


ROOTS & ROUTES

Vol 11, No. 1, January 2022

Mu Films
P.O. Box 5865, Berkeley, CA 94705



Official Selection
Documentary Competition
Sundance Film Festival, 2000

Grand Jury Prize
Best Bay Area Documentary
San Francisco International
Film Festival

Best Documentary
DocAviv

Emmy Award Nomination
Best Director

First Person Plural

WRITTEN, PRODUCED, AND DIRECTED BY
DEANN BORSHAY LIEM

EDITED & CO-WRITTEN BY
VIVIEN HILLGROVE

“Emotionally poignant and politically relevant, **FIRST PERSON PLURAL** is personal documentary at its best.”
— Shari Frlot, Sundance Film Festival

Official Selection
Grand Jury Prize
WINNER
Emmy Award

Photo Credits - IMDB.com



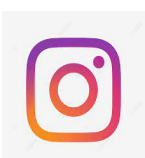
PASSAGES OF FORTUNE?

EXPLORING DYNAMICS OF INTERNATIONAL
MIGRATION FROM PUNJAB

Aswini Kumar Nanda, Jacques Véron
and S. Irudaya Rajan



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Editor's Note



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Dear Readers

Greetings!

The year 2021 saw the vaccination drive to protect people from COVID while 2022 has begun with the news of restrictions in many parts of the world as the new corona variant Omicron is causing a scare again among the people. In addition, there were many more complex challenges, and policy issues faced by the world community.

Against such backdrop, GRFDT continued webinar series to raise the migrant and diaspora issues even during this turmoil period. In January 2022, GRFDT conducted more than five webinars. The first section of the newsletter issue has covered some of the highlights of these webinars.

The current issue presents a brief article by Alejandra Camacho that indicates that Mexico is emerging as a new opportunity for Central American refugee migrants. In the article titled "Mexico: A New Opportunity for Central America Migrants," the author noted that from 2019, the number of refugee applications has increased in Mexico. The unfavourable response from the United States of America appears to be one of the main reasons.

In addition, the current issue carries a book review titled "Passages of Fortune? Exploring Dynamics of International Migration from Punjab," written by Harjinder Singh. The issue also has a documentary review titled "First Person Plural: From a Personal Perspective a Subtle Glimpse at the 'Quiet Migration' by Anusree P. The documentary touches on the issue of migration and transnational adaptation.

We invite readers to participate and share their experiences with us to have a meaningful engagement. You can communicate with us through email at editorinchief@grfdt.com. We wish you happy reading and look forward to your suggestions and comments. Happy Reading!

Happy Reading!

Feroz Khan

GRFDT Events

Global Research Forum on Diaspora and Transnationalism (GRFDT) and other reputed organizations, including Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA), Cross Regional Center for Refugees and Migrants (CCRM), International Institute of Migration and Development (IIMAD), Metropolis Asia Pacific, Alianza America (AA), PICUM, Freedom Collaborative, and South Asian Regional Trade Union Council (SARTUC) jointly conducted more than five webinars and lecture series in the area of migration and diaspora. On 15th January, GRFDT conducted a special lecture by Prof. Richard Bedford, Prof. Teena Brown-Pulu, Prof. Vijay

Naidu, and Dr Iman Ahmed on Health/Crisis, Migration and Diaspora (In the context of COVID 19). On 22nd January, Dr Piyasiri Wickramasekara delivered a special lecture on Multilateral Stakeholders of Migration (Regional and International Migration Mechanisms). On 18th and 25th January, the organization conducted GCM Objectives 11, 12 and 13.

Readers can check the programme's videos on GRFDT YouTube Channel titled "Diaspora Transnationalism". Details of the upcoming programmes are also available on the GRFDT website.



Date: 15 January 2022

1PM-2:30 PM Geneva time | 8PM-9:30 PM Manila time |
3PM-4:30 PM Doha Time | 5:30PM-7 PM India time



Prof. Richard Bedford
Emeritus Professor at the University of Waikato and Auckland University of Technology.



