



Navigating through Undocumented Migration and Human Trafficking in the Select Works of Benjamin Kwakye

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ARTICLE INFO ABSTRACT

The research article sheds its light on the undocumented migration and the challenges faced by the immigrants and its unintended consequences. The complexities in getting the legal papers or the lack of the economic factors or some other myriad forces accelerate the illegal flow of migration. Like the legal migrants, the illegal or the undocumented migrants are pulled by the socio- economic factors of the host nation. The illusion of economic development hastens the migration. During the process of undocumented migration, the immigrants fall prey to the human traffickers and the aftermath proceedings in getting the legal papers are too complicated. As the migrants track their routes to the host land in the crooked manner, they become the victims of the human traffickers very easily. The undocumented migrants couldn't get proper aid from the others as their journey is not legalised and their visibility is hidden. The research study aims to unfurl the hardships of undocumented migrants and the exploitative strategy of the human traffickers through the lens of Benjamin Kwakye, the contemporary African writer. Exploration towards the roots of undocumented migration and the ways to reduce the threat remains inevitable. The study aims to explore the relationship between human trafficking and illegal migration and the silenced voices of the undocumented migrants by analysing the select works of Benjamin Kwakye.

Keywords: undocumented migration, human trafficking, exploitation, sham marriages, abuse

The eradication of the poverty and the economic development of the world nations is the goal of the globalisation. The global window has erased the borders of the nations to activate the economic development. But the unfocussed part of the achievement is the undocumented migration. Even though the global trade has promoted easy movement of men, materials and technological flow across nations, undocumented migration still remains as a major hindrance to global growth as well as humanity. The undocumented migrants put themselves in a major risk comparatively with the other sorts of migration. Illegal modes of migration is the most important area of research as its implications remains unassured. In its recommendations regarding the undocumented or the irregular migrants, The United Nations defines the irregular migrants as "...foreigners who violate the rules of admission of the receiving country and are deportable, as well as foreign persons attempting to seek asylum but who are not allowed to file an application and are not permitted to stay in the receiving country on any other grounds" (as quoted in Paspalanova). There are many reasons stimulating the undocumented migration and the literature aims to bring to the forum by portraying the chain of connecting of poverty, undocumented migration and human trafficking etc., and its consequences in the real-life conditions.

Literature review

Nicola Yoon's *The Sun is also a Star* documents the life of a Jamaica- American who struggled to save her family from deportation. *Crossing with the Virgin: Stories from the Migrant Trail* by Kathryn Ferguson is the record of stories heard from the migrants to the Samaritans who helped to rescue the dying and needy encountered in the desert trials of undocumented migration. The challenges faced by the irregular migrants in the desert and the life of volunteers in humanising process are being discussed by Kathryn. *The Undocumented Americans* by Karla Cornejo Villavicencio talks about the life of undocumented migrants suppressed under

the name of labours living in New York. *Living on the Margins: Undocumented Migrants in a Global City* by Alice Bloch and Sonia McKay documents the working lives of irregular migrants in London and exposes the exploitive market policies marginalising the undocumented migrants. *Legal Passing: Navigating the Undocumented life and Local Immigration Law* displays the sufferings of the undocumented migrants and also discusses about the law and policies. *Enduring Uncertainty* by Ines Hasselberg gives a nuanced outlook about the undocumented migration involving the fear of deportation.

Diary of a Reluctant Dreamer by Alberto Ledesma shares the author's experiences of undocumented migrants shadowing every aspect of life. *In the Country We love*, the memoir by the actress Diana Guerrero brings out the sufferings of children under the threat of parent's deportation and its consequences. *In Permanent Crisis: Ethnicity in Contemporary European Media and Cinema* by Ipek A. Celik discusses the role of media in framing the ethnic and racial otherness dealing irregular migrations. The literature reviews enlist the lives of the undocumented migrations and sufferings and the current research study aims to focus on the challenges faced by the irregular migration and how undocumented migrants are exploited by the human traffickers. And also proposed to reveal the dynamic forces that shapes the flow of undocumented migration. The research undertakes Benjamin Kwakye's select novels like *The Count's False Banquet* and *Obsessions of Paradise* to examine the challenges of the undocumented migrants.

