

Go Home? The Politics of Immigration Controversies, by Hannah Jones, Yasmin Gunaratnam, Gargi Bhattacharyya, William Davies, Sukhwant Dhaliwal, Kirsten Forkert, Emma Jackson and Roiyah Saltus

Andrea Filippi

Volume 34, Number 1, 2018

Intersectional Feminist Interventions in the "Refugee Crisis"

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1050857ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1050857ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Centre for Refugee Studies, York University

ISSN

0229-5113 (print)

1920-7336 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Filippi, A. (2018). Review of [Go Home? The Politics of Immigration Controversies, by Hannah Jones, Yasmin Gunaratnam, Gargi Bhattacharyya, William Davies, Sukhwant Dhaliwal, Kirsten Forkert, Emma Jackson and Roiyah Saltus]. *Refuge*, 34(1). <https://doi.org/10.7202/1050857ar>

Copyright (c) Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees, 2018
Creative Commons Attribution NonCommercial 4.0 International License



This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

discussions of care labour have been historically central to the critique of patriarchy as exploitation of women. As right-wing parties use immigrant Muslim women's liberation as a way to sugar-coat their anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant agendas, though their cultural and economic policies they resituate female Muslim immigrants as care bearers of the nation who should provide the affect labour from which European women were "emancipated." The book reminds us of the racialization of women's emancipation: as Western women broke the bonds of care labour and went out to join the open market of work under capitalism, the burden of care labour fell on the shoulders of women of colour – in this book's case, Muslim women immigrants and non-Western female immigrants.

Reading the gendered analysis in this book, one finds that it resonates with the tools used by international non-governmental organizations to support female refugees, especially noticeable today in Syrian refugee camps, particularly those in the Middle East. "Empowerment" centres, for example, teach sewing and make-up classes along with other skills for employment deemed "appropriate for the female gender."

Although the author deftly illustrates the consequences of the hegemonic way in which female Muslim immigrants are being produced, she engages little with examples that rupture this hegemonic portrayal; neither does she engage with any form of resistance by female immigrants towards these policies or the normative gender roles imposed on them. Through this, she also falls into a pattern common to post-modernist approaches to tackling Islamophobia, failing to include the voices of resistant Muslim women immigrants in the analysis. Even though she engages with Muslim women

immigrant femocrats who support right-wing parties, she flattens their subjectivities. A different, multi-layered engagement and approach with these Muslim women immigrant politicians would have provided a more nuanced take on the roots of their politics. In addition, an engagement with critical gender governance literature would have expanded and further demonstrated the co-optation of women's rights and neoliberal attempts to absorb feminism.

Most importantly, it is refreshing to read this epistemological intervention on Islamophobia in Europe and its convergence with gender and neoliberal governments and economies. The problematic framing Muslim women as victims in order to further exploit them is clearly reiterated and powerfully demonstrated. A particularly well-made and well-supported argument in this book revolves around the precarity of migrant lives and their production as illegal aliens as having a base in the accumulation of capital stands out very strongly in her book.

In the Name of Women's Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism, with its theoretical sophistication and solid arguments, is highly recommended for graduate students who are interested in sociology, gender studies, feminism, critical geographies, migration studies, affect labour, Marxism, nationalism, neoliberalism, and capitalism.

Maya El Helou is an independent feminist researcher, feminist comic artist, and consultant on gender and sexuality in the Middle East and North Africa. The author can be reached at maya.elhelou@gmail.com.

Go Home? The Politics of Immigration Controversies



Hannah Jones, Yasmin Gunaratnam, Gargi Bhattacharyya, William Davies, Sukhwant Dhaliwal, Kirsten Forkert, Emma Jackson, and Roiyah Saltus

Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017, 186 pp.

Between July 22 and August 22, 2013, the UK Home Office carried out Operation Vaken, a campaign ostensibly aimed at increasing "voluntary returns" of undocumented migrants. As part of the campaign, vans were

driven through some of the most "ethnically diverse" neighbourhoods in London, displaying a billboard saying, "In the UK illegally? GO HOME OR FACE ARREST." The Go Home vans

were the starting point for the research project that forms the basis of this book.