Prof. Teena Brown-Pulu
Senior Lecturer, Auckland University of Technology



Prof. Vijay Naidu
Development Studies Specialist



Dr. Iman Ahmed
Global Health Expert

**HEALTH/CRISIS, MIGRATION AND DIASPORA
(IN THE CONTEXT OF COVID 19)**

Special Lecture Series on Global Compact for Migration

 **URL: <https://bit.ly/gcmsd>**





Date: 22 January 2022

1PM-2:30 PM Geneva time | 8PM-9:30 PM Manila time |
3PM-4:30 PM Doha Time | 5:30PM-7 PM India time

Special Lecture Series on Global Compact for Migration

MULTILATERAL STAKEHOLDERS OF MIGRATION
(REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION MECHANISMS)



Dr Piyasiri Wickramasekara
Vice-President - Global Migration
Policy Associates



URL: <https://bit.ly/gcmsd>



Tues 25 January 2022
15.00 - 16.30(CET)



GCM OBJECTIVE 13: USE IMMIGRATION DETENTION ONLY AS A MEASURE OF LAST
RESORT AND WORK TOWARDS ALTERNATIVES

Speakers

Sumitha Shaanthinni Kishna
Director
Our Journey (Malaysia)

Michael Flynn
Executive Director
Global Detention Project

Hannah Cooper
Europe Coordinator
International Detention Coalition

Manfred Bergmann
Migration Expert (Italy)

Moderator

Judy Yazbeck
Insan Association



Scan QR Code

Register here:

<https://bit.ly/gcmcertificate>

Session language: English

Visit <http://www.globalcompactmigration.com> to know more
Email: academy@grfdt.com

Mexico: A New Opportunity for Central American Migrants

For decades, the United States of America used to be the principal destiny for migrants from Central America fleeing from violence. Nevertheless, since the year 2019, the number of refugee application increased by 125% in Mexico. One of the main reasons, why the application's number increased is due to the uncertainty about the United States of American government response about migration and refugees. The principal countries of origin from where migrants are arriving in Mexico to seek asylum are [Honduras, El Salvador, Venezuela, and Haiti and Cuba](#).

Asylum applications in Mexico are in charge of the [Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance](#) (COMAR) which receives the asylum seekers applications and processes them for 90 days. Notwithstanding, there have been several identified cases in which the applications took from six months to even a year. This Commission is also in charge of reporting the number of asylum applications, in the first quarter of 2021, there has been an [increase of 31%](#) in applications compared to the last year. In the case of the year 2021, the majority of asylum applications come from Hondurans, as a cause of violence, [unemployment, and the hurricanes Eta and Iota](#).

In Mexico, [eight out of ten](#) persons applying for asylum acquire a positive resolution at the end of the process by COMAR. This is one of the reasons why each year the number of asylum applications has been exponentially increasing. Notwithstanding, it is fundamental to provide a protective response for refugees in the country as migration is highly vulnerable to diverse crimes such as [threats, violations, and kidnappings](#). This protection response needs to include a social and cultural reception public policy for migrants and refugees focused on the principal necessities of people in mobility.

Alejandra Camacho holds a bachelor's degree in International Relations from the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey (TEC), and a Technical Diploma in Political Communication from the University of Cádiz (UCA). She is passionate about culture, humanitarian assistance, international development, and is able to communicate professionally in Spanish, English, French, and Italian. Twitter: [_alejandracav](#)

Market Forces govern the International Migration from Indian Punjab

[Passage of Fortune?: Exploring Dynamics of International Migration from Punjab](#) by Aswini Kumar Nanda, Jacques Veron, and S. Iruadaya Rajan, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York, 2021; pp xxi + 335.

The non-availability of timely and rigorous data sources for the analysis of dynamism of international migration and construction of an effective policy framework to facilitate fruitful migration for the area of origin and destination along with the migrants themselves (termed as the win-win-win situation in migration studies) is a global matter of concern. The case of international migration from Punjab has a similar lacuna. Globally well known for its unique identity, the Punjabi diaspora is discussed barely in migration and development studies. Due to the non-availability of data for analysis, and to form an effective policy, the migrant population remains laggard in realizing its full potential to contribute to the development process of its motherland. In this context, “Passages of Fortune?: Exploring Dynamics of International Migration from Punjab” is a first-ever detailed attempt, based on Punjab International Migration Survey 2010, which attempts to unfold multifaceted layers of international migration from Punjab.

