselves within Fortress Europe? Shouldn’t we be building bridges rather than walls? Irrigate our old European substratum with contributions from elsewhere, as we have done throughout our history?

For our part, we have chosen.

¹³⁵. Occitanie Region Newsletter / Oct 16, 2023.

¹³⁶. “Prejudice, a key player in intercultural relations” Yvan Gastaud et Bruno Quemada/ Migrations et sociétés 2007/1 n°109

[Back to contents](#)

Non-profits coordinate state-wide support network for new immigrants

By Janey Tallarida

Preface – by Larry Childs

Social services organizations frequently need to balance their need to work independently versus in partnership with other agencies.

Why, when and how to make such discernment were pressing questions intensely reexamined among immigration service providers at the outset of the 2020 pandemic in the state of Massachusetts. Historically these organizations had rallied together to collaborate on matters of public advocacy, but not so much around strategy, service delivery, or in their fund raising. Perhaps it was time for a paradigm shift was the thought among a few City of Boston officials. Pressing them to act was the exclusion of their undocumented immigrant residents by the federal COVID relief packages.

Quickly the city assembled a few key leaders from among the immigration services community to explore the question. Emerging from their dialog was seed money for what they called the 'Boston Resiliency Fund' to be administered



The passion and collaborative spirit of our 15 partner organizations is reflected by these two Brazilian Worker Center leaders. Details about our partners and work together is summarized on our website: <https://www.immigrantrelief.org/>

by a new, Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative.

Within a few weeks 15 organizations convened, not just within Boston but across the state, under this single banner. They assembled a part-time staff, met bi-weekly on zoom, and started genuine

collaboration fueled initially by the city funds and then soon thereafter millions more as the philanthropic community was impressed by the passion, efficacy and efficiency of the cooperative approach. What follows is an overview of their compelling, innovative model.



Members of the Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative meet virtually on a bi-weekly basis and annually physically together pictured here at their 2024 retreat

Brief Description of Organization

The Massachusetts Immigrant Collaborative (the Collaborative) was founded in April 2020, to address the needs of immigrant families who were inequitably impacted by the pandemic. Many of our community members worked in hospitality, restaurant, cleaning, and other sectors in which jobs were lost or hours cut. We are a diverse, statewide group of 15 immigrant serving organizations working together to ensure access to resources that support, with dignity and equity, immigrant communities that have been historically under-resourced, including those at-risk and/or without status.

We do this in solidarity with the families and individuals, respecting their rights and supporting long-term economic mobility while addressing urgent needs and access to the broad range of services that each partner organization provides. All 15 partners are experienced, community-based organizations who, together, provide sustainable solutions that empower immigrants to increase self-sufficiency.

Who We Serve

The Collaborative and its partners serve Massachusetts immigrants from across the globe who are at-risk, underserved, and/or low income. Over the past three years, we have provided over \$10,000,000 in emergency cash, food and services to more than 120,000 immigrants, helping them avoid eviction and put food on the table. Funding is disbursed directly to families, and tracking systems ensure efficiency, transparency, and accountability. Because of the high cost of housing, food, and other urgent needs, we continue to support families, both newcomers and long-term residents in this way.

Today, Massachusetts is experiencing a significant influx of migrants and a dire need for housing and resources. According to a July 13th Boston Globe article, “the sheer number of arrivals has exhausted available shelter space statewide, with officials resorting to using empty dormitories and hotel rooms.” Over 5,600 families reside in emergency shelters, and that number grows daily. On August 8th, Governor Healey declared a

state of emergency. Several of the Collaborative’s partners are working closely with the state’s Office for Refugees and Immigrants to support families.

Alignment with state priorities

The Collaborative aligns with interests of the state of Massachusetts and a wider public by addressing hurdles that immigrants, refugees and asylees face while integrating into United States society. We strive to empower immigrants to achieve long-term stability and economic mobility using a comprehensive, holistic approach. For example, workforce development including English classes, job readiness and ensuring workers’ rights are a strategic priority. But to achieve financial stability, immigrant workers must have work permits. The Collaborative’s Centralized Legal Services supports immigrants in obtaining work permits, permanent residence (green cards) and citizenship when possible, leading to economic inclusion and better opportunities.