In parallel to Operation Vaken, the Home Office undertook further campaigns. They, for instance, displayed posters in hospitals claiming “NHS hospital treatment is not free for everyone,” started using recognizable immigration raid vans, and published images of immigration raids on their Twitter account with hashtags such as #immigrationoffender and #nohidingplace. This book focuses on such government communications campaigns and discusses their—intended and unintended—consequences and their impact on people’s everyday lives.

Go Home? is divided into six chapters, each followed by a short interlude, entitled “Living Research.” These interludes discuss thoughts, reflections, and experiences about the research and represent a refreshing way of reflecting on the politics and practice of research. In the reflective interlude following chapter 5, for example, the authors build on Audre Lorde and her writing about anger as a powerful motivator for activism, spurring both this research and acts of resistance.

The introductory chapter offers an overview of the book and a conceptualization of the hostile political climate, public debates, and discourses on migration. Further, it provides a brief discussion of tightening border regimes, encompassing the deterritorialization of border control, the fortification of nation-state borders and the domestication of borders—all salient issues in Britain at the time of researching and writing the book. Most importantly, the chapter introduces the authors’ approach to the research. The project Mapping Immigration Controversy began as a collaboration. It was developed and effected in partnership with community organizations, the core research team itself being a relatively large group of eight academics. The project challenges the division between activism and academia and contributes to “thinking and discussions about the role of critical migration research” (17). Methodologically, the authors rely on a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, specifically focus groups, interviews, online research, ethnographic observations, and a survey. It is an interdisciplinary research project, drawing upon theories from disciplines such as cultural studies, economics, politics, and sociology.

Chapters 2 and 3 conceptualize anti-immigrant government communications on a more theoretical level. Chapter 2 draws on the framework of performative politics to understand government communications. The authors view both the communications campaigns, which they describe as speech acts, as well as physical affirmations of borders, such as through raids or deportations, as state performance. They argue that such campaigns are directed at several audiences, one purpose being to reassure those skeptical of migration. However, audiences hold an interpretative power, and

accordingly there is an “inherent instability” (43) to political performances. Chapter 3 examines government communications with reference to the policy logics that frame them. It shows how affective, symbolic, and emotional dimensions increasingly shape rhetorics related to migration and how Operation Vaken “needs to be understood in the context of this perceived need for the state to *seem* tough in the eyes of the voting public” (81).

Chapters 4 and 5 present a more detailed analysis of the empirical research. In chapter 4 the authors discuss the effects of anti-immigration communications and include a spatial dimension in their analysis. They point out that the local as well as national context and historic specificities have an impact on these effects. The same campaign in different places is differently received, and the context also influences the reaction and possible resistance to such campaigns. Some of the consequences of anti-migrant communications they found were the creation of a divide between those perceived as migrants and those not, and increased fear and feelings of precariousness among racialized minorities. Further, they found divisions within communities based on a discourse of “deservingness” and on a dichotomy opposing “good” and “bad” migrants and citizens, suggesting that such communications segment the population.

Chapter 5 builds on narratives of “un/deservingness” and shows how, in the context of such discourses, people categorized as “bad” migrants employ similar strategies themselves towards others, such as newer migrants or people living at the margins of the welfare state, to shift their own position and present themselves as belonging to the “deserving” group. The authors further illustrate how, while some resort to neoliberal values of productivity and aspiration, others resist those values and refer to alternative ones, such as everyday acts of kindness in “an attempt to rehumanise social relations” (130).

Government communications prompted debates about solidarity, and people have engaged in various forms of resistance, such as in demonstrations or counter-campaigns, which the authors view as having the potential “to be a powerful antidote to the performance of toughness” (138). The concluding chapter brings together the arguments made throughout the research and emphasizes the need to engage with questions of race and racism, as well as with their intersections with other social categories, in order to understand immigration control and bordering practices.