Research proposal

The research paper aims

- To explore the challenges faced by the undocumented migrants during the migration and its aftermath impacts of undocumented migration.
- To uncover the marginalisation and exploitation imposed on the undocumented migrants.
- To underscore the consequences of the psychological tensions as when they are deprived of fundamental survival needs.

Kwakye's *The Count's False Banquet (TCFB)* began with the hints of migration of the protagonist Tutu "at the US consulate in Accra to queue for an interview" (11). Tutu spent most of his time before the consulate to get the visa. After a month he got the appointment to meet the immigration officer. The officer enquired the reason for his visa but the officer was not satisfied with Tutu. He believed that he would not return to Ghana if he allowed the permit. "Border enforcement results in more positively selected migrant flows, possibly due to the higher costs of crossing" (Orrenius et al.). So, Tutu was denied Visa. "Could he not see I loved America?" echoed the pain to go America (Kwakye, *TCFB* 15). Many young men like Tutu were pursuing the American dream to go to America to satisfy the economic needs and remove their poverty. But the consequences of the denial of the visa create unintended results. Targeting at a particular motive like financial needs might lead to have "negative psychological consequences like depression, anxiety, lessened self-esteem, and dissatisfaction with life" (Nickersen & et al.531). Caught under the hands of poverty, Tutu became a beggar in the streets of the immigration office. Kwakye has also pointed out "I'd even heard of people who committed or attempted suicide after they were denied Visa" (*TCFB* 21).

Poverty lulled Tutu to determine that achieving the American dream would be the only solution to eliminate poverty and to meet his family needs. According to James Truslow Adams who first gave the suitable definition as "a dream of a social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable" and wish to be recognized by others for what they are, irrespective of their birth or position (375). Tutu's father was furious about Tutu's American dream "We are poor. Where will we find the wings to let you fly to America" (Kwakye, *TCFB* 32). So, poverty remains as a greatest hindrance in the legal migration as the aspirants couldn't get through the immigration easily. And also, the same poverty lays the foundation stone for building the American dream to remove poverty. Tutu dreamt "I would go to the land famed for equal opportunity, work hard and amass wealth" (Kwakye, *The Count's False Banquet* 50).

Poverty is one of the major push factors "that force people to leave their homes" (Lee). Poor living conditions in the mother land surpasses the individual to move from their homeland. In *Obsessions of Paradise (OP)* Kwakye figures out the life of poor working conditions of people like soil carriers to make their living. The protagonist Shem devastated by poverty was pushed to the extreme of his life. No way to go he took up the job of the soil carrier even though it was legally prohibited. Shem wanted to escape from the cruelties of the life and to lead a very simple life. Men like him "walked past each other with the buckets of night soil still on their heads" and in the day time they tried to get rid of the smell of the night that assaulted the nostrils (Kwakye, *OP* 97). The distressed conditions drove Shem to get rid of the miserable job and poverty. Another soil carrier Puni lamented for poor his living conditions as he exclaimed "He had been without a permanent job for months, desperate and filled with suicidal thoughts... this job was desperate but necessary opportunity for survival" (Kwakye, *OP* 99). Kwakye's protagonists stand as a perfect example of individuals driven by both economic and non- economic factors. Apart from the poverty, Tutu was pushed by the American dream and Shem and Puni were expelled by the dehumanising conditions. Foster argues "migration is not simply an aggregation of individual decisions, but a process patterned and shaped by existing politico-economic systems" (17).

