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Daniel Varela
dvarela@conncoll.edu

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**The African Diaspora in Contemporary Italy:
the Challenges of the Migration Crisis in Lampedusa**

Daniel Ángel Varela

*Italian Studies Department
Fall Semester, Academic Year 2021-2022*

Toor Cummings Center for International Studies and the Liberal Arts (CISLA)
Senior Integrative Project (SIP)

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Abstract

This senior integrative research will unpack the trials of displaced African people migrating into Italy. The migration crisis is a byproduct of our complicated international system riddled with wars, poverty, and persecution of marginalized groups. This study will focus on intersectional identities to facilitate a demand advocating for a group of people with limited agency, autonomy, and visibility. Some key questions to be answered in this study are: What challenges facing migrants in Italy within narratives in film and literature? How do positionality and locality play a role in migrant narratives?

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, this research was made possible by the unwavering support of my parents and relatives who loved me unconditionally. I would also like to express my gratitude to my faculty advisor and mentors. Professor Paola Sica advised my project during the fall semester with her intellect on Italian society. Professor Andrew Levin mentored the research process throughout my studies. Professor Catherine Benoît shared her insights on anthropology and film studies – without this, I would not have been able to construct a documentary-based project. Also, I would like to thank alumna and former trustee Susan Lynch '62 for funding the Rising Sophomore Summer Research Program to begin my extensive background research advised by Professor Frida Morelli. I would also highly appreciate the Toor Cummings Center for International Studies and the Liberal Arts (CISLA) team: Mary Devins, Cara Masullo Ekwuabu, Anissa Cantone, Professor Andrea Lanoux, and Professor Suzuko Knott. Without their assistance and involvement, this process would have been challenging to navigate alone. Another set of remarkable supporters was Dean Marine Melendez and Professor Mara Suttman-Lea. They never stopped listening to my rants about the migration crisis and professional support under the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship for Black and Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) pre-PhD scholars in the humanities. Finally, I sincerely thank my friends who shared valuable insights, encouragement, and dedication to following me along this journey. This accomplishment is a product of my commitment to my nana Jeannie Ewans. She wanted me to advocate for our community across the African diaspora as her final wish before passing away. Thank you.

Daniel Ángel Varela (he/they pronouns)

A Brief Introduction to the Migration Crisis

In the wake of 2015, the Syrian Refugee Crisis broke headlines across the world as one of the most significant humanitarian crises in our modern society. The refugee crisis was coined as a response to the international system riddled with wars, extreme poverty, and violent persecution of marginalized groups.¹ For the purpose of this study, the crisis will be broadened to a “migration crisis” that encapsulates the experiences of intersectional identities when it comes to race, ethnicity, gender, and age. Forced and involuntary displacement drives migrants to flee their origin country to seek asylum in a host country. Migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers are often left at the hands of humanitarian organizations that provide social services and programs to help transition migrants into a new community in a host country. International organizations play a crucial role in intervening in the migration crisis regime. They are responsible for facilitating global powers to cooperate and solve the humanitarian crisis. Refugees are estimated to be over 68.5 million people according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which encloses numbers of internally displaced people, refugees, asylum seekers, and other migrants.² The United Nations’ refugee arm, the UNHCR, is a foundational avenue for humanitarian work in addressing and taking steps to help alleviate the global migration crisis; however, there is an indispensable need for cooperation from our global international community to solve it.³ What are the challenges facing global cooperation? The global call to help migrants requires western countries like Italy to respond with full cooperation to aid the migration crisis effectively. This integrative research project will unpack the trials of displaced African migrants

¹ Hollenbach, David SJ, “Borders and Duties to the Displaced: Ethical Perspectives on the Global Refugee Protection System,” *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 4(3)2016: 148-165.

² Sleiman, Dana, “UN Refugee Chief Urges Security Council for Firm Response to Record-High Displacement.” UNHCR (April 09, 2019).

³ Loescher, Gil, Alexander Betts, and James Milner, *The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights* (UNHCR), (New York: Routledge, 2008): 73-120.

from diverse contemporary film and literature to reimagine the futures of the global migration crisis.

This study will trace the dominant interrelated cultural, social, and political issues facing African migrants in Italy. The myth perpetuated by mainstream media and culture has denounced Africans as merely ‘economic migrants’ instead of Syrians, who were granted unconditional aid when seeking asylum. Thus, it will be pertinent for this study to address competing narratives and to envision the future of African migrants in Italy. Conducting an intersectional analysis across film and literature to examine contemporary African migration into the southern point of Italian borders: the island of Lampedusa. The North African migration system puts migrants’ lives at risk to get across the deadly space of the Mediterranean Sea with the dangers of human trafficking, abuse, harassment, discrimination, exploitation, and even death. Furthermore, the politicization of borders manifested into the Italy-Libya pact to deter African migrants from entering Italy, the securitization of the European periphery, and the normalization of migrants in host country communities. How will Lampedusa share insights into the daily struggles African migrants and their future generations face in Italy?

Italy’s Socio-Political Modern History

The background of Italian politics simulates advocating for migrant rights and dehumanizing black migrant bodies. Mainstream media are giving Trump conservatism a platform to highlight the latter can be seen across many political leaders like Salvini, who became an anti-migrant and xenophobia mascot across his speech, policies, and biases in Italy. These mindsets demonstrate the friction dragging along the urgent global humanitarian crisis. Xenophobia leaders’ leading institutions pose a more significant threat to migrants as they will

control and safeguard the hegemonic influence of western control at all costs. However, hope lies with those who vow to protect and assist migrants indiscriminately.

Islands sitting on the southern coast of mainland Italy are the first responders to migrants coming from the African continent across the Mediterranean Sea. Risking life for refuge in Italy is often the only reality migrants pursue to avoid problems like persecution, conflict, climate change, and COVID-19. Access to a healthy, nonviolent environment with opportunity is limited to many Africans who are still dealing with the ramifications of European colonialism on the continent. The interconnectedness of racism, colonialism, and capitalism begs the question of how challenging historical narratives and contemporary discourse against migrants is imperative to synergizing efforts to help those displaced in crisis.