Go Home? is a timely contribution that analyzes consequences of current migration politics with a valuable intersectional perspective. The book provides an insight into the effects of immigration enforcement rhetoric and shows how borders creep into spaces of everyday life. Through empirically well-grounded research, the authors demonstrate the violent

consequences such as poisoning discourses can have. Reports of increasing racism in the aftermath of the UK referendum on EU membership only heighten the pertinence of this work.

The project provides an excellent example of conducting collaborative research and producing anti-racist and feminist-situated knowledge (4), and a kind of public scholarship (161) that is informed by academics like W. E. B. Du Bois, bell hooks, or Audre Lorde. Part of such research is the commitment to make the knowledge accessible to an audience beyond academia. Not only is the book written accessibly,

the researchers also communicated their thoughts both during and at the end of the project, including through blog posts, tweets, a short film, and a conference that included beyond-text formats such as performances. Ultimately, the authors contribute to imagining more inclusive futures and to alternative forms of knowledge production.

Andrea Filippi is an independent researcher. The author can be reached at andrea.filippi@unine.ch.

Running on Empty: Canada and the Indochinese Refugees, 1975–1980



Michael J. Molloy, Peter Duschinsky, Kurt F. Jensen, and Robert Shalka, foreword by Ronald Atkey
Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017, 612 pp.

R*unning on Empty* documents the Canadian resettlement operation of about 70,000 refugees from the Indochinese region between 1975 and 1980. It is a hefty monograph, rich in details and anecdotes. It will serve as a reference for teaching this period and, because of the novel information it includes, might be used as a starting point for new research. In addition to making a clear empirical contribution, the book is original in its focus on the role of the public administration over this period. The public service is presented as a site of innovation in managing an unprecedented resettlement effort. The engagement and devotion of public servants is an important thread throughout the story, and the interactions between elected officials, high-level public officials, and federal departments are explored with enough detail to account for the different ways in which each influenced the others.

Running on Empty contributes to current efforts to illuminate the workings of the Canadian state from the inside, when it comes to refugee, immigration, and border operations. Besides historical literature, it is an interesting historical companion to Mountz's *Seeking Asylum: Human Smuggling and Bureaucracy at the Border* (University of Minnesota Press, 2010) and Satzewich's *Points of Entry: How Canada's Immigration Officers Decide Who Gets In* (UBC Press, 2014). It also provides a different representation of mid- and

high-level public servants working in immigration in this period. Instead of the actors described by the historical work on the Canadian immigration bureaucracy as engaged in control, exclusion, and boundary making, the characters of this story are determined to help and to ensure due process. Whether readers will be convinced or not, *Running on Empty* attempts to show that each generation of public servants contributed differently to Canada's refugee policy.

Stemming from a collaboration between the Canadian Immigration Historical Society, the authors and officers active in resettlement operation, the book is divided into three sections: the history of Canada's involvement with the Indochinese refugees, the resettlement operations in Southeast Asia, and the work of welcoming the refugees in Canada. It rests on archival materials, including never-released files such as Cabinet memoranda, and includes testimonials from officers active abroad and in Canada. The first section reviews Canada's refugee policy and the events leading to the fall of Saigon, with an eye on the positions taken by Canada as part of a changing geopolitical context. It follows policies, laws, and politics chronologically from 1975 to the 1980s. Chapter 4 on the 1976 Immigration Act is a great resource for teaching about the inclusion of new provisions into legislation and about the beginnings of the private sponsorship program. Notable in this section is

© Author(s), 2018. This open-access work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International Licence, which permits use, reproduction, and distribution in any medium for non-commercial purposes, provided the original authorship is credited and the original publication in *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* is cited.

Cette œuvre en libre accès fait l'objet d'une licence Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License, laquelle autorise l'utilisation, la reproduction et la distribution de l'œuvre sur tout support à des fins non commerciales, pourvu que l'auteur ou les auteurs originaux soient mentionnés et que la publication originale dans *Refuge: revue canadienne sur les réfugiés* soit citée.