"The combination of increasing immigration pressures and restrictive policies imperfectly enforced by many destination countries has made illegal immigration widespread" (Casarico et al. 1). Shem and Puni decided to escape from the harshness and move to Europe through Libya. They didn't not have much money to buy a plane ticket and get through the legal papers. Puni informed about the irregular mode of migration. Shem knew "the perils of that journey" (Kwakye, *OP* 99). Puni reminded Shem about their dehumanising jobs and asked what could be worse than their conditions and firmly believed that could be the only means of escaping the cruelties of life and so he contacted Koku, the driver. "It would be the journey into an unknown with a promise, yes a promise of hope at the end... it could be dangerous even deadly" (Kwakye, *OP* 100). Kwakye warns the readers about the upcoming perils in the irregular migration through his characters. Often there lies a confusion between the concept of human trafficking and human smuggling as such "a smuggled individual 'voluntarily' travels illegally to the destination country" where the human trafficking is the exploitation of the individuals is done after the migration (Van Der Leun and Van Schijndel 27). Shem and Puni started their travel along with the other irregular migrants who wished to escape to Europe through Libya.

Many researches have been undertaken to deal with the aftermath of the illegal migration. The research section particularly lashes out the dangers of the journey of the migrants if caught in the hands of smugglers. Kwakye describes the evils of the journey exploited by the smugglers cum human traffickers crushing the migrants. "The most annoying parts of the journey were the frequent road stops ... to pay at the various police stops along the way" (Kwakye, *OP* 105). One of the migrants refused to pay as he had his passports. But the driver warned him that the police would beat him to death if he refused to pay. Thus, the smugglers began to extract the money from the irregular migrants.

Apart from the exploitation, the realities of the journey seemed too difficult for Shem. They had to travel for days with sleepless nights. The climatic conditions starved their physique and drained their energies. Shem shivered that "their dehydrated bodies would give up, the ghost and scavengers would come down and devour them" (Kwakye, *OP* 110). On the way to Europe, the desert travel exposed the pathetic conditions of the migrants "Dead bodies in the desert" (111). The migrants found many bodies in the desert probably robbed and killed by the bandits. The author symbolises the death and the dangers to be encountered in the irregular migration. The driver was riding through the vast desert for more than two days. The migrants trembled in fear whether the driver was following the right path or driving them to perdition, they would not know until they reach their destination.

"Human trafficking is a global phenomenon, widely considered as a serious human rights violation" (Greve et al. 8). Eight rifle-toting rag tagged men interrupted their travel. They started to rob and attack the smuggled migrants. One of the smuggled migrants was shot dead as a threat to others. They robbed money from the men and the bandits turned their attention towards the women. "They ran their hands over the women.... Putting their hands under the dresses" (Kwakye, *OP* 117). The attack was uncertain, deliberative and even fearful. The smuggled migrants knew about the perils of the journey before they started their journey. But the journey was too horrible that the air shivered in fear and blood. "Death is the signature of history. As is cruelty" (Kwakye, *OP* 119). The death sequence and the turmoil of fear and loss of money seemed to carry their own exhaustion, the total breakdown of the energy of the moment. Finally, the migrants were handed to the traffickers as the migrants had no money to pay. "This is like any business transaction. No pay no deal" said the driver (122). Kwakye points out the place where the smuggling and trafficking intersects where humanity gets exploited.

According to Webb and Burrows "activities of trafficking and smuggling overlap, and the overall market can be presented as a continuum between these two extremes, where many initial clients of smuggling operations can end up as victims of trafficker" (as quoted in Bouteillet-Paquet). Kwakye elucidates the motives of both the traffickers and smugglers are the same- having the intention of exploiting the irregular migrants. The chain of connectivity of the human trafficking begins where the human smuggling finishes off its intentions. The gangsters tortured the transmigrants for money. They threatened that if they didn't pay the money, he would sell them. They would become the slaves. "Now I will ask to call someone, your father, your mother, I don't care. Even if it's a goat with money, call him" (Kwakye, *OP* 138). While making the call by the transit migrants, the traffickers would beat them severely with hoses again and again. If the phone call was left unattended the victim was beaten up severely. The author portrays the complexities and relationship between the smuggling and the human traffickers in the migration flow. The victims who directly experience such brutalities are under the threat of the psychological pressures and trauma. The prolonged trauma would also result in Post traumatic stress disorder resonating anxiety, anger, depression, suicidal thoughts and long- lasting trauma in their life.

