RADICAL TEACHER

A SOCIALIST, FEMINIST, AND ANTI-RACIST JOURNAL ON THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF TEACHING

Introduction to Migration Curriculum in Women's Human Rights Teaching and Advocacy Resource

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JOSE (LUPE) ORTIZ (2020), FOR THE PEOPLE ARTISTS COLLECTIVE & JUSTSEEDS COLLABORATION

In an explicit pivot from policy to implementation, Secretary General of the United Nations Antonio Guterres has moved the United Nations firmly towards concrete practices and solutions to the many problems that bedevil societies everywhere in the world. The general lack of social protection safety nets, widening inequalities of status, lack of or inadequate access to justice, education, health, and housing all contribute to conflict and exacerbate violence, xenophobia, and racism. People migrate in search of a better life and find integration into host societies difficult. The teaching, learning and advocacy resource presented here is designed to facilitate the creation of a college or university course for practitioners that will both provide an understanding of the overarching policies and purposes that motivate specific interventions to create progressive change, especially for the benefit of migrant and refugee women and girls, and give them some of the essential information and tools to bring about such change. It might also be used for advanced high school groups or socially conscious study groups that want to understand the current migrant/refugee situation in a human rights context.

Each locality in which a practice is carried out is unique and different from any other. Cultural, political, economic, and social entities and structures vary from one country to another, and the local structures may also vary widely. Each policy implementation, each good practice or strategy must be tailored to the needs of a particular locale and its governing structures, though general principles of delivery and implementation, such as mapping and gathering evidence apply to all. The goal is to make the policies and the ideals on which they are based -- fairness, justice, equity, equality, women's empowerment and gender equality, all in the context of a human rights framework – work for the good and the harmony of an entire community. The goals and the policies are common; the practice is unique.

When embarking on finding solutions to the many and varied challenges presented by migration and the integration into a given society of any group, it is necessary first to define terms, to understand the difference between migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced and stateless people on the move and the various benefits to which they are or are not entitled under specific circumstances. Practitioners need to know what they are dealing with, the scope, nature and origins of the crisis under examination, and where the areas of greatest concern are located. Disaggregated data are essential for the creation of targeted policies and practices to alleviate the problems that arise at each stage of the migration journey: pre-departure, transit and crossing borders, arrival at destination, and return.

Principles for advocacy concerning migrants need to be formulated in terms of the human rights that must frame all interventions, and they must work also to empower women. Available protections, principles of equal access that afford a 360-degree perspective and leave no one behind (both of these stated principles of the United Nations), and the concept of gender justice that addresses issues of impunity, stereotyping, and cultural norms and practices, all must be considered and integrated into the creation of effective practices.

Basic methods and tools of advocacy must be taught, such as identification of needs; mapping in a cultural, economic, social and political context; the inclusion of migrant voices as information sources and advocates; identification of good practices and evaluation of replication appropriate to individual situations; and finally, the creation and adoption of evidence-based, community-specific, durable solutions.

All the major policy instruments covering issues of migration are listed in the ***Teaching and Advocacy Curriculum***, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees, together with its 1967 Optional Protocol; the "International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Their Families; the New York Declaration for Migrants and Refugees; the 2018 Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and the Global Compact on Migrants (GCM -- for safe, orderly and regular migration). In addition, since this guide was developed in connection with CSW 65, the annual meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the United Nations is listed, this year (2021) belatedly celebrating the Fourth World Women's Conference in Beijing in 1995. Major UN policies and documents relevant to migrant women and girls are also listed, together with brief descriptions of their subjects and purpose. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979) and its optional Protocols and Recommendations; the Beijing Platform for Action of 1995; and the Sustainable Development Goals (2015), together with their specific migration targets.

Relevant UN Agencies and entities concerned with migration are listed next, together with some description of their specific mandates and interests and some of the relevant, major documents that could serve as guides for the student or practitioner.

Finally, some of the major relevant civil society organizations are listed, together with their major contributions. Such organizations include but are not limited to the Civil Society Action Committee; the NGO Committee on Migration; the Women in Migration Network; the Women's Refugee Committee; Migrant Forum in Asia; and Alianza de las Americas. The list is comprehensive but by no means exhaustive or complete. It can be added to as issues develop and change and as developments on the ground bring new perceptions of how best to handle the many complex issues that migration entails.

There are many reasons that cause people to migrate, but most leave to seek what they think of as a better life with more opportunities for advancement for themselves and for their children. They migrate for economic reasons, to seek better job opportunities, better schooling for their children, more stable lives for themselves; they migrate as a result of political instability, conflict and outright war; they migrate because of domestic and/or institutionalized violence and crime; they migrate because they have been targeted as a hated minority group and have been deprived of their citizenship; they migrate because of natural disasters, their homes and land devastated by outsize hurricanes, exacerbated by climate change; they migrate because a volcano has rained death and destruction on them

and on their land, or an earthquake has reduced their homes and towns to rubble; they migrate when their water sources have dried up, turning their land into desert, the result again of climate change and/or poor resource management; they migrate in search of a healthier environment, when untreated sewage and general degradation has caused disease to spread, and climate change has worsened the problem; they migrate when their rivers and other water supplies have become polluted with toxic waste runoff from exploitative companies upstream from them, or when a pandemic has decimated their communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly exacerbated some of the thornier problems of migration, criminalizing such movement, requiring tests, often expensive and even unavailable, quarantining both before and after arrival at a given destination, denying the migrant access to basic facilities like clinics and hospitals, especially if the migrants are undocumented, increasing xenophobia while fixing blame for the spread of the virus on various targeted groups. A good example of this is the escalating number of attacks on Asians in the United States, where they are being blamed as carriers of the disease that reputedly originated in China. Criminalization of migration is all too common, fear of spreading the infection dictating that migrants be arrested and detained without hearings and for an unlimited amount of time in jail-like facilities, instead of being released into the country of destination and in many cases, being reunited with their families, pending a hearing. Forced repatriations and deportations are being carried out at an increasing rate, and home countries, often unwilling to let the returning migrants in, increase the difficulties of reintegration while pleading lack of resources, ramping up fear of infection and blaming specific groups of migrants for the spread of disease.

Each of the migration issues addressed here has been extensively written about and commented on, but this advocacy resource is not intended to present a comprehensive bibliography on the subject. Instead, it presents relevant facts and definitions, good practices, what needs to be done in general, and relevant resources. Depending on the interests of professors, teachers, mentors, and group leaders using this resource, any of these topics could be a very rewarding research project, a source for evidence-based approaches and durable solutions to individual migration issues, and a source of fruitful inquiry, comment and suggestions for advocacy and action, especially in the context of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic.

To access the Migration Curriculum, go to this link and then open the .pdf under Subtopics: Migration: https://whrtlar.wordpress.com/poverty-eradication-social-protection-and-social-services/.