The medium of film is paramount in advancing an effort to share authentic stories of suffering, exploitation, and loss to portray an angle of the crisis African migrant women, men, and children face daily. Italy has the potential and locality to be a leader in reforming policies, institutions, and programs failing migrants. Italy will always be a key entry point for refugee migration, so its role is pertinent to reimagining a more effective and inclusive system that will benefit everyone.

African-Italian Migration Relationship

A brief timeline of African migration begins to rise in the 1980s to Italy. Some reasons impacting displaced people can range from food insecurity, political repression, and employment security to a few potential reasons driving Africans to seek a better life outside of their origin country. Crossing the treacherous Mediterranean Sea is often the fastest route to enter Europe by migrants from Sub-Saharan and Northern Africa. Since 2010, Italy has received over a million migrants with relatively open borders. In 2014, Italy slowly began to change its attitude towards

the displaced population as the influx of African migrants continued to increase. Italy's Minister of the Interior and Deputy Prime Minister Italy, Matteo Salvini, perpetuated anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric as he held office from June 2018 to September 2019. During his time in office, the number of migrants to Italy significantly dropped. In 2018, the number dropped to just over 20,000 rather than the previous year's annual count of 160,000. The New York Times covers Salvini usually as the "anti-migrant interior minister."⁴ The mainstream media plays a significant role in raising the visibility of this global migration crisis but can also perpetuate erasure through a biased perception of African migrants.

Chapter 1: The Migrant Spectacle in Contemporary Italian Film

The film has always been a facet of capturing moments of human history, entertainment, or even drama. Italian filmmakers are known for their unique style of directing a film across centuries. In our contemporary society, documentaries have been a tremendous source of information on the reality facing migrants. Globalization has enabled the global audience to watch, learn, and listen to the art of storytelling. In this research, three films stood out that tremendously integrate a terrible problem and human perseverance. First, *Fuocoammare*, directed by Gianfranco Rosi, sets the bar high when it comes to filmmaking within the migration studies field. The nuances of life and death behind the screen tend to be susceptible to inaction. Yet, this documentary does more than just trace the lives of many in a multifaceted approach of observation. The second film, directed by Andrea Segre in collaboration with Stefan Liberti and Ferruccio Pastore, is *A Sud di Lampedusa* where it becomes apparent that through participant observation, filmmakers and storytellers can witness and document the sacrifices of many west

⁴ James Horowitz, "Italy's Most Powerful Populist Rules from the Beach," (New York, The New York Times, 2019).

African migrants who are traveling to Libya in pursuit of a better life. While this is a shorter documentary, it still brings the raw nature of a humanitarian crisis and the urgency that the global audience must comprehend. Finally, *The Invasion of Lampedusa*, directed by Olly Lambert for BBC, opens a comparative analysis of a non-Italian filmmaker. This documentary, unlike the others, opens the discourse surrounding local islanders in Italy to argue both sides of the migration crisis. All three documentaries shed light on the broader scale of injustices, racism, and xenophobia that dictate the lack of complexities of the migration crisis.

Through viewing the migration crisis in a remote setting with film and literature, the measures taken by local, national, and international governments have been largely inadequate for the scale of the migration crisis. Speaking to only the African migrant demographics entering Italy can reveal what mechanisms are causing displacement and migration into Europe. But there is a wider net of migrants coming from various countries and continents. Documentaries are fine art in which motion pictures record history in the making for anyone with access to learning an incredible amount of knowledge and understanding. The hope is that this paper will be able to shed light on what these documentaries bring to the world of migration studies and two advocates with the knowledge that one game from a crisis has not ceased to end.

Fuocoammare: The Epitome of Italian Documentaries

In this film, directed on the island of Lampedusa, its first shot displays a young Italian boy playing with his toys on a tree.⁵ The simple yet ominous perspective of the loneliness the boy may feel almost distracts the viewer from what the documentary is trying to say. When it comes to the migration crisis, the host country and its citizens are often separated from the discourse. The experiences of local Italians on this island are unique in that they have sacrificed

⁵ *Fuocoammare*, Directed by Gianfranco Rosi, 02:42.

and learned to live off of an island. The dilemma progresses to articulate how dramatically the inflow of migrants has overtaken the local population. Why are these narratives so crucial in giving the audience the complete picture of the story?

The directors love to display a common motif of nature interacting with all humans. The locals enjoy walking and playing around the island and use the bountiful joy of a simple life. Migrants alike have to deal with the treacherous waters of the Mediterranean and, for the most part, are traveling and overcrowded and constructed rafts with women and children. The film shows a moment of obscure light during sunrise with a raft surrounding the grand ocean. It symbolizes the peace and calmness before the storm with the following scene that shows a radio show host playing a classic Italian song while transitioning to the kitchen of an old Italian woman listening to the same radio show.⁶ The woman is shown cooking and preparing a meal while listening to the news as if it was nothing new of about 34 recovered migrant bodies off the coast of Lampedusa. The three scenes back to back give a taste of what the whole documentary will be and the chaotic nature of the crisis. It takes the locals, Italian authorities, international organizations, and many others to safely rescue as many migrants as they can off the shores of the Mediterranean.

A filmmaker's role is to create a set of images that will convey a particular notion of an event or story. The director will power and autonomy to influence what the final product will be is another curious and exciting relationship. It isn't until more than 15 minutes into the documentary when we are first introduced to the rescued African migrants.⁷ Some may have wondered during the introduction to the film that this has nothing to do with the migration crisis.

⁶ *Fuocoammare*, 07:05.

⁷ *Fuocoammare*, 17:26.

