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Structural Violence at the Economic Barrier:

A Comparison of the US-Mexican and Spanish-Moroccan Borders

On October 6, 2005, the governor of Morocco's northern Nador province, Abdellah Bendhiba, said that six men "died during an assault of rare violence by some 400 immigrants trying to enter" the Spanish town of Mellilla on the North African coast overnight (BBC). Three days earlier, US customs officers stated that at least 464 Mexicans had died attempting to cross the US border that year. This represented a 43% increase on the previous year, when 223 died in the Arizona desert alone, usually of thirst and dehydration. (BBC October 4, 2005; BBC March 28, 2005). Although these two events that occurred halfway across the globe from one another may appear unrelated, they are in fact a part of the same socio-historical processes that govern the global politics of market economics.

The reasons behind the migration of Third World citizens toward the nation-states of Europe and North America generally point toward economic inequity. "The current transnational age is characterized by a gross incapacity of peripheral economies to absorb the labor that is created in the periphery, with the result that it inexorably flows to the cores of the global capitalist economy" (Kearney 1992[?]:23-24). The socio-historical processes of colonialism and the chronic indebtedness of Third World nations put individuals from peripheral areas at an extreme economic disadvantage and they inevitably migrate toward areas of greater economic prosperity. Third World nations

cannot absorb the labor precisely because of these socio-historical processes. Likewise, “migrants are engaged in a global capitalism that at one level obliterates the border distinction but that, at another level, is a mechanism of border control through the hegemonic state apparatus” (Alvarez 1995:458). Global capitalism espouses the doctrine of free trade throughout the world and the disintegration of the borders that define nation-states to allow their capital and assets to move without barriers, yet it also encourages the militarization of such boundaries to keep marginalized populations desperate enough to work for the lowest wages possible. In this way, the global market encourages structural violence against the poor of the Third World to line the pockets of First World elites.

Structural violence employs the systemic implementation of exploitive and unjust social, political and economic structures and practices by the elite regimes of the First World causing physical, psychological and economic harm to poor individuals often from the Third World. This type of violence is not overt but rather results from the inequity inherent in global capitalist system. The use of global economic and political structures and institutions to dominate marginalized populations assists First World elites in generating further wealth and power and thus increases their dominion. These structures include, but are not limited to – the formation of nation-states and borders, colonialism, Third-World debt and free-trade agreements.

The formation of nation states and the construction and implementation of the artificial lines that separate them are one of several political and economic structures that assist elites in this domination. Both the US-Mexico and Spanish-Moroccan borders

represent economic and political lines that separate the First World from the Third, and keep economic refugees from upsetting the economic order of global capitalism.

The defining characteristic of border conflict and paradox is the abutment of the US, *the* world's dominant economic-political nation-state, with Mexico, which has a "third-world" economy. No other border in the world exhibits the inequality of power, economics, and the human condition as does this one (Alvarez 1995:451).

Perhaps nothing could rival this boundary for inequity and sheer size, as the US-Mexico border spans over two thousand miles, but that sentiment is echoed in a statement on the Spanish Moroccan border. "The contrast between the social-economic development of Western Europe and that of North Africa...is quite dramatic because of their proximity" (Bodega, Cebrian, Franchini, Lora-Tamayo, Martin-Lou 1995:800). Both borders represent an economic dividing line, where the South meets the North and Third World meets the First. By preventing the migration of the desperate, both Europe and the United States are engaging in "clearly discriminatory measures taken against economic immigrants who...involuntarily become illegals" (Bodega et al. 1995:807). Death in the borderlands of both North Africa and North America occurs due to the structural violence inherent in the systemic subjugation of the "Others" to the south of the European and American industrialized powers.

Subjugation occurs in many forms but begins with the inequity created by colonialism. As a colony of both France and Spain simultaneously, Morocco is unusual as a country with dual colonial legacies. Prior to colonization, most of Morocco's population practiced subsistence agriculture, though a few merchants operated on trade routes (Cohen 2004). Colonization of the area began with the Spanish-Moroccan War in 1860. The Spaniards reward for victory was a sum of "100 million pesetas on the

makhzan” or ruling council, to be paid in foreign currency (Porch 1982:18). The Spanish protectorate eventually gained control of but remained in the northern part of the country while the French wrangled with other European powers for the right to colonize the remainder of the territory. Following the Spanish design, the French created the Bank of Morocco in 1907 to control the country’s finances and to ensure repayment of forced loans (Eickelman 2002). This drained currency reserves and inflation ensued along with increased taxation. Likewise, imports of cheap commodities from elsewhere put many craftspeople out of business and migration to the northern coast began, creating a landless proletariat that was to continue into the present day (Porch 1982).