The book follows the mixture of quantitative and qualitative approaches as migration studies require analysis of socio-economic perspectives including remittance flows and its utilization pattern, migrant philanthropy, demography of migrant household, gender perceptions, cross-border marriages, the role of migration consultancy, and the labour replacement after the migration at the household level. While discussing all these aspects to gauge the asymmetry of out-migration, authors squarely incorporate residential area, region, religion, caste, gender, land ownership, wealth index, and poverty status of migrant households in their analysis. Therefore, the given analysis focuses on all

the dimensions in which the process of international migration and migrant resources utilization is embedded.

Rural Distress and International Migration from Punjab

Simon Kuznets, who won the 1971 Nobel Prize in Economics, considers urbanization based on industrialization as modern economic growth (Kuznets, 1960, p. 125). The given model of modern economic growth is not felicitous for the developmental path of the Punjab economy. The state emerged as a food basket of India after the implementation of a new agricultural strategy in the mid of 1960s but missed to plug the agricultural surplus for industrialization. The backward and forward linkages of agriculture with industry have not flourished within the state. Under the post-reform period, characterized as neoliberal globalization, where markets subjugate all the spheres of life, the state-supported agricultural base of rural Punjab has eroded continuously, along with a plunge in industrial growth. Therefore, the industrial sector of the Punjab economy remains unable to employ the rural as well as the urban surplus labour force. Altogether, the population pyramid of Punjab clearly indicates that more than three-fifths of the population of the state fall under the working-age group (p. 40). The given juncture of the Punjab economy gives birth to the high incidence of international out-migration from Punjab. The historical social networks with overseas countries act as a ladder for the new waves of international migration from Punjab. With the present rural distress and non-availability of decent employment opportunities in the urban area, international migration emerges as a rural phenomenon in the state. Chapter 12 of the book describes the issue of international migration from rural Punjab and provides facts that the households in the rural areas (13 percent) were twice as likely to have an emigrant than households in the urban areas (6 percent)

(p. 48). The management of money by emigrants in rural areas involves – borrowing from banks and moneylenders, mortgage and sale of productive assets by migrant households, which often put lead emigrants and their family members in distressed situations (p. 83). In addition, the cost of emigration, which has increased manifold in the last decades, also contributes to rural distress (p. 87). Similarly, the given chapter is full of facts and data analysis, but more or less fails to establish the link between the massive international migration from Punjab with its own aforementioned economic conjuncture.

Major Migration Corridors

Punjabi people have migrated to countries across many continents of this world. The authors outline the major corridors of international migration from Punjab. These corridors include Punjab-UAE, Punjab-Canada, Punjab-Italy, Punjab-USA, Punjab-Australia, Punjab-United Kingdom, and Punjab-Greece. All these destination countries accounted for slightly more than four-fifth part of all emigration from the state (p. 67). Each of those corridors has its own specific characteristics and requires specific tracer study to gauge the dynamics of international migration. The global migration system and its changes also have strong impacts on the direction of emigration flow from Punjab. Together with the liberal immigration policies, the boom in European countries creating greater opportunities for employment after the Second World War led to Punjabi migrants moving towards the European continent. Similarly, the boom in oil-producing countries in the 1970s opened up new avenues of immigration based on work permits in gulf countries. At that time, the out-migration from Punjab was initiated majorly towards UAE. Due to the lack of any policy-based corridor from India to any other nation, the given corridors are self-perpetuated according to the needs of internationally segregated labour markets. In addition, the state government has not created any effective policy framework to manage the out-migration after recognizing the differential characteristics of each of the given corridors. The policy failure of the government provides space to the market-oriented immigrant consultant industry, which charges exorbitant prices for their services, to serve the needs of emigrants.

Expansion of Migration Consultancy Service Industry in Punjab

Different theories that deal with migration are clubbed into two broader streams: The first stream deals with the initiation of migration and the second stream concentrates on the perpetuation of movements over space and time