However, the filmmaking capacity and visual talent of Mr. Rosi have solidified its place as the foundational documentary within the migration field in the context of African migration to Italy. He took the liberty to soothe the audience, who he knew would probably be other white Italians, to be able to relate to and associate themselves with the film's contacts through the locals of Lampedusa. This measure or decision could also explain why he decided to show the migrants later in the film with their arrival to the island where they know no one but the migrants who journeyed with them. After a few minutes of sharing the migrant experience, the film traces the lives of particular locals with their daily routines, such as work conducting medical work, playing with friends, and moments with family members. The ordinary scenes seem almost to question why they are presented the way they are in a documentary that is supposed to capture the migration crisis. Understanding the spectrum of experiences from both locals and migrants can bridge a moment of kindness. With kindness, it is possible to affirm progress and advocacy for the livelihoods of migrants in the future.

Another moment of reflection can be drawn from the scenes where migrants are held and processed by the local authorities. In the pool of African men, one migrant appeared in the documentary. This was a woman who may be Muslim and whose skin tone is pale white was told to show some hair due to her head wrap.⁸ This was the epitome of insecurity and vulnerability that migrants face every day. The moment her body jumped at the question of the officers to either remove her scar altogether or show some hair was a dynamic scene of internal sacrifice. Migrants face discrimination and harassment, and now that they are one step closer to gaining freedom and autonomy to exist in a safe country approve their devotion to doing anything to accomplish their goals.

⁸ *Fuocoammare*, 35:50.

The most humanizing aspect of this documentary would probably be the theme of community. The intersectional identities of migrants often share the identities across genders, ages, and origin countries. Some stories of migrants coming from Africa share how their sexual orientation and gender were the leading reason to flee their country from persecution. In this film, the community can be seen from both locals who sympathize with the stories of migrants and the social environment that migrants curate themselves. At a certain point, a group of men crowded the street and determined teams based on national origins, such as Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and others, to determine which team would play next in the game.⁹ Cultural and social practices for migrants are an enormous affirmation that suggests that migrants can handle the amount of pressure and harm from voyaging to Italy.

The last few scenes of the film pick rescue on the Mediterranean Sea of African migrants who are collapsing and having near-death experiences stranded at sea.¹⁰ This rescue of a blue raft with an overcrowded group of people is saved by a medic boat that rescues younger children who require care and other young adults who are facing the repercussions of being out at sea without protection and warmth.

Overall, the documentary narrates what happens on a day-to-day basis on the island of Lampedusa and the waters around it and the message of human cooperation to defend and protect our human lives. No one nor any country can tell when the next disaster or catastrophe will be, and the migration crisis today shows that many people are often left with no choice but to go and find a better place to live their life. Outside of politics, identity, and culture, it is evident that humanitarianism has no space for xenophobia and racism. Locals and Migrants have

⁹ *Fuocoammare*, 01:05:20.

¹⁰ *Fuocoammare*, 01:30:10.

to trust and lean into each other to establish a beneficial and symbiotic relationship with a praxis of nurturing. Hunger, disease, and violence are subtle themes that migrants experience on their journey. The small rocky island seems to share a duality of people who live without privilege. Regardless of nationality, Lampedusa evolves to be more than a destination or a home but rather a utopian refuge at sea. In an English translation, the film named *a fire at sea* defines the migration crisis's aura on receiving communities. It is a tumultuous ride that may have some wins but comes with many losses. The Director exemplified what it means to be human and Italian to the masses. Migrants deserve a spotlight where they are also in stories where they exist and thrive with local people.

A Sud di Lampedusa: Brief and Profound Storytelling

The second documentary to highlight is from an Italian team of filmmakers who curated an experienced documentary. This film follows a dialogic model of creating space for migrants to share and be their authentic selves. Having dialogue and discourse on the migration crisis reveals how dehumanizing and divisive politics can become in the mainstream media. One thing that made this film unique would be its soundtrack that uplifts scenes of transition, travel, and nature to connect them back to the African roots of the diaspora. Compared to *Fuocoammare*, watching this film was a different experience than the previous one. Still, *A Sud di Lampedusa* enables the migrant community to teach others about their family values and community-based bonding.¹¹ This is a prominent and recurring motif where migrants share how traveling in a group with other like-minded individuals with similar backgrounds and aspirations can work together to succeed as one.

¹¹ *A Sud di Lampedusa*, Directed by Andrea Segre and Stefano Liberti, 03:34.

The journey across the Sahara Desert in Niger is not an easy feat. Knowing how human trafficking works across the Mexican border into the US United States, the subjectivity and randomness of following a trafficker to the next point or destination create an unknown world for migrants. The resilient man was shot in 2006, making this the earliest documentary in this series. Their interviews shed light on what they must do to find work in a different place other than home. Some traveled to Europe across the Mediterranean Sea into Italy, while others tried to go into Libya. The travel time getting across northern Africa can take less than a week, according to one migrant.¹² Desert crossings by truck are common and have their risks.

The notion of despair in this documentary is more significant with the dialogue that migrants provide. Including African migrant voices in this documentary, it transforms these oral histories into a participant observation case study analysis of multiple subjects with diverse experiences. The ability to listen to their words of fear and uncertainty that is often drawn to those in the authority of their livelihoods, such as the police or employers, can make it easily drastic worse for other migrants like women or children.¹³ The testimonial interviews are limited compared to the vast number of African migrants in each scene. Testimonials act as a conduit for migrant experiences. Their hopes and dreams and their trauma are one complete narrative.

The short film ends with upbeat music and a desert shot with a quote by the pan-Africanist President of Burkina Faso, Thomas Sankara (1984), who said, “*Abbiamo scelto di rischiare nuove vie per giungere a una maggiore felicità*” which translates to “we have chosen to risk new ways to achieve greater happiness.” The spirit of migration embodies this quote that the director leaves the viewers with. The last scene defends the integrity of the film, the migrants,

¹² *A Sud di Lampedusa*, 05:50.

¹³ *A Sud di Lampedusa*, 09:35.

and the futures that will lay ahead. After watching the film twice, it is understood that all of the Italian translations from their interviews woven together transcribe an account of groups who bear witness to similar paths. *A Sud di Lampedusa* exemplifies the experience of courageous individuals who want to reach greater happiness.