The Collaborative believes that our leadership should represent our community so we are led by

a four-person steering committee that meets weekly, consisting of executive directors of our partner organizations. All but one steering committee member are immigrants (originally from Guatemala, Brazil, and Haiti) reflecting and representing the community we serve. Most of our 15 partner organizations are also led by immigrants who understand firsthand the challenges faced by their community. Knowing the community first-hand enables us to promote meaningful integration and belonging to program participants. Our leaders and other staff are well-equipped to provide culturally responsive, trauma-informed assistance to those we serve, and to speak with them in their own languages.

Our strategic priorities

- 1. Emergency Cash and Food Assistance:** Many immigrants continue to need financial assistance. Over the past three years we have disbursed \$10 million in emergency funds and bulk food to 120,000 people. The majority of people served participated in bulk food distribution programs. Direct cash assistance commonly ranges from \$300 to \$750 and is used for housing, food or utilities.
- 2. Immigration Legal Services:** The Collaborative partners with four immigration legal services providers: The Mabel Center for Immigrant Justice, The Rian Immigrant Center, Agencia ALPHA and Immigrant Family Services Institute. Legal partners' staff include expert immigration attorneys and Board of Immigration Appeals accredited representatives who



Members of the Collaborative discuss their 5 strategic priorities at their annual retreat. These include: Emergency assistance, shared legal services, workforce development, institutional capacity building and advocacy.

- provide consultations and legal representation.
- 3. Workforce Development and Worker Rights:** Eleven partners offer economic inclusion and mobility programs including English for Speakers of Other Languages and basic computer classes; skill building programs and intensive career coaching. M.I.C. advocates for fair and equitable economic systems and offers Know Your Rights workshops to educate the community about workers' rights and we are exploring financial coaching for community members.
- 4. Advocacy:** The Collaborative supports our partners engaged in advocating for immigrant rights. M.I.C. organizations have advocated for Census 2020, the Work and Family Mobility Act, and the Safe Communities Act.
- 5. Shared capacity building:** Our partners' meet bi-weekly to

share challenges, successes and resources. A number have offered trainings on topics that help other partners support their communities including workers' rights and immigration law basics. This is a significant time commitment on top of their staff's ongoing programs and responsibilities. The Collaborative seeks to provide a percentage of grant funding to support our partners' staff time sharing resources and expertise, coordinating families' applications for emergency funds and connecting people in need of legal support to our Centralized Legal Services. The Collaborative also supports its own staff person who facilitates Steering Committee and Partner meetings, and fosters communication and collaboration between partners.

[Back to contents](#)

Escaping Prison of the Mind

First published by IFSI: February 2, 2022

By The IFSI Immigrant Navigator Team: Dr. Mario Malivert, Larry Childs, Makendi H. Alce, Angie Gabeau and William Pierre-Louis, Jr.

illustrations: Teddy K. Mombrun

It was early spring in Boston, a time of hope and renewal for many. Yet to the three Haitian immigrants who had just arrived at the IFSI office, the promise of spring renewal was still uncertain. We invited them to meet one another, share their stories, and learn about strategies and resources. Our purpose was to help them navigate their way towards a better life in their newly adopted country. Recovering mental health was also a goal for each of them.

Group juggling

After greetings and a formal welcome, they stood in a circle with a few staff members and the IFSI youth film crew who were there to document the gathering. While sharing their names, participants tossed back and forth colorful yarn balls across the circle. Despite the occasional drop, light pressure to perform, and mounting laughter, a 'group juggle' was achieved. This uncommon collective challenge from Project Adventure illustrated how juggling various life challenges could often be more

achievable and enjoyable when collaborating with others. Also, it broke the ice, quickly built bonds, and set a tone for the personal sharing ahead. They sensed one could open up and trust members of this group, not worry about being perfect with their words, and feel reassured that this would be a safe space.

