

Violation of Human Rights Among Migrants and Refugees

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ABSTRACT

According to The Global Migration Group, in 2020 an estimated 281 million people left their country of origin for reasons that include persecution, war, violence, conflict, poverty, and lack of access to healthcare, education, water, food, and housing.

Since the violation of human rights among migrants and refugees has become a global issue, social worker practitioners must address the relevant considerations and challenges that these minority groups experience during their immigration journey as well as the issues they face upon arriving at their destination.

This poster describes the failure of states to identify victims in need of protection with regard to their civil, political, and human rights.

It is a lack of understanding and awareness of these problems that prevent Americans from being more sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity and from working to end discrimination, oppression, and other forms of social injustice in the United States.

How do structural issues of income inequality and institutionalized discrimination fit into this problem?

Castex (1994) describes how the Hispanic/Latino communities face challenges such as low median incomes, limited English proficiency, and higher rates of single parents with low education levels. They also suffer psychosocial stressors and labor exploitation, that prevent them from seeing themselves as members of their communities. All these forms of oppression, restrict their freedom to attend to the well-being of themselves and their families and prevent them from having access to material and non-material resources that would allow them to achieve the lives they came to this country to pursue.

Even though American citizens claim job displacement by undocumented workers, evidence suggests that the labor market is not impacted by these workers as much as they claim.



In reality, the wages and earnings of unauthorized workers are either too small, or even nonexistent, so they do not create negative effects on the labor market of American-born workers, (Espenshade, 1995).

Unfortunately, the prevalence of false beliefs about these issues creates, or at least adds to, the lack of empathy toward immigrants that is endemic in society. Espenshade, (1995), suggests that the most common cause for unauthorized immigration is the desire to find jobs that will provide support for migrants and their families, including family members who have stayed behind in the country of origin. Immigrants anticipate foreign labor demand in the U. S. because many employers seek higher profits by paying low wages.

Discrepancies in income are reflected by how newly legalized immigrants' employment experiences and earnings differ from undocumented immigrants. Rivera-Batiz, F.L.'s (1999) describes how undocumented foreign workers earn lower wages than legal immigrants in the United States. In addition to this wage discrimination, undocumented immigrants and refugees face other difficulties such as a lack of health providers and fear of reporting crimes that might lead to deportation.



Many are fleeing traumatic events, but American citizens would rather classify them as criminals than recognize how societal discrepancies and injustice are impacting the lives of these marginalized groups.

How has the problem been defined and/or addressed?

Failure to address this problem has short- and long-term implications, especially when the federal government seems to avoid the problem by ignoring the civil and human rights of undocumented immigrants and refugees who have been the focus of much discrimination and hate (Pew Research Center, 2015). For that reason, social workers must also work with people who could address the needs of diverse groups at different levels. Many Americans endorse deportation as the only solution to the problem, although Lee, S.J. (2006), makes it clear that the immigration judicial system does not have the resources to deport eleven million undocumented immigrants.

Many Americans justify social injustice directed at undocumented immigrants and refugees by pointing out the diverse problems that beset this community. Vargas et al. (2017) looks at research that shows the correlation between anti-immigration and poor health conditions and increases mental health problems among this population. In addition, racial profiling, ineligibility for federal housing, food stamps, Medicare, and cash assistance, as well as discrimination, deportation, and separation from family members are factors that lead immigrants and refugees to experience negative emotional and behavioral issues. These negative outcomes could be manifested in the form of anger, anxiety, depression, social isolation, fear, and lack of a sense of belonging.



Many Americans believe the only the solution to the crisis in immigration is prosecution and deportation.

These views are promulgated by politicians and spread on social media where lies, misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda run rampant. Undocumented immigrants and refugees are already at a disadvantage; they experience isolation from peers, labor exploitation, struggle to pursue education, fears of detention and deportation, and often post-traumatic disorder as a result of separation from their loved ones, all things which our current social environment fails to recognize.



What has been done to eliminate the problem?

The issues surrounding undocumented US immigration are reflected in this poster because it seeks to explore social workers' performance at the macro level of the issues, especially due to the fact that the NASW is at the forefront of fighting for the civil and human rights of immigrants and refugees.

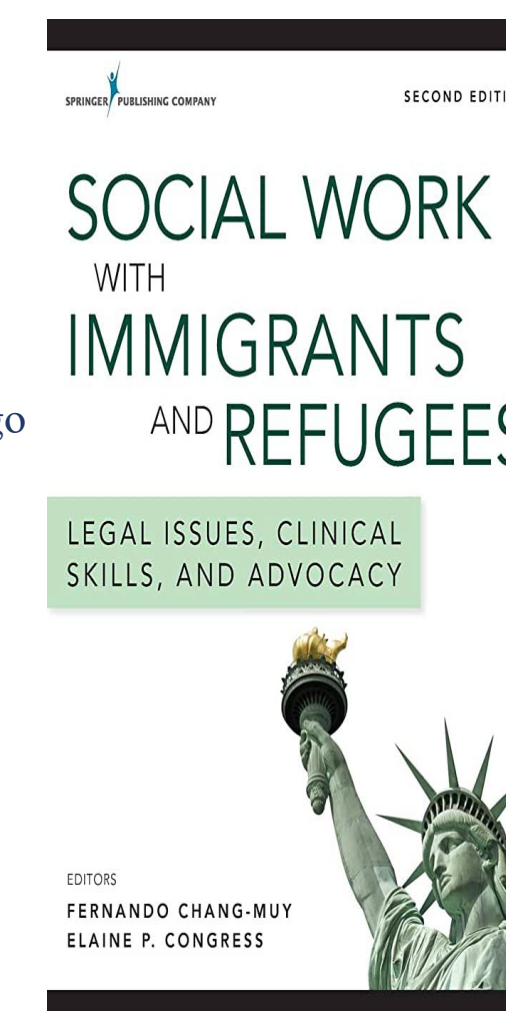


The NASW's position on immigration is described in the *Code of Ethics* 1.05 - *Awareness and Social Diversity* which describes how social workers must fight for the rights of all people regardless of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, political beliefs, national origin, color, sex, age, marital status, religion, and mental or physical disability.

The NASW also condemns all forms of discrimination based on the *Code of Ethics* 4.02. Finally, it encourages social workers to act to prevent and eliminate domination of, exploitation of, and discrimination against, any person and group based on the *Code of Ethics* 6.04- *Social and Political Action*.

This topic is vitally important in modern social work, especially considering how early social workers focused so much on immigration.

Jane Addams, the "mother" of social work, began to address immigration issues in 1889 by creating the first settlement house in Chicago for those who had arrived in America to work (Johnson, 2004). She advocated for vulnerable populations at the macro level with other religious and charitable organizations, working to facilitate the well-being and integration of immigrants in the United States. She also gave speeches about the success of Hull House to try to improve social inequality (Johnson, 2004).



Therefore, social work education must expand beyond teaching cultural competence by creating a sense of awareness in society about how harmful and maladaptive responses create barriers that produce systemic inequality. It must also be reinforcing how the lack of understanding of immigration policies and human rights violations cause many other negative consequences among these minority groups.

CONCLUSION

This issue needs to be addressed by practitioners and professional organizations. It would be impossible to overestimate the importance of social workers' advocacy on behalf of immigrants and refugees who are in need and experience violations of their human rights due to oppression, and vulnerability, as a result, of social inequality in the United States. Otherwise, there will be no improvement in the systems and services that fail immigrants and refugees, or in societal discrepancies, injustice, and the lack of fairness for the oppressed and vulnerable.

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