The Invasion of Lampedusa: The World's Gaze into Migration Media

In the BBC film, a reoccurring figure in most of these documentaries includes the spotlight on the Lampedusa mayor Bernardino “Dino” de Rubies. He served for quite a few years until being jailed for corruption but still played a crucial role as a mayor on an island that receives thousands of migrants annually. The film’s temporal context marks the Arab Spring period when migrants came from all ends of the Mediterranean Sea. The team of officials on the small island of Lampedusa often had newscasts on migrants arriving as a typical headline.¹⁴ The coined “Tunisian Invasion” during this moment in Italy gave international press coverage of the closing of the famed European open borders policy.¹⁵ It has become a wave of communication and rhetoric changing to denounce the migrants coming to Italy as a host and transit country. Most who consider Italy a transit country will take the journey to France, where they feel they will get better opportunities and less harassment. How migrants tactfully decide where their destination will be takes a lot of planning and money to make it come true with the appropriate channels. The documentary tracks political tensions and responses to the migration crisis across various scenes and aspects of life on the island.

The locals are at the forefront of the debate on the migration crisis and often share very divided views. One portion of the island includes the older generation, who are more likely

¹⁴ *The Invasion of Lampedusa*, Directed by Olly Lambert, 04:18.

¹⁵ *The Invasion of Lampedusa*, 06:27.

opposed and would instead let migrants perish at sea than be welcomed into their island. Another part of the Italian locals supports migrants' rights and intervention to aid them as soon as possible. The problem of bringing more toilets and sewage being ferried into Lampedusa became a community discussion. Debates on the streets often have to reach a compromise. This scene depicts the trucks loading the supplies onto the island and the crowd on the road taking it all in.¹⁶ The historical moment when Tunisians began to outnumber the local Lampedusan people became a pinnacle of the crisis on the island at the time. Scenes of the dump yards show over 30 Tunisian boats being tossed into a pit together. Tunisian migrants were stranded and confused by the Italian's actions. The sense of despair across multicultural communities stems from the many barriers and obstacles migrants face. Each documentary informs the public about how language barriers, xenophobia, and racism can often affect their experiences on the European continent.

The international community lacks global cooperation to protect and assist migrants; thus, France decided to close their borders leaving many migrants stranded at Italian ports. The Lampedusa locals and officials put the weight on Rome and the Prime Minister to deal with the migrant load, which has led the locals to believe that Italy has masterminded a political scheme to keep migrants abandoned on the island. The next shot instantly changes into a moment where migrants care for one another by maintaining their warmth. One young man wrapped a scarf around a friend to help ensure he was taken care of.¹⁷ This brief moment of peace and love quickly succumbed to another local press conference where Mayor Dino attempted to protect the interests of both his people and migrants to be supported better by the international community.

¹⁶ *The Invasion of Lampedusa*, 40:45.

¹⁷ *The Invasion of Lampedusa*, 46:30.

The broader reception of this BBC documentary increased awareness of the migration crisis while also beginning to correlate the same themes that Italian filmmakers began in their films. Now that the crisis in the island of Lampedusa has reached the mainstream media, what is the future for African migration to Italy? The never-ending incoming groups of migrants will risk whatever they need to for the next level in their life with safety and housing. The film has been an ideal way to communicate with multilingual communities, especially when it comes to humanitarian crises. Each documentary upheld various valuable topics and histories. Still, altogether they are in sync to hone in on the same message: migrant reception in Italy is inevitable and must be a global call to cooperation. By the thousands of lives displaced, Italy was and continues to be the preferred destination to enter European borders.

The trilogy of films that document the lives of migrants does not scratch the surface of how severe and extensive the migration crisis is. Luckily, using the genre of documentaries, it was more reliable to trust the filmmaker's content as trustworthy information. On the other hand, genres like drama may provoke certain messaging styles in a film that suggests a particular agenda and purpose. Documentaries alone cannot illustrate the grandness of the migration crisis, but it shares the real stories of real people who left their lives behind for a better one. The degree to which migrants sacrifice themselves physically, mentally, and psychologically inflates their worthiness to have a global society that welcomes them with open arms.

Chapter 2: Intersectional Identities, Mobilities, and Barriers

From ethnographic works to interdisciplinary responses, the literature provides the essential knowledge to lead to productive discourses to inspire change for migrant rights, protection, and assistance. Historical, social, economic, political, and cultural contexts will

immerse readers into a multifaceted, interdisciplinary account of the realities controlled by poorly regulated policies. Many scholars have persisted in making meaningful contributions to migration studies. Whether anthropologists, political scientists, or researchers, each perspective increases the range of aspects that create the migration crisis.

Transnationalism in Oral Histories of the African Experience

This analysis will address intersectionality identities, mobilities, and barriers for the most part. Each migrant has an identity with a unique race, ethnicity, age, religion, ability, gender, and sexual orientation. These primary identifiers can shape their experiences, chances of mobility, and any barriers that may impact their journey. One unique scholar comes from groundbreaking research through an ethnographic work on the experiences of African migrants from Senya Beraku, Ghana. The harsh realities and sentiments that Africans in fishing villages face when coming into contact with adversity are poverty, civil war, religious persecution, or lack of social mobility. The matter Ghanaians find themselves in from a consequential approach, Hans Lucht develops into research examining the intricacies of belonging and disconnectedness in Italy. Migrants may be seen in industrial wastelands amid poverty, illicit drug activity, prostitution, and violence.¹⁸ The nature of high-risk migration in the world is depicted in his chronicles and in addressing questions of survival and belonging to add a layer of analysis to all media forms.

In addition, Lucht creates a space to educate the reader on the study of existential reciprocity from the Ghanaian fishermen. They risked their lives on the Mediterranean Sea to get a chance to find their reason for existence. The testimonies genuinely capture the essence of an ethnographic work shedding light on the African diaspora through the lens of economic refugees. The men eventually find themselves working in the underground economy on the outskirts of

¹⁸ Lucht, Hans, *Darkness before Daybreak African Migrants Living on the Margins in Southern Italy Today*, 19.