Following a military takeover, French settlers began migrating to Morocco along with commercial enterprises such as railroads, banks, mines and agribusiness. To “educate” the population on how European enterprises were run, land was seized from Moroccans to operate these companies thus increasing the size of the landless proletariat (Eickelman 2002). Migration to Morocco and the seizure of land by the colonizers and their enterprises as well as debt created by the colonial governments displaced local communities. This forever altered the character of the area by depriving locals of the means of self-subsistence, turning many into a class of landless workers.

Mexico experienced its own colonization at the hands of the Spaniards and although it had only one European colonizer, and later another North American one, the effects were no less severe. When the Spaniards realized they had found a previously unknown continent, they were eager to take its wealth for Spain. To attract private funds to this venture, Spain granted conquistadors twenty percent of revenue collected in the

exploitation of resources from the territory. Conquistadors busily stripped the land and its indigenous inhabitants of precious metals and other resources and sent them back to Spain. This exploitation of the people and land continued from 1519 until 1821 when Mexico gained independence from Spain after eleven years of war. The war cut production in both mining and agriculture, leaving the new nation with a debt of 76 million pesos to mainly foreign creditors and a treasury facing a state of chronic bankruptcy.

Mexico proceeded to lose the state of Texas in 1836 to colonists from the United States wishing to form an independent nation. Mexico reluctantly allowed the quasi-independence of Texas as it did not have the resources to prevent this takeover, but when it was admitted as a state to the US in 1845, war broke out. The US invaded and proceeded on a two-year march through Mexican territory, raising its flag in Mexico City in September of 1847. Mexico was forced to surrender and relinquish 890,000 square miles of land in what has become the states of Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California; receiving a mere 15 million dollars in compensation (Villegas, Bernal, Toscano, Gonzales, Blanquel, Meyer 1995). The US colonization was different than most in that the land was never returned – it was rather absorbed into the colonizing nation for a paltry sum. Mexico had no choice but to relinquish the land to the *nuevo conquistadores* and never fully recovered from this colonial legacy of lost resources and territory. Political instability and chronic debt have plagued the nation ever since.

Likewise, Morocco is experiencing complications in its recovery from the effects of colonialism. Following resistance to French rule, Morocco gained independence in 1956 (Eickelman 2002). Spain acknowledged Moroccan independence one month later

with the exception of five small presidios and the Spanish Sahara (Howe 2005).

However, a month after the Treaty of Fez was signed, Prince Moulay Hassan stated:

Independence is just the beginning of our problems...We've got to start all over and build a nation out of chaos. In forty years, the protectorate succeeded in sapping our national strength and natural resources and left us in a vacuum with only the throne to cling to (Howe 2005:90).

The problems in Morocco have in fact continued due to this colonial legacy. Despite independence, indebtedness to foreign banks has been constant. "External debt reached \$11 billion" in 1983 which was 70% of the gross domestic product (Rhazaoui 1987:141). Further, in order to pay such debts, Moroccan agriculture focused on export crops beginning in the 1960's. Cash crops used up a majority of the arable land and grain had to be imported to the area for the first time in history to feed the population. By the 1980's half of all cereals were imported, which were inevitably more expensive than locally grown grain. With the majority of the Moroccan population unable to afford to purchase the imported grain, estimates put malnutrition amongst the population at 30-60% (Swearingen 1987:160).

The lack of self-sufficiency in agriculture and foreign debt created problems for the majority of Moroccans. The government had low currency reserves and 8,600 government jobs were eliminated in 1983 adding to an unemployment rate of over 29% (Rhazaoui 1987:142). Due to the colonial legacy and chronic debt, landless workers needed to find wage labor elsewhere. Emigration to Europe began to increase in the early 1960's. Documented Moroccan migrants in France jumped from 3,900 in 1961 to 11,000 in 1963 (1965). Numbers have continued to rise in France and elsewhere as families and individuals struggle to find the means to feed themselves. Moroccans

comprise the largest group of foreign workers in the European Union (Huntoon 1998), which is fundamentally due to geographic proximity and easy access to Spain as tourists (Bodega, Cebrian, Franchini, Lora-Tamayo, Martin-Lou 1995). In 1986, the number of Moroccans in Spain alone was calculated at nearly 95,000 (Bodega et al. 1995:808), and significant numbers of Moroccans are found throughout Europe and North America.

Due to the political and economic instability created in the colonial period, Mexicans have also been forced to migrate in search of work. The largest flow of Mexican migration to the US began in the early 1900's as labor recruiters went to Mexico to find inexpensive workers for railroads and agriculture. During World War II, the US government endorsed this labor migration when it created the Bracero Program to legally allow Mexican guest workers in the US for seasonal agricultural labor. The program ended in 1964 but the pattern had been established and Mexican migrants became dependent on this wage labor for survival. US agricultural producers also enjoyed the benefits of higher profits from an inexpensive labor force.