The conditions of women were so cruel than men. They were sexually exploited. Women irregular migrants "are at a high risk of sexual victimisation and that many women are forced to pay for their migration through prostitution or are subject to brutal sexual exploitation and torture along the journey" (Hadjicharalambous and Parlalis). The traffickers took no pity on the women too. They beat the women and took the women to the next room. The other migrants in the main room were ashamed of their powerlessness to rescue the women. They knew the horrors waiting for the women by the traffickers. The women yelled in pain. "Someone's princesses" whispered one of the migrants and also added "Is this what poverty does to us?" (Kwakye, *OP* 139). The women

were raped and torn to pieces. Kwakye condemns at violence done to women and describes the human trafficking sometimes kidnaps and sell the women as sex workers. The risk of physical, psychological and sexual harm tends to greater to women than in men. In agony the victim yelled at the trafficker "You kill me finish. Nothing you do matter now" (141). Death seems to be a better option for the irregular immigrants rather than the brutal assault.

Kwakye explains the inhuman instances of the human trafficking and makes the readers to think about the consequences of the irregular migration through his characters. After the brutal rape, one of the women repented "If we would not have been better off staying at home, atleast we lived a quiet life, if a deprived one" (Kwakye, *OP* 141). Kwakye has exposed the bitter side of the illegal migrants and also has brought the darker side behind in suppressing the humanity during the irregular pattern of journey.

Kwakye through his novel *The Count's False Banquet* lime lights the aftermath impact of the illegal migration through his protagonist Tutu and his friends. "Gender perspectives on migration and trafficking are often simplified by focusing on female experiences only or by dichotomizing women migrants as victims and men as a social threat to the labour market" (Greve et.al 23). Kwakye breaks the stereotypes of treating only women as victims. He figures out his protagonist Tutu who suffered due to his illegal migration. After the rejection by the immigration officer, Tutu decided to achieve his American dream by forging the papers. He borrowed Green card of Gyan, his friend and made his illegal migration to America. The protagonist had enough money to buy the plane ticket but in case of migrants like Shem, they didn't have enough money to buy the tickets. Tutu had a doubt that his features were different from him. But the immigration officer had been loaded with the sort of stereotypes that all black people resemble the same. Tutu felt his "skin colour served as some sort of box in to which we were all lumped" (Kwakye, *TCFB* 57). After landing in America, he reached his friend's apartment. His room was so small to accommodate even two persons. "One bedroom. Where will I sleep?" (Kwakye, *TCFB* 73). His friend suggested that he would be staying out for work most of the time and asked Tutu to share his room. Gyan revealed the difficulties to find the shelter particularly for the irregular immigrants as they could not find it. Tutu understood that the undocumented immigrants were denied of basic amenities and opportunities to make their living. He realised that his mere American dream had blindfolded the reality behind the dream. "Problem. I didn't have the card, the imprimatur of my legal, residence and therefore my ability to work in the U.S" (98-99).

His friends suggested purely financial marriage arrangement to get his papers. They informed him that the undocumented immigrants would marry a woman purely for the documents by paying her money and she would sign him for the green card documenta. After getting the papers, they would get divorce. "I wasn't even so sure a marriage of convenience was any sort of evil" (139). The research article targets the undocumented lives of the migrants adopting 'the marriage of convenience' as a tool of getting residency documentation. Andrikopoulos in his article "Love, Money and Papers in the Affective Circuits of Cross-Border Marriages: Beyond the Sham/ Genuine Dichotomy" defines marriage of convenience as a marriage that has nothing to do with love, only aiming for a residence permit (2). In the selected work, the protagonist decided to opt for sham marriage as a sort of arrangement for immigration purposes and not as a genuine one.