Naples, where images of mobility and immobility are described in the story. Comprehending the contemporary lived realities of human migration can be traced through the geological and existential positionality of the African migrants.

The book's structure is intriguing as Lucht gives a detailed storyline of the Ghanaian migrant crisis. He begins by introducing the daily lifestyle of the migrants in Naples and how the Italian city environment is harsh with many issues ranging from racist altercations, constant muggings, squalid working conditions, and the daunting status of limbo for many. Another interesting location is the expressway which is both a place of mobility and possibility for citizens, but also a place of threat and failure for walking migrants targeted and attacked.¹⁹ This paradoxical situation that migrants find themselves in Naples is also conceived when Lucht questions how the Ghanaian migrants put themselves through suffering in Naples rather than living in the village with loved ones.²⁰ This is a theoretical question that almost comes across as theoretical when circumstances beyond the average human's understanding require the ultimate sacrifice in hopes of building a better future for friends and family left behind. In the following section of the book, Lucht traces the route to Europe from Ghana, filled with death, survival, and strategy. The usage of oral narratives in this section transcends the story into a series of accounts with various perspectives and impacts of their treacherous journey. Lucht even takes a moment to question the role of international organizations as powerful as the European Union that has perpetuated a "production of indifference" that institutionalizes death from the increasingly more challenging it is becoming for refugees to enter Europe.²¹ Finally, Lucht closes with the beginning of the journey: the small Guan village, which Lucht described during his fieldwork in

¹⁹ Lucht, Hans, *Darkness before Daybreak African Migrants Living on the Margins in Southern Italy Today*, 67.

²⁰ Lucht, 83.

²¹ Lucht, Hans, *Darkness before Daybreak African Migrants Living on the Margins in Southern Italy Today*, 139.

the Preface section of the book. It is equally important to recognize the causes and consequences of transnational migration and displacement worldwide to cohesively understand the full story of its inception of difficulties to the future with hope.

What Do Historical Transgressions Say About the Migration Crisis?

Graziella Ferrara is another scholar whose contributions to the field can develop the thoughts depicted in the documentaries. She is a writer and scholar on geographical internationalization that provides an extensive overview of the current lack of cooperation between Italy and North African movement of people, culture, and values. One article holds Italy accountable for its lack of effective collaboration and respect for humanity to promote the legal rights to protection and assistance that the Deputy High Commissioner in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) claims to adhere to. From the late 20th century to the current 21st century, Ferrara's sources track the temporal and geographical range of the migration crisis that initially stemmed from the 1940s and the emergence of migration from Africa to Europe. She even takes into account the increasingly concentrated African communities living on Italian soil that include Egyptian-, Moroccan-, and Tunisian-experiences with integration. Ferrara examines the complex mechanisms that factor in how countries interact with one another in the case of North Africa and Italy sharing the Mediterranean Sea that acts as a geographical hub for intersectional relations as a mechanism drawn out from cultural differences.²² Her argument transcends an intersectional, racialized approach to studying the dynamic between the international relations between the key stakeholders in this cyclical migration crisis bounded by the migration from Africa to Euro-Italy.

²² Ferrara, Graziella, "Geographical and Socio-Economic Problems of North-African Migration to Italy," *Geography, Environment, Sustainability*, 9.

Ferrera initially builds her argument by setting a precedent for the main distinction between the divided countries around the Mediterranean marked by ethnocentric homogeneity with African subjects who may not respond openly to integration, diversity, and pluralism as much as European subjects do. This interpretation of the socio-political forces behind the racialized differences between both regions creates heedless, improvident policies that diverge from the shared values of international cooperation. The construction of a vacuum of disparity across a global humanitarian migration crisis without a definite solution is ultimately a legacy of colonialism. It is crucial to recognize that the issues presented to present-day Africa and Italy were likely preventable if forces like colonization never took control of economic, social, and political conditions that burdened and disrespected African human rights. The intersectional pedagogy applied in Ferrara's study reinforces the causes that force African migrants toward the Mediterranean are direct byproducts of the atrocities that ravaged African communities before the mid-20th century. It is even more critical that Ferrara stresses the existence of a larger government or governance problem where "1.2 billion people live in despotic regimes (34) or fragile states (43) struggling with degradation, poverty, and emergencies."²³ The migration crisis proves that world governments have only succeeded in wreaking havoc against African migrants worsening displacement and infrastructure to help migrants sustainably.

Ferrera successfully addresses the global concerns that begin with racial differences to be quickly resolved by requiring an integration of North-African communities in Italy through "the emergence of a new paradigm of interpersonal behaviors that follow codes and believe that ensure reciprocity of benefits."²⁴ She concludes her article by relying on the human spirit that

²³ Ferrara, 5-8.

²⁴ Ferrara, Graziella, "Geographical and Socio-Economic Problems of North-African Migration to Italy," *Geography, Environment, Sustainability*, 11.

can trust in humanity to do its bidding and ultimately provide necessary conditions for cooperation that can address all of the issues and causations that draw out endless mechanisms to amplify the migration crisis. Her principles of solidarity and hope offer not only world leaders but the reader to understand that without partnerships that converge goals for the greater good, there will be no hope for the future of the thousands of displaced lives that are being held in a stateless limbo in between politically constructed land borders to dictate mobility and security. Her work offers an easy answer for stakeholders in the refugee regime to consider their governance, policy-making, and interests to move towards a prospering world that slowly changes individual thought and institutional values.

Ferrera, just like many other migration scholars, is curious when it comes to disrupting preconceived notions that are normalized in our societies and are moral and ethical. This article's reality is the importance of not disregarding human life, dignity, and safety from problems outside their control, space, and time.