Mexico took on new debt to foreign banks in the 1970's to support development projects and government programs, as well as to pay old debts and interest. They were forced to default on the loans in 1982 and this obliged Mexico under the terms of the loans to open its economy to foreign businesses. An employment crisis ensued as local manufacturers and businesses failed, creating a need for further migration to the US. The US responded with new laws making it more difficult for undocumented Mexicans to migrate across the border and increased border policing and enforcement (Fussell 2004).

Debt was perpetuated in Third World nations during the 1970's because First World lenders "had large supplies of money that they were eager to lend" (Schaeffer 2003:97). The large supplies came from the trade imbalances and debt created in the colonial period as well as money spent on oil. These petrodollars were accumulated by states with large oil supplies that sold the oil to industrialized First World nations. Generating enormous wealth for elites in oil producing countries, they wished to deposit the petrodollars in a 'safe haven' – the banks of the First World. Thus First World banks had a large amount of capital they needed to invest and without investing the money, it could not generate more money for the banks. Giving loans to Third World nation-states was seen as a reasonably safe investment because as one Citicorp chair said "a country does not go bankrupt" (Schaeffer 2003:99). The loans were also helpful to First World elites because they were mainly for products created by First World corporations and to repay loans already given to and forced on the Third World nations by the banks of the First World.

The Third World nations needed that money to repay debts that had been accruing interest sometimes since the colonial period. "Over 60% of [the money] was immediately paid back to the banks as debt repayments or interest" (Schaeffer 2003:99). In the case of Mexico \$88 billion was borrowed between 1977 and 1979, but "only 14.3 billion was actually available for use in the country" (Schaeffer 2003:99). The banks, led by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, attached strict conditions to the loans. If they were defaulted on, the terms required debtor nations to open their economies to foreign investment. This investment included selling state owned businesses such as water and power at bargain prices to transnational corporations

who proceeded to charge higher fees for these public services. Many people simply could not afford the services and were forced to find money elsewhere to provide for their families. Third World economies were barely able to tread water with these loans as they were forced to repay the previous loans and interest that had in some cases been forced upon them in the colonial period. The cycle of debt had been continuous as debt was taken on to repay debts and the interest on the debts crippled the local economies forcing many out of work with nowhere to go but North. These debts combine with the other structures in place to exploit the populations of the Third World with structural violence.

The privatization of public services has continued with free trade agreements. Free trade agreements have become a central tool in the exploitation of Third World populations, as well as the vast majority of people in the First World. In creating an economic apparatus outside the constructs of national and elected governments, First World elites and corporations have succeeded in transcending the laws of these governments. This success has translated into profit as labor laws, such as minimum wages, can easily be circumvented. This is accomplished by simply relocating production facilities to areas where such laws do not exist. The passage of NAFTA between Mexico and the US has

been very beneficial for the rich in both countries and very harmful to the poor in both countries. In the United States, probably hundreds of thousands of reasonably well-paying jobs have been lost as transnational [corporations] have simply shifted operations to Mexico where they can get far cheaper and more suppressed labor. That's not a benefit to Mexico which has also lost millions of jobs because the productive apparatus has collapsed (Chomsky 1999:98).

The productive apparatus of Mexico has collapsed because US based transnational corporations have moved into Mexico displacing local productive capacity geared toward the local economy in favor of foreign owned productive capacity geared toward export and increased profits.

The point of forcing them to open up the barriers was to allow them to be taken over by transnational [corporations] that export to foreign markets...More than half of businesses have suffered, but mainly smaller businesses...Mexico is exporting to the United States, but that's not because export industry has increased. It's because the domestic market has collapsed (Chomsky 1999:98).

Mexican domestic markets have collapsed as employment in local industry has transformed into employment for transnational corporations who use the threat of moving production elsewhere to keep the workers from demanding fair wages and decent working conditions. The workers cannot afford to buy the products they produce on the wages they are given and therefore all products must be exported to markets where there is "effective demand" for those products. This creates a hierarchical economic system in which inexpensive labor is utilized in the Third World to export the products of their labor to the First World because the workers in the Third World are not paid the real value of their labor and therefore cannot afford to purchase what they have produced. Thus these free trade agreements are part of the broader strategy of structural violence perpetrated against the poor in the name of increased profits.

As the borders between the US and Mexico, and Morocco and the EU are where these two economic systems meet, they become zones of conflict. The paradox of the border is that:

Capital flows, commercial ties and labor streams that span the border have established a web of social and economic interdependency between the countries...At the same time, the United States-Mexico border is an intensified

zone of conflict as the United States government escalates its efforts to seal the southwest border from undocumented migration (Eschbach, Hagan, Rodriguez, Hernandez-Leon, Bialek 1999:431).

If migration were not controlled and borders were open to people as well as capital, First World elites would not have a Third World labor force to exploit – which keeps the First World labor force from demanding higher wages. It is therefore necessary to keep cheap labor in the Third World, as well as to keep them undocumented in the First so that they cannot enjoy the benefit of even minimum wages.