Gyan, the Count's friend informed him that he married a girl for the Green card. "He'd paid her the price she asked, no more or less, and they separated amicably" (Kwakye, *TCFB* 139). But the pathetic situation was so crucial that The Count could not find a suitable job to make his living. He was starving with his bread and orange juice as his food. He couldn't pay the rent and finally picked up the toilet cleaning job. "I had read of America in glossy magazines or seen its magically wondrous streets in movies, cleaning toilets hadn't formed a part of itinerant's agenda" (159). The Count Tutu accepted for Sham Marriage with Tina "All you have to do is tell Immigration we're married" (205). Tina demanded seven thousand dollars in instalments as compromise of Sham Marriage.

After the marriage for the sake of the papers, Tina and The Count lived in separate apartments. But for the sake of the papers, Tutu was asked to live in with Tina. Initially Tina demanded no expectations except money from Tutu. But as days passed on, Tina began to demand more and more from Tutu like accompanying the kids from the school, buying the groceries, paying the rent, dishwashing, cleaning the toilets etc. "In this territory, I had to summon all my will power not to speak back" (Kwakye, *TCFB* 311). Tina began to demand sexual interest from Tutu. Tutu was afraid to protest her as she would cancel her marriage. The demands of the household chores didn't hurt Tutu but sexual exploitations heavied his heart "it was almost suffocating... I became a husband in law and deed" felt Tutu (325). He couldn't refuse her sexual exploitation because he was trapped under immigration papers. Tina had to sign his papers and so he swallowed her sort of human trafficking. When Tutu tried to protest her, Tina began to verbally abuse Tutu by calling him as "Lazy ass... Stupid African" (333).

Viuhko asserts "exploitative sham marriage involves exploitative elements that can range from verbal threatening, controlling, and forcing, to physical- and sexual violence" (as quoted in Tikka 13). Tutu was exploited due to his sham marriage. He considered that he would get easily get his documents through his fake marriage. Initially Tina demanded only money from Tutu. But later on, Tina exploited his mental and physical health abusing him sexually. She turned the situation of sham marriage into human trafficking. Tutu was

forcibly do certain things which didn't prefer but he had to go with the rules of Tina. Kwakye highlights how sham marriages become the exploitative elements in human trafficking which forces, abuses and exploits the individual in search of getting documentation for his residence. The author symbolises sham marriages as an exploitative mode of human trafficking.

Deportation is the major threatening factor that lures the individual to be the victim of the sham marriages. "A voice in my mind kept urging me to stay on course and persevere until the end that it couldn't be too long now until I got the Green card" (Kwakye *TFCB* 409). He wrote a letter to his Pa expressing some of the abuses at Tina's hands, the additional financial burden, the household chores, the endured verbal assaults and cried severely expressing his inability to get rid of it and sending money to them. If Tutu voiced out against Tina, he had the fear that he would not be able to get his papers and he had the chances of deportation. In order to skip deportation, he choked all the abuses of Tina only for Green card.

Research Findings

The irregular migrants are pushed by the poverty and the persuasion of the American dream. Lack of money and easy go method of getting the visa papers, the immigrants choose the irregular mode of migration. The research article has displayed the ill effects during the migration and the aftermath of the irregular migration. Also the research has emotionally depicted the psychological tensions of the victims of irregular migration and how their lives are marginalised. Kwakye through his characters makes the readers to get awareness about illegal migration and human traffickers and smugglers. The human trafficking attains its peak by the exploitation of the human kind. Thus, the irregular immigrants become victims as they fall under the clasp of the smugglers for transportation and sham marriages to get the permanent residence of Green card.

Conclusion

Unauthorised migrants are not criminals as they need to be humanised. Protection and patterns must be secured in all the ways to prevent the irregular ways of migration. Enhancement should be done both at the national and international level to monitor and educate the people about global flow. There is a plenty of scope for the future researchers to delve into the exploitative sham marriages and human trafficking. Conservation of humanity is precious even though the world spins at its technological view.

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