Data in Contemporary Narratives and Predictions of Plausible Futures for African Migrants

This section will cover the ground with a multifaceted array of researchers whose works have pushed migration studies toward concrete analyses and dedications. One theme they all configure in their works is humanizing the collective and dynamic experiences of migrants. It may not be filmmaking, but storytelling in an academic setting or a journal or newspaper op-ed can all manage planning and expression about the common tendencies within the migration system.

Robert Press developed a study based on 60 interviews with African migrants in Italy and France between 2014-2016 to guide readers to reconsider the public portrait of migrants that is perpetuated across media, dialogue, and society. He begins his work by presenting the narrative

of Toto, who lived through the atrocities committed by the Sudanese government with acts of genocide against black Arabs.²⁵ The use of narratives is strongly reiterated throughout the text, but Press distinct it to be the argument Beezer and Zetter (2014) promoted that views narratives as “the most obvious and powerful tools in researching journeys.”²⁶ The ethnographic-like work of Press was able to show how Libya was a place of slavery, servitude, degradation, exploitation, torture, imprisonment, violence, and many other malpractices that are commonly associated with African migrants who are trying to go North to Europe. One of the most humanizing aspects of this study is the merit that Press denotes as African migrants not being helpless but rather inspirations of endurance, survival, and resilience across their lives.

UNHCR data of arrivals in Italy annually: 181,436 people arrived in Italy in 2016, and 28,223 were minors. Compared with 2014, the year of the humanitarian operation Mare Nostrum, 26,122 children came to the Italian coasts, while there were 16,478 in 2015. Among them, many minors faced their journey without an adult of reference: 49.9% of the total in 2014, 75% (12,360) in 2015, and 92% (25,846) in 2016.²⁷ Comparing the documentaries with more up-to-date scholarly research on the migration crisis allows for a connection between the data within narratives and the possible futures for African migrants interacting with filmmakers and researchers. Interacting with migrants as a whole, listening to their concerns with the migration system, and giving them a platform to be vocal about their experiences will continue to shape the efforts of activists seeking to find a better solution to the crisis.

Aine O’Healy’s book chapter within *Italian Mobilities* emphasizes the descriptions of migrants who find themselves voyaging into the treacherous waters of the Mediterranean Sea

²⁵ Press, Robert, “Dangerous Crossings: Voices from the African Migration to Italy/Europe,” 3.

²⁶ Press, 5.

²⁷ Paradiso, Maria, *Mediterranean Mobilities Europe’s Changing Relationships*, 65.

and land on Lampedusa island. Within the introductory pages, O’Healy characterizes the normalcy of Lampedusa locals finding migrants at sea and interacting with authorities to address the dire situation, just as the documentaries reflected. Actors who play a positive or negative role in the migration crisis are essential to recognize. Sometimes the failures of the migration regime come to catastrophes, like on the October 3, 2013, rescue that ended with 155 people on land and 360 confirmed dead at sea.²⁸ The media often frames these events as a need to increase securitization measures or increase efforts for preventative solutions.

Moreover, the politicization of borders reflects the xenophobia that many western governments associate with raising militarization against the migrant humanitarian crisis. Thus, cinematography can easily sway Italian locals’ perception of and against migrants over time - including the pressures of their local media. Lampedusans are still central to the narrative of immersing the Italian audience in a dialogical opportunity to encourage the bare minimum of understanding of what impacts the dissolution of migrant support. Each film, in its own words, captivates the echoes of one another to be vulnerable to “contradictions and blind spots.”²⁹

Each filmmaker and researcher parallel visibility, agency, and humanity. Regardless of their identities, they all maintain the subtle intuition that the futures of African migrants cannot be certain nor set in stone. The production of film and studies contributes to raising awareness to provide a coherent depiction of meaningful narratives with provocative discourse to convey migration’s severe, complex nature. The context of the past, present, and future times must never ignore each other, and it is foundational to follow the mission of disrupting dehumanization and ineffective migrant policy.

²⁸ O’ Healy, Aine, “Imagining Lampedusa,” in *Italian Mobilities*, 152.

²⁹ O’Healy, 170.

The many identities across roles in the crisis, in certain respects, find life-changing bare necessities for migrants. The various paths and journeys African migrants take will have them experience very different things along the way. But it is the barriers within the migration crisis that undermine the efforts of activists and humanitarians. Laws, policies, and political corruption will always be the highest level of authority that takes priority before the lives of migrants. Crenshaw's approach to intersectionality provokes the notion that "dominant conceptions of discrimination condition us to think about subordination as disadvantage occurring along a single categorical axis."³⁰ Discrimination based on xenophobia, racism, transphobia, and other identity-based aggressions is the poison of racialized discrimination as another marginalizing identity within statelessness.

The vast Mediterranean Sea has seen people attempting to cross its waters. Their promised land of freedom and hope will never be guaranteed, and they are fluid futures that may alter based on the realities that will impact migrants. The more research and films curate the existence of African migrants, the better it will be to diminish the perception of threat and reinforce values of civil society with community love. Policywriters, theorists, and lawmakers can bear the work. Still, civic engagement advocating their officials to save migrants and promote integration may sway one community at a time to take part in the global collective to cooperate and act.

Conclusion: Futures for the African Diaspora in Italy

The use of mediums in media in a globalized community integrates the aims and diversity of how we communicate as human beings. As one species, we must do whatever we can to help

³⁰ Crenshaw, Kimberle, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," 140.

our global society with its disasters and tragedies. Maintaining a culture of shared knowledge and creation without prejudice could radically alter the current state of affairs with migration and many other global issues. However, being realistic with pushback and anti-migrant movements, it is essential to provide holistic solution-building approaches and community action. The films prove that Italian locals can easily be the reason to reinforce remedies rather than turning away human lives at sea. Focusing on a duality of roles within the system, migrant to non-migrant, will illustrate the whole story considering all accounts. Unbiased storytelling has and continues to be an excellent tactic for directors to give raw, authentic content that may or may not influence the viewer.