The US-Mexican and Spanish-Moroccan borders emphasize this paradox and are remarkably similar in many respects. Both employ the use of heavy militarization to prevent economic migrants from crossing. The Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla on the North African coast create the only land borders between Africa and Europe. The US-Mexican border is the only land border between the economic powers of North America and the Third World nation-states of Central and South America. As such, both Mexico and Morocco are borderlands in their own right as others from their respective regions and continents transit through on their way to the economically more prosperous North.

The Spanish conquered Melilla in 1497 and Ceuta is a mere 90-minute ferry ride from the Spanish mainland (BBC September 3, 2005). Both enclaves are heavily fortified to prevent the flow of illegal migrants as well as hashish and other illegal goods. Although you can see Spain across the water from Morocco on a clear day, the sea crossing is dangerous and many have died while crossing in “rubber dinghies, old boats or on inflatable inner tubes” (Bailey 2005: BBC). Across double fences from Morocco in Ceuta and Melilla lies the European Union and greater economic opportunity. Spain

detained more than 15,000 people who arrived without identity papers in 2004 alone.

A major source of political friction between Spain and Morocco “has been the entry of third-country nationals into Spain through Morocco, through the enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta, as well as by boat across the Strait of Gibraltar” (Huntoon 1998: 439). In 1992, an agreement between Morocco and Spain required Morocco to supervise uncontrolled migrant flows through its territory toward Spain (Bodega et al. 1995). Prior to the agreement, immigrants from countries that Spain did not have extradition treaties with were simply released into Spain and thus the greater European Union. Due to the volume of illegal immigration, Spain decided to use its accord with Morocco to deport such persons back to Moroccan authorities for processing. They have also fortified the fences to make them higher and are adding a third barrier of mesh steel wire to prevent people from trying to scale the fences (Bailey 2005: BBC).

The US Mexican border is equally fortified. US Border patrol, better known as *La Migra* by migrants, polices fenced borders in major cities along the borders as well as in unfenced rural and wilderness areas along the more than 2,000 mile dividing line in the states of Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and California – the previously conquered territories. Despite the danger of arrest or death, the Pew Hispanic Center reports, “that the number of illegal entrants in the United States has grown to as many as 12 million. The country has added 850,000 illegal entrants each year since 2000” (Arizona Star March 13, 2006). Although “the majority of unauthorized immigrants are believed to originate in Mexico” (Hill, Wong 2005:1), increasing numbers are coming from other Third World nations in Latin America and beyond. Brazil estimates that half of the 1.5 million Brazilians in the US are there illegally and 27,000 were apprehended at the

Mexican border between 2004 and 2005 (Winterstein 2005). One smuggling ring “allegedly helped ‘large numbers’ of illegal immigrants by flying them on tourist visas from the Middle East to Brazil, then to Guatemala and Mexico before taking them over the southwest U.S. border” (AP May 22, 2002). With US fears of undocumented Middle Eastern migrants rising since terrorist attacks in 2001, and concerns of a wider Latin American migration across the Mexican border, the US put intense pressure on the Mexican government “to stem the flow of Brazilians over its border with the U.S.” Mexico was forced to require visas for all Brazilian tourists as of October, 2005 (Winterstein:AP).

As the US-Mexican border is far larger than the Spanish-Moroccan, the US cannot rely entirely on Mexico to contain immigration from elsewhere. To further suppress the numbers of migrants:

the Senate Judiciary Committee approved a proposal that includes double and triple-fencing near Arizona cities and in part of the state's desert. In December, the House passed a bill calling for, among other steps against illegal migrants, some 700 miles of fencing along the 2,000 mile border (CS Monitor March 14, 2006).

Supporters note that a “fence in San Diego County, approved by Congress in 1996, has dramatically reduced people and narcotics trafficking there, and allowed agents to refocus on problem areas” (CS Monitor March 14, 2006). But detractors state:

All fencing has done in recent years is shift the routes that illegal immigrants use to enter the United States — often with deadly results. Border Patrol spokesman Jose Garza told the Star in January that at least 217 illegal entrants died in the Tucson sector in the fiscal year that ended September 30...Even proponents of border fencing find the piecemeal approach lacking. If you're going to build a fence, they say, make it a big one that runs the entire 2,300 miles of the border. "It's got to be continuous or (illegal entrants) will just go around it" (Arizona Star March 13, 2006).

However, without a massive military effort on the scale of China's Great Wall including guard towers and manned outposts at frequent and regular intervals along the full two-thousand mile stretch, such a fence could and would be scaled nonetheless.

