

“Profit, Protest, and the Asylum Industry”

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Call for contributors/ proposals, deadline: 31 July, 2017

Overview: While the power to grant or deny asylum to people remains overwhelmingly within the purview of States,¹ we approach the actors and institutions forming around asylum systems internationally as “the asylum industry.” Our position engages analyses of commodification and industrialization in multiple, related spheres under neoliberal capitalism.

The existing global asylum regime is characterized by profit-making activity. Brokers, coyotes and smugglers demand extortionate payments to facilitate border crossings and send remittances home. Corporations run private detention centers and manage the deportations of “failed” claimants.² Contractors erect walls and fences, barring potential asylum seekers from making claims.³ Expert witnesses and research institutes, working primarily within the private realm, create testimonies and reports that shape case outcomes. Authorities demand medical examination certificates, psychoanalytical documentation, and bodily evidence as “proof” of persecution. Agencies compete for government contracts to provide stipulated services to asylum seekers and asylees, while placing them into a regime of monitored vulnerability. Immigration lawyers charge exorbitant fees for their services. Governments cite “austerity measures” as they defund or privatize legal and social aid.⁴ Worldwide, activists fight for reform, and attempt to fill gaps in service provision. Their grassroots work is however often overshadowed by large, specialized NGOs that advocate for select categories of persecuted people⁵ and establish limited “deserving,” asylum seeker identities.⁶ Universally accessible in theory, asylum (like other categories of sanctioned migration) has become far more readily available to people with financial and cultural capital.⁷

Call for Contributors: The proposed collection unites international academics, activists, journalists, artists, and people directly impacted by the asylum industry to explore how current practices of asylum align with the neoliberal moment more broadly, and to present visions for alternative systems and processes. We are looking for contributions in a variety of forms, for example:

- research papers (3,000-4,000 words)
- journalistic articles (800-1,000 words)
- photo-essays, data visualizations, political artwork, and other creative formats (e.g. diary entries; graphic novella; cartoons; poems, etc.).

Interested contributors should send a project title, a 250-word abstract/ proposal, and a 150-word bio/ description of their organization. For artwork, send a short description and 1-3 representative images. Email materials to sm3276a@georgetown.edu and pine@american.edu by **31 July, 2017**. We will notify contributors of acceptance in mid-August. Completed submissions will be due by November 2017.

Note: We are currently applying for funding to compensate activists, artists, and contributors directly impacted by asylum processes for their work, and are in advanced talks with a publisher.

References:

- ¹ Gil-Bazo, María-Teresa. 2015. "Asylum as a General Principle of International Law." *International Journal of Refugee Law*, 27 (1): 3-28
- ² Flynn, Michael. 2014. "There and Back Again: On the Diffusion of Immigration Detention." *Journal on Migration and Human Security* 2 (3): 165–97.
- ³ Fang, Lee. 2016. Surveillance and Border Security Contractors See Big Money in Donald Trump's Immigration Agenda. *The Intercept*. December 6, 2016. <https://theintercept.com/2016/12/06/defense-companies-trump/>
- ⁴ Fassin, Didier. 2011. Policing Borders, Producing Boundaries: The Governmentality of Immigration in Dark Times. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 40:213-226
- ⁵ INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence (Ed.). 2007. *The Revolution Will Not be Funded: Beyond the Non-Profit Industrial Complex*. New York: South End Press
- ⁶ Agustín, Laura María. 2007. *Sex at the Margins: Migration, Labour Markets and the Rescue Industry*. London: Zed Books.
- ⁷ Gammeltoft-Hansen, Thomas and Ninna Nyberg Sorensen (Eds.). 2013. *The Migration Industry and the Commercialization of International Migration*. London and New York: Routledge.