Choose three cards

After a moment to reflect, frame goals, and grasp the structure for the afternoon, they all settled into chairs around a table covered with picture cards. Each person then selected three cards representing aspects of their migration journeys and hopes for the future. Sharing stories with strangers still felt risky but less so now that a playful moment and sense of clear purpose connected them.

Doro started - 'I chose this card,' he said, 'An image of a boat and people going to sea because it describes my situation. I am one of the Haitians who experienced the worst kind of trauma while on the road trying to get here. It has

been such a path of tribulation ever since we left Peru, having to cross ten countries. At one point, we took a small boat from Colombia to Panama, where we then walked for seven nights through the jungle. We were unable to see any light except the occasional glow from the sky. During daylight we had to hide sleeping in open abandoned fields.

Then it was on to Mexico where we didn't receive any support and the Haitian consulate was not very helpful. They do little there to help their people. All these experiences caused me to feel disappointed by the leaders of my country. Feeling no love... It is so sad especially since we are supposedly the first free black people in the world. Sure, we no longer have chains binding our feet but it feels like we still have them in our minds.'

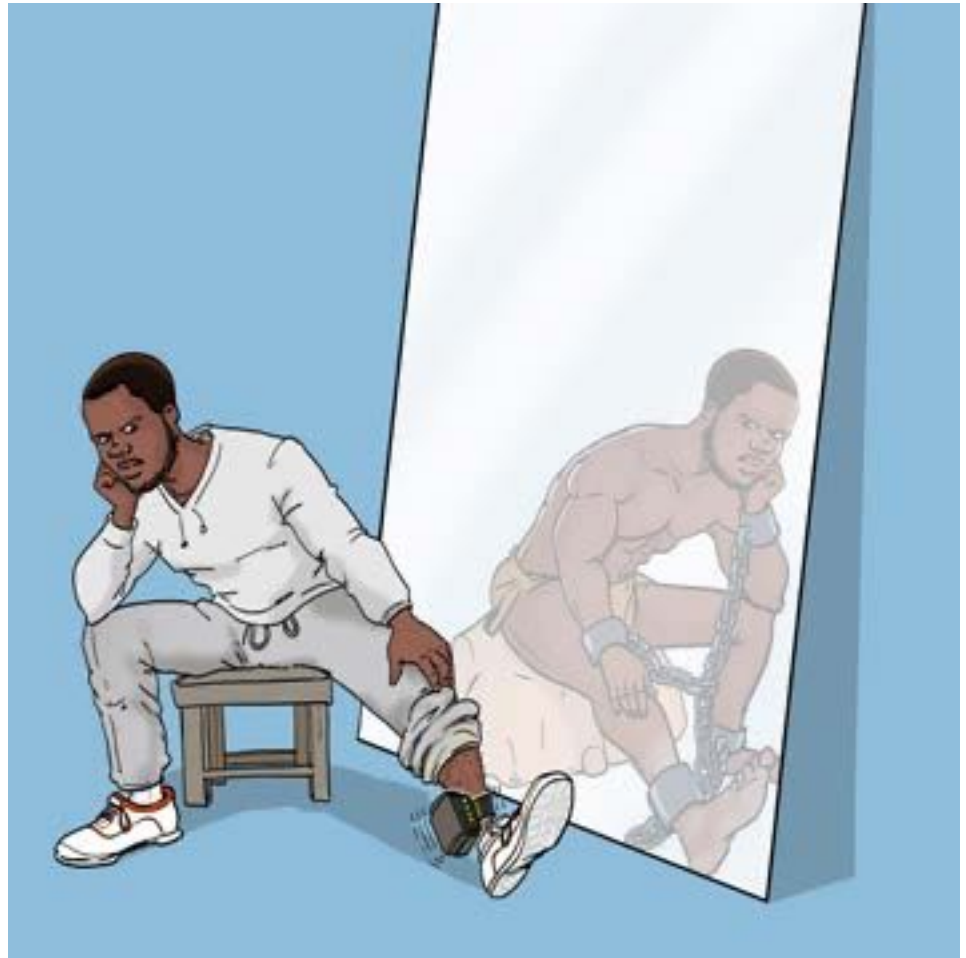
Though his past was bleak, Doro expressed more hope for the future. 'Here in Boston though,' he reflected, 'It is a little different as we find Haitians who talk with us, try to understand how we are

living, and then help us’.