To fill in the perceived gaps in the border, some US citizens have taken measures into their own hands creating the Minuteman project. "Armed with night vision goggles, radios and light aircraft...the volunteers insist they will simply 'observe' the new arrivals' movements and alert the US Border Patrol" (Smith-Spark 2005:BBC). However, many NGO's and aid agencies such as the Border Action Network are "seeking to force the authorities to take action to prevent any potential vigilante violence...[stating] 'This is really an issue of outsiders coming in, creating a situation about immigrants, fanning the flames of racism and riling up people's xenophobia'" (Smith-Spark 2005:BBC). Where fences and the US Border Patrol fail to keep economic refugees from entering, the armed citizenry of the United States is more than willing to assist to protect America from these "Others" to the south.

One reason for such citizen endeavors against migration is a fear of declining wages. Although employers in the United States and Europe get an inexpensive labor force, workers in these countries are threatened by the competition of low wage labor. By classifying migrants as undocumented illegals, the US and Europe receive a labor force that is not subject to national wage laws such as the Federal Minimum Wage in the United States. This means these migrants must take whatever wages are offered to them, which is inevitably far lower than the mandated minimum. As workers in the US and Europe can barely survive on the minimum wages mandated by these laws, they cannot take jobs which fail to pay them the permitted minimums and thus they are

unable to compete with a desperate migrant workforce willing to take anything that is offered. Although it is the structures of politics and economics that allow this, the workers in the US and Europe often fail to acknowledge the structural violence against both the migrants and themselves and frequently prefer to target their anger toward the migrants.

In the Spanish case, one structure that aided in creating the problem began with the implementation of the 1985 Schengen Agreement that gave Europe a single border. This created “a ‘fortress’ Europe which erect[ed] a wall to the ‘South’” (Bodega et al. 1995:801). Spain’s geographic location at the southern edge of Europe influences the immigrant mix in the rest of Europe and “some of the northern members are concerned that ‘too many’ non-EU nationals will enter a borderless Europe through an ‘unprotected southern flank’” (Huntoon 1998:437). Spain follows the European immigration policies that allow freedom of movement within the European Union countries “but restrict the entry of nonmember country populations, especially those of the Third World” (Bodega et al. 1995:807). Spain, situated at the southern edge of the economic divide, is accordingly under pressure from more powerful and influential members of the EU to find ways to stem the flow of immigration from the south.

With unemployment high in Spain and often higher in other nations of Europe, many Europeans see immigration negatively affecting them. Even though most immigrants tend to find jobs in menial labor, this is often unacceptable for European workers. Although European employers get an inexpensive labor force, “the native lower-class workers are affected by the direct social and economic competition represented by immigrants.” (Bodega et al. 1995:800-801). Further, “Europeans...do

not normally regard themselves as belonging to large-scale countries of immigration” (Coleman 1992:414). Despite the fact that Europe is in population decline, unemployment is still high and the need for unskilled labor from outside Europe is therefore deemed low. “Large-scale immigration to Europe, especially from the Third World, is opposed by all European governments, who believe they are responding to the wishes of their electorates” (Coleman 1992:416). Europeans are not anxious to allow poor populations of “Others” into their territory despite the fact that a century earlier they were more than willing to upset the balance of these societies with their colonial endeavors. Migration of Moroccans and others from the Third World is not accepted by Europe although they continue to exploit them economically with chronic debt and exorbitant interest to European banks. “Xenophobic behaviors and high European unemployment suggest that immigrant entry will be limited in the European Union in the future” (Huntoon 1998:441).

Xenophobic behaviors are of course not limited to Europe. Although the United States was settled and created by immigrants, and is generally viewed as “a nation of immigrants”, “many immigrants—especially those from south of the border—have no desire...to become *American* citizens” (Dougherty 2004:IV-V emphasis in original). Many US citizens feel that migrants who wish to come to the US should be assimilated into US society and become *American*. They believe “Mexico encourages its ‘riff-raff’ population to ‘simply move north’” which causes US citizens to be “consistently terrorized by home invasions and robberies perpetrated by illegal immigrants” (Dougherty 2004:front flap). This type of xenophobia is directed at economic migrants who do not “want to put down roots...[or] to be the first generation in a new line of

Americans...[they] come merely to clamor for opportunities and benefits not available to them in their home countries” (Dougherty 2004:V emphasis added). Thus in this xenophobic opinion, the impoverished and desperate “riff-raff” of the Third World South are running wild across the border terrorizing citizens and murdering authorities. They are not welcomed, and are often met by the armed citizens they are supposedly terrorizing, because they come only to “demand” the opportunity to work for well below minimum wage in order to feed their families. This drives wages down for US citizens who are in turn less able to provide for their families. What people who espouse such views fail to acknowledge is that the reason these migrants do not have opportunities or benefits in their home countries has to do with the economic inequity created by the structural violence of global capitalism perpetuated by elites in order to suppress wages in the United States. The system restrains the movement of the economic refugees to keep them impoverished and desperate while creating the economic incentive for the populations of the First World of the to vilify their plight.