If migrants seek refuge or asylum when arriving on Italian soil, they must get their status hearing in Italy. Such neighboring countries like France deport refugees back to Italy to abide by the Dublin Regulation (2004) policy. Examining the current political status of the EU policies aligned with domestic Italian immigration policies clarifies what motivates the creation of the current policies and future reforms. The complications of Italian politics stem from protecting the interests of Italian nationals without determining how to produce an African migrant solution with its delegates or even international partners. Contemporary Italy will slowly transition into a more multicultural and diverse society that will come with a reassessment of the government to provide equal rights and opportunities to the new generations of Italians who come from migrant households.

The UNHCR, grassroots organizations, and other non-governmental organizations are not the only solutions to the migration crisis. Filmmaking is one step to sharing ideas and records of humanity. Researching then adds to the layer of visuals with contextualized explanations for the current situation. With this process comes change that turns citizens voting on policies to help

fund programs, services, and infrastructure improvements towards the migration crisis. Suppose the tiny island of Lampedusa can handle the growing numbers of migrants on their small territory, then what are the excuses for western countries like Italy and the global organizations like the United Nations to address collective action, design flaws, and free-riding? Increasing levels of participation across governments, provinces, and local communities will include migrant voices. The safety, enjoyment of asylum, solutions, mobility, and voice are simple pleasures and liberties that migrants often wish to seek.³¹ The erasure of migrants taking part in discussions about their displacement creates an imbalance of power for refugees to advocate for themselves. How else will refugees be able to address problems if they are excluded from spaces to have dialogue? How will African migrants shape their futures if the crisis worsens?

Understanding the context and challenges facing the island of Lampedusa marks the complex dynamics of power imbalances towards advocacy work and raising awareness as hateful and fearful tactics. The reality facing African migrants must be taken seriously, and imagine structures that will finally offer the African migrant a new home and new happiness.

³¹ Aleinikoff, Alexander T. and Leah Zamore, *The Arc of Protection: Reforming the International Refugee Regime*, Stanford University Press, 2019.

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CISLA Addendum: “The Fluid Journey of Intersectional Learning”

My rigorous and interdisciplinary education with Connecticut College’s Connections curriculum offers students the opportunity to embrace their unique approach to scholarship. My own intention in pursuing my undergraduate education was to explore my own multicultural, queer, and multifaith identities. These soon interacted with the nuances of global governance, humanitarian rights, and intersectional identities across communities. Throughout my studies, I explored media, literature, and culture through the lens of anthropologists, political scientists, and linguists, with a profound sense of how interconnected my courses were.

In a presentation co-led by my SPA 225/325/425 Teaching and Learning Spanish course, the ten of us highly motivated students shared with our Spanish Department (SPA) professors, peers, and our new Dean of Institutional Equity and Inclusion (DIEI) administrator about the semester context of the Spanish department (Hispanic Studies and Latin American Studies) with a report of trends, issues, and recommendations. This was the epitome of a liberal arts education in action, given the valuable information we gathered through a peer-to-peer poll with ten questions. We hypothesized the current climate of student participation within the language department, utilized our course’s theoretical frameworks to articulate learning experiences, and prepared an open forum to begin dialogue across students, faculty, and staff. This experience, like many, has shaped my inclination to aspire to be a part of multiple disciplines, multiple communities, and multiple organizations.

Monolithic expectations and realities of life have been shaped by what is known as white supremacy or heteropatriarchal notions. I never truly understood how one ethnic or racial group could subject another to cruelty and harassment based on uncontested superiority. It was not until taking IS201 with Professor Bhatia that I truly conceptualized the idea of positionality - which

can present itself differently from individual to individual. My positionality has always been multifaceted, but growing up mixed, you are told by the dominant social groups in society to exist as one race alone being mixed was a game of selected options rather than an all-encompassing identity.

After internalizing my lessons from my first couple of years in New London, Connecticut, my passions grew to new areas of the college community: student leadership, shared governance, and international scholarship. I was elected as Student Government Association (SGA) Chair of Residential Affairs after completing a year as First-Year Class President. The tremendous opportunity to represent my peers on the executive board of our student government quickly made me view institutions on a more provocative scale. I began understanding the lack of communication channels between staff, faculty, and students that correlate to nations' dynamic, global systems with varying levels of shared cooperation amidst humanitarian crises. These lenses of perception drove me into a transitional journey of determining what my SIP would ultimately become. I endured watching films of the migration crisis to witness the tragedies that displaced people, yet saw how empowered international governmental organizations (IGOs) such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), still lack the funding to mobilize aid to protection and assistance. My academic and co-curricular experiences generally help me ponder about different experiences, research, or assignments as a scholar.

I knew that the center within the Connections curriculum that had a mission to promote global learning, intersectional identities, and motivated students would seamlessly facilitate a once-in-a-lifetime development as an undergraduate selected scholar. My Senior Integrative Project (SIP) describes the African diasporic movement led by migrants to cross into Italy. The

migration crisis in the European Union (EU) is a highly politicized debate across political, social, and economic spaces. My project unravels the complex migration crisis by depicting African migrant narratives in film and literature. This will have to interrogate the local Italian people who receive and help migrant rafts to shore along the island shores of Lampedusa and Lenosa.

Forces Perpetuating Contemporary Society

In my own lived experiences, I have experienced numerous forces that have hindered or offered growth to me. As a young scholar in middle school, I was in the Associated Student Body (ASB) for two years leading various student life activities, communications, and school spirit. I never knew how maintaining a high GPA, co-curricular activities, and rigorous classes could lead me to scholarship programs and financial aid at independent schools. I was mentored for a few years under one program that helped me learn about the other side of Los Angeles outside of my low-income community. Fancy galas, expensive brunches, and enthusiastic white staff are all for a county-wide cohort of students in similarly marginalized groups being sent off to boarding and private schools across the country. This initial financial investment into my studies helped me gain the tools, resources, and networks to pursue a high school education beyond the public school across the street from my apartment. At Harvard-Westlake School, I was given the great privilege to be taught Italian as my second language as an elective while taking advanced Spanish and ballet classes. I felt isolated while also empowered to take up space wherever I could. Getting an education from a top-tier private school made me realize the educational gaps between my BIPOC low-income peers from middle school versus the wealthier BIPOC and White students from my high school campus. The long bus rides to get to and from campus totaled, on average, 3.5 hours a day, excluding commuting time in the car with my parents to get home from the bus stop.