Doro went on, ‘My next card shows two people tracing a heart with their fingers. I chose it because I hope we will find people like this who show us some love which is really needed since we still have nothing here. We don’t know how long we’ll be here, and we’re facing all kinds of difficulties... and we are the lucky ones. On the road, I met many people, but some would never finish the journey. They were left behind to die in the seas or the forests. The government, here, should try to understand us and spare us from these risks and further misery since we have already suffered so much.’

Next, Doro looked down at his feet and described his arrival experience with the border patrol. ‘Instead of being welcomed and supported, we were imprisoned, myself eventually released but with an ankle monitoring device. To them, it is only a little band placed on one’s ankle, but to us, it is a shackle embedded deep into our minds. The device doesn’t only prevent me from moving around but also from really living, sleeping or thinking clearly. When the battery would run low it buzzed every couple of minutes eventually driving me crazy. At night now, even with the device no longer attached to my ankle, dreams of its vibrating sounds still wake me. Then I become unable to go back to sleep. We have experienced too much misery.... many of us traumatized to the point of losing our minds’.

Then, just as the group listening



Doro reflects on disturbing parallels between his buzzing prisoner ankle monitor and the historic chains of slavery.

to Doro fell into empathic despair, he shifted to a more hopeful tone. ‘Finally,’ he said, ‘I chose this card, another heart, this one carved out of rocks. I am hopeful that I can be inspired again by the love symbolized here’.

The IFSI ‘Immigrant Navigator’ is a multilingual web portal with associated in-person services that ease and accelerate the settlement and social integration of vulnerable, often undocumented immigrants. A key feature are the stories these immigrants share with IFSI staff through interviews and from which other immigrants gain inspiration,

lessons and tips about how to navigate the perilous journey and US integration process. These stories also educate a broader US public including policy makers and service providers. Every 2 weeks a new story is published on the IFSI Blog. Our third story, “Escaping Prison of the Mind” captures the psychological struggles of one man who, while trapped by historic patterns of injustice, still has a capacity for hope and even love. Thank you for reading — and for welcoming these newcomers to our communities!” - Dr. Gerald Gabeau, Founder & Executive Director.

Navigator Lessons:

It is common to feel betrayed by one's home country and government for the conditions that caused one to leave.

It can be helpful to try to understand and place one's experience within a wider historic and social context. At the same time try to not allow feelings of resentment to dominate one's thoughts.

Sharing personal experiences and reflections with others can be very helpful as one can gain other valuable perspectives and strategies for changing a fixed mindset such as Doro's 'prison of the mind' analogy.

Continue seeking help as it is likely one will eventually find the friendship and support needed.

Hope, persistence and love are powerful attributes which, when focused upon, can lead to better mental health and life prospects in a new homeland.



While participating in a focus group with other Haitian migrants at the IFSI offices Doro shares a postcard of rocks forming the shape of a heart. He said it represents how despite the many hardships he remains capable of love and hopeful for a better future.

[Back to contents](#)



This publication is licensed under a Creative Commons licence: provided Cooperative Approaches and the author's name are credited, the copyright holder authorises use of the original work.

You can subscribe to the magazine by clicking on this link

<https://approchescooperatives.org>

Refugees

EXPULSION

Welcome

Immigration policy

Xenophobia



Asylum

Work permits

INTEGRATION

Residence permit

CITIZEN INITIATIVES

Family reunification