The system that suppresses the movement of economic migrants is the same one that is anxious for their labor. Moroccans, unlike members of other former Spanish colonies in Latin America, do not receive preference in obtaining or renewing work permits in Spain (Bodega et al. 1995). However, Laura Huntoon notes that “in the past the Spanish need for seasonal immigrant labor dovetailed nicely with a soft border with ally Morocco” (1998:439). Spain needed Moroccan agricultural labor and having a soft border that allowed some migrants to cross facilitated their need for the labor, while maintaining their status as illegal kept that labor inexpensive.

Likewise, US employers are anxious for immigrant labor. The US House of representatives passed a bill in 2005 “that increases penalties for illegal immigration activities and requires employers to verify the legal status of their employees” but it failed to address other issues, leaving large loopholes for corporations to continue to hire undocumented migrants (Abrams 2006:AP). “Critics argued that it was futile to try to close the border when demand for low-wage workers in this country remains so strong” (Abrams 2006:AP). Michael Kearney notes that Mexican migrants “run scared all the time and are desperate to get work before they are apprehended and sent back to Mexico” therefore,

they accept whatever wage is offered and they work like fiends... the surveillance activities of the Border Patrol are not intended to prevent their entry into the United States to work, but instead are part of a number of ways of disciplining them to work hard and accept low wages (Kearney 1992[?]:128).

By classifying undocumented migrants from Mexico or Morocco as illegal labor, employers in Europe and the United States receive an undervalued labor force to enhance their profits. “Migration and process must be examined in conjunction with the larger structure controlling the ebb and flow of commodity (labor) distribution between Mexico and the United States” (Alvarez 1995:458). These same structures exist in Europe, as the desire for cheap labor and higher profits creates economic incentive for elites in both areas to maintain an illegal status for these economic migrants.

Increased border enforcement has escalated over the last few decades at both the US-Mexico and Spanish-Moroccan borders. If the volume of migrants were to exceed the capacity of the First World economies ability to absorb the generally unskilled labor, an expensive refugee crisis in the First World nations would ensue. In

an attempt to avoid such an uneconomical crisis, governments in the North make it more difficult for economic refugees from the South to migrate. Containing these economic refugees in the South allows the US and Europe to ignore the migrants and vilify their governments for not doing enough to aid their citizens, thus shifting the blame away from the structures of the global system.

The change in policy toward migrants at the Spanish-Moroccan border is due to the sheer volume of economic refugees from the African continent. For many years the migration through the Spanish enclaves was a purely Moroccan one. However, a relatively recent phenomenon is a pan-African migration through Morocco. As economic conditions in Sub-Saharan Africa have worsened, usually due to the same colonial legacies and chronic indebtedness imposed on Mexico and Morocco, people are willing to take great risks out of desperation. This often involves crossing the Sahara Desert, frequently from West Africa – the heart of the colonial slave trade, and camping in Moroccan forests while waiting to attempt the dangerous crossing. Moussa Sakho from Mali left his Moroccan forest camp, headed toward the border and he:

took a ladder fashioned from branches and whatever else he could get his hands on and tried to get over the imposing double fence topped with razor-wire which separates Morocco from the Spanish enclave of Ceuta. (BBC September 29, 2005).

Moussa and others from Sub-Saharan Africa undertake such endeavors because they feel they have no future in their home countries. Moussa “dreamt of being able to find a job where he could earn enough to support his family and maybe buy a few luxuries, like a television or even a car. And he thought he could only do this in Europe - or

'Eldorado'" (Winter 2005: BBC September 29). Simon Fortu of Cameroon tells why he is in Morocco:

I am 19 years old and left Cameroon on 21 May 2005. I got to Melilla one week ago. My journey is quite short compared to other people's. I stayed two months in the forest. When you're in the forest you don't have peace of mind. One day police come with helicopters, the next the gendarmes. You are always running, running, running. I left all my family behind in Cameroon because we are poor. We don't have anything. I decided to be a better person so I could lift them up in the future. I told them that I was going to Europe so they sold our family land and gave the money to me. That was our only family land. The money took me to Morocco. I'm not disappointed to be here in the camp. I know I must first stay here sleeping in a tent, but I know that one day I will be sent up to big Spain. That's where I will start up my own life. I will do anything in Spain, any job at all. I don't intend to go back with empty pockets. I would look like less than an ant. My family would say I squandered their money for nothing. That would be a very sad and painful encounter. (BBC October, 14 2005).

As times have grown increasingly difficult in countries throughout Africa, migrants have risked everything to get to Europe where they believe they can find decent wages to feed their families. These economic difficulties can generally be traced back to European colonialism and the debt crises imposed on these people by First World banks. Since Morocco is the only African country with a European land border, it is the primary passageway to the EU for sub-Saharan Africans. With the new influx of excess labor from other countries through Morocco, the border has become more impermeable. Visa requirements for Moroccans began in 1991 and the flow of Moroccans was reduced. (Bodega et al. 1995:807-808).