Privilege, locality, and scholarship were like a holy trinity in my development as a student. I knew how important it was for me to respect and develop profound relationships with others. Meeting new people interested in my advocacy work, academic interests, or co-curricular fun always enabled me to have multiple friend groups. I learned many valuable lessons about myself, others, and the world around me through these groups. I knew that every day that I did my homework, participated in class, and took up opportunities I would be rewarded eventually. Graduation made the mark.

Many of the students in my class already drive multiple vehicles, own assets, have property, and have adopted the tremendous amount of wealth and social status that their guardians offer them. They had a significantly easier time navigating the college process with the wealth allocated to their tutoring, essays, and donations to sway admissions rulings in their favor. On the other hand, I did not have the same leverage of privilege that most of my peers could when facing adversity and challenges. This is contemporary society: the dominant class is enabled to exist and control all aspects of society that promote limiting expectations for those being dominated.

Personal Affirmations of the Past

Knowing the challenges facing the world and how they are constructed, empowered, and perpetuated makes institutional analysis more engaging and deliberate. I never understood the mechanisms that created what is known as the migration crisis until taking “Politics of Refugees” with Professor Borer and “International Organizations” with Professor Levin. I then could pinpoint moments in my life where specific memories connected my passions without my seeing the whole picture together.

During my high school years, I signed up for a spring break trip to Spain with my school and was able to get funding through the financial aid office. I helped the chaperones and students who needed additional Spanish support as native speakers for the two weeks. We traveled first into Madrid, where I was impacted by a giant yellow banner with thick black capitalized letters reading: “REFUGEES WELCOME!” across the roof of a post office. This moment in the trip began my interest in understanding what refugees were in 2016 - a year after the refugee crisis was proclaimed. Throughout the journey, I discovered migration histories across the Mediterranean across religions, ethnicities, and nationalities. I found how similar the narratives of migrants in that hemisphere were to those in the western hemisphere coming from Latin America and the Caribbean into the United States and Canada.

My personal history with the migration crisis has been as an outsider looking into the narratives of my older generations who migrated. I learned about the forces of displacement and persecution that forcibly interlocks fear into the lives of the most vulnerable population across the world. Still, within the United States context, my family has several migration stories that trace a significant period of time and communities. First, my maternal grandmother migrated north to America from southern Mexico as the eldest of 13 siblings at 14. She then worked as a migrant worker, in the textile industry, and ran a business in the produce industry. Her heritage and family ties were bound to native farmers south of Colima’s volcano system. My maternal grandfather’s family migrated from central Mexico to Southern Arizona as descendants of the Pascua Yaqui tribe. This side of my family has roots across northern Mexico, southern California, and Canada. My late paternal grandmother comes from a mixed heritage of enslaved Africans from the western coast and Blackfoot tribe heritage. Part of my family has moved from the south and into Ohio and southern California. My paternal grandfather came from Inca

heritage in Guatemala and migrated north to southern California with his brothers for a better life.

Each family has had its share of struggles and trials. Still, now all are witnessing the investments being paid off with the younger generations taking the ancestral knowledge with them into new horizons. As a multicultural family, we all share our customs, language, heritage, and traditions. It is a unique position to be the binding factor of my families and extended families. Their knowledge and presence continue to support my goals and aspirations in life. Their struggle challenges me to work harder for the legacy that I will carry on. I allow it also to nurture my spirit and sensibility to learn content in my academic experience that will help me reflect and share my perceptions of the world around me. My future is one without limitations as a liberated queer individual. My family is happy, and I am joyful for the privileges I have had to be where I am today.

Challenges of Living in Peace and Sustainability

My research project has held a large portion of my mental and physical health when it comes to challenges. Some material challenges are presently the inability to have in-person work with migrants in Italy due to the global pandemic. I have created a virtual project that will enable me to determine the degree of reality and authentic depictions of migrant narratives across film and literature. I am held to a standard that will maintain a remote work ethic and methodology.

Meanwhile, the spiritual challenges that face us today are the lack of humanity and spirit to determine whether or not a global challenge is meritable or deemed worthy enough to pour millions of funding into supporting a campaign. The migration crisis, as opposed to a Catholic church burning, will always get the smaller end of the deal. Institutional barriers such as policy and structure of maintaining the migration crisis are weak and are not sustainable for the growing

number of displaced people in the world. Nonetheless, the labor to motivate global leaders, populations, and the private sector to be on the same mission to end the migration crisis would need global actors' full participation and full cooperation.

Some of the ethical challenges facing us are identity politics and the controversies over protecting human life. For migrants, crossing the Mediterranean may be a huge next step in their plan to freedom. But traveling across the African continent has its own compromised territories that will dehumanize migrants. Is it ethical for me as a student to describe film and literature about a specific social group that is different from my own? How does one remedy humanity with respect and awareness for a wider audience? These questions represent my analysis approach to how I design my project and have navigated discussions with other students on campus.

My CISLA journey has taken me to new heights in pursuit of genuinely immersing myself with people who are heavily involved in the migration crisis. While I was unable to study abroad in Italy in my junior year Spring Semester with the Brown University in Bologna program, I could still participate in a summer international internship with the Migrants team based out of Sicily, Italy. Interning for this organization has welcomed me to a world of proactive minds and disciplined entrepreneurs with visions for the future that put migrant lives first. I have grown so much while learning new things about the world around me and ensuring that I hold myself to the highest standards of integrity to continue raising awareness and advocating for migrants.

I have cherished each moment, person, and lesson through which I used to accelerate my understanding and knowledge. I sincerely hope to continue to study and enrich myself through curiosity.