Like the Spanish, the US has also tightened border enforcement due to the sheer volume of undocumented migrants. "The rise in immigration has been accompanied by increasingly vociferous calls to implement new entry restrictions" (Hill, Wong 2005:1). However, entry restrictions are also implemented due to the fact that the government

needs to appear as though they do not tolerate disobedience. “Although the volume of overall inflow is sometimes an issue, unauthorized immigration is often the dominant concern” (Hill, Wong 2005:1). The issue of the lack of documentation and the US insistence for a desire on the part of the migrant to assimilate and become *American* are the stated concerns. A new plan in the US Senate “would allow those in the country illegally to obtain six-year nonimmigrant visas under which they could work in the country and travel outside the country. They would have to pay a \$1,000 fine and undergo background checks” (Abrams 2006:AP). This bill would allow undocumented migrants to work and travel home if they can afford the fine on wages that pay below the federally mandated minimum. But if they wish to stay in the US permanently they will have to prove they are interested in assimilating. “After six years, the immigrant who pays back taxes, is learning English and pays an additional \$1,000 fine can apply for a green card, or permanent residency” (Abrams 2006:AP). The legalization of such immigrants will rarely be possible due to financial issues. It is difficult for the migrants to live in the US on wages below the federal minimum and as they often have families in Mexico they need to support, they will unlikely be able to afford the fine to even become a guest worker, much less a citizen who must pay back taxes on wages that were technically illegal. Thus this bill, like the one that gave employers an escape clause to hire undocumented workers, is merely another way for politicians to pretend they are addressing the concerns of their working constituents. Meanwhile allowing loopholes to serve their donor constituents, generally transnational corporations, who are anxious to maintain an inexpensive illegal labor force – which also keeps the legal labor force of

citizens cheaper. Thus structural violence against both the migrants and the US citizenry will continue.

Despite the attempts to control migration, desperation continues to cause many to attempt the crossing. Migrants in Morocco often attempt to rush the fenced border in a determined move to enter Spain and the EU. Even though many are arrested or killed, they continue to try to get in. Patrick Thomas of Gambia was desperate to cross:

In Morocco it's very hard to live. No food, no place to sleep. And the police when they catch you they take your money from you, they torture you and in prison they only give you half a piece of bread each day. My arm is bandaged because I caught my arm on the barbed wire as I was climbing over the fence. And the Moroccan police beat us. The Spanish police just catch us and take us back. In my country people live in poor conditions. If you're like me and your parents are not alive and you are taking care of your sisters, you must try and come to Europe. I was studying agriculture and economics in Gambia. My father died and my mother was taking care of my schooling but then she died. Then my older sister took care of me but three years ago she had an accident and she also died. So now I'm the only one taking care of my family. I have no one to help me, but a lot of people I must help. I have four sisters and three brothers living there. When I am in Europe I will help them so they can continue their education. I am willing to risk my life to get to Europe. I can't see any other solution. (BBC October, 14 2005).

The Spaniards maintain the appearance that they are not part of the problem by sending the migrants back to Morocco where Moroccan police are expected to remedy the situation. In 2005, an NGO found more than 500 migrants "abandoned in the Moroccan desert after being expelled from Spain's North African enclaves. The migrants said they had entered or tried to enter Ceuta and Melilla but were forced back, loaded onto trucks and driven to the Algerian border" (BBC October 7 2005). A Nigerian migrant reveals how the smugglers and police deal with the non-Moroccan migrants.

The Moroccan gendarme will wait till evening when it is dark. Then we are pushed to the Algerian side. Sometimes - if you have a telephone or other things - the Algerians will take it, before directing us back again, saying : 'This is now Morocco, you go back.' So, we go back to Morocco. It is just a circle - a merry-go-round. The Moroccans are making a profit. We call them connection men. If you imagine about 400-500 people being deported - and you calculate that each individual pays 200 euros (\$240) [to get back] - you see how much money that is. This is going to the Moroccans in the border town of Oujda. They are doing the connection for us to come to Rabat, Tangier or Ksar [El Kebir] - wherever our destination might be. So you discover that getting these [migrants] and deporting them to Oujda beefs the economy of Morocco (BBC October 12 2005).

The migrants are deported back and forth across the Algerian border and are subsequently forced to pay to get back into Morocco. After finding several hundred migrants abandoned in the Moroccan desert including pregnant women and children, an aid agency claimed Spain was acting in violation of basic human rights stating, "the sending back of immigrants as agreed by Spain and Morocco to a country which does not have minimal capacity to receive them violates Article Three of the (UN) Convention against Torture" (BBC October, 7 2005). Having economic problems of its own, Morocco lacks the capacity to receive refugees. As the Moroccan economy is also heavily dependent on remittances from migrants in the EU, Moroccan police and smugglers need to take full economic advantage of the precarious political status of the new migrants. With an increasingly impermeable border with the EU and its economic opportunities as well as the lack of an effective labor market for their own population, some Moroccans are finding money wherever they can get it. Thus, these non-Moroccan migrants are a threat to Morocco's survival as a country economically reliant on labor exports and it handles them with physical violence that has manifested from the structural violence imposed on the Moroccans by the EU.

Mexico, like Morocco, is economically dependent on labor remittances from their First World neighbor to the North. "The remittances from Mexican's working in the United States are an important contribution to Mexico's economy (the second largest source of foreign exchange after oil)" (Hill, Wong 2005:1). Accordingly, Mexico is unlikely to stem the flow of its own citizens to the US despite the obvious dangers and political ramifications with its powerful sometimes ally, while at the same time putting restrictions on citizens of other nations from attempting to cross, such as the visa restrictions on Brazilians, thus nearly mirroring the situation in Morocco.

Although the Spaniards allow the Moroccans to do the majority of the dirty work of border terrorization, the US border patrol often does not bother to maintain the appearance of peacefulness and unauthorized movement of undesirables is frequently met with violence. Migrants are often not even sent back but rather intimidated until they go back, even if they are shot in the process. One migrant:

and two other men planned to cross together and part ways once they penetrated Texas...The three men had established a "save your own ass" rule: if anything happened, the three would split up and not worry about each other...The three were spotted and fired upon by Border Patrol before they were able to cross...[the migrant] often wonders what happened to one of the men who was hit in the leg with a bullet and fell while the others ran away (Rivera 2004:14).

This particular migrant tried to cross the border three times before hiring a smuggler to get him to Texas where he boarded a bus bound to a friend's place in New York City.

Despite these dangers migrants are willing to do almost anything to make it to the US.

They cross the Rio Grande and other swift moving waterways under the cover of darkness. They travel in sealed and poorly ventilated freight compartments of trains or trucks. They hike through the parched terrain of the American southwest. Some scale fences and other steel barriers erected by the United States government to seal the border. Endeavoring to overcome these multiple

barriers, migrants often rely on the assistance of a *coyote*, exposing themselves to a criminal underworld (Eschbach et. al. 1999:431).

These dangers can often lead to fatal consequences and there were over two thousand documented deaths of undocumented Mexicans at the border between 1993 and 1997 (Eschbach et. al. 1999), not to mention vast numbers of people who have simply disappeared on their way to crossing the border.

The structures of the global capitalist system allow Northern First World elites to benefit from the exploitation of marginalized populations in the Third World South. By utilizing the political structures of borders and nation-states and the economic structures of debt creation and perpetuation, as well as free trade agreements, Northern elites continue the colonial project of exploitation and domination. In analyzing these structures, it becomes clear that the hierarchical nature of global economics causes physical and structural violence to be perpetrated on whomever is below the perpetrator on the economic ladder. The structural violence perpetrated by northern members of the EU toward Spain requires Spain to militarize its border, restricting Moroccans from entering and deporting African migrants to Morocco. Moroccan authorities subsequently dump these non-Moroccan migrants in the desert and take their money because they threaten the Moroccan economic base of labor export, which was forced on the Moroccans by Spanish and French colonialism and the debt that has been constant since. US based transnational corporations and elites use structural violence against their workers by threatening to lower their wages with an inflow of cheap illegal labor and by moving production facilities to areas where labor laws do not exist to cause these workers to accept the lower wages. This causes US citizens to vilify and take up

arms against the migrants who are supposedly taking the jobs. The migrants native country, likely Mexico, who lost its economic base due to Spanish and US colonialism and constant debt to foreign banks, restricts the entry of citizens of other Third World nations due to pressure from the US government and a fear of losing their monopoly on migrant remittances thus causing its economic collapse. All of this aids the global elites in generating further profits by causing the actors and workers in all parts of the world to become fragmented and fight amongst each other. This segmentation of the world's working class serves to distract the global proletariat from the injustices created and perpetuated by the world's elite.

Both the US-Mexican and Moroccan-Spanish border are at the forefront of such phenomena because they spatially represent the intersection between the two economic tiers. These nation-states sit at the territorial bridge of the global economic divide and as such have both become borderlands in their own right. As the global economic divide continues to widen, both Morocco and Mexico will face increased challenges as the nation-states straddling this politically and economically constructed border. These challenges will likely include increased migration of populations from their south through both Morocco and Mexico. The continued utilization of the structures that facilitate the exploitation and underpayment of workers to benefit the global elites will further the economic divide and expedite this migration. Until there is economic justice and equity amongst the world's citizens, desperation and hopelessness will drive many toward and through these borders. This continued exploitation for profit will widen the economic gap between rich and poor until the sheer numbers of desperate populations will overwhelm the political, economic and territorial boundary. No amount of

militarization, use of physical force or structural violence will ultimately prevent the majority of the world's increasingly desperate population of economic refugees from storming the barriers of fortress Europe or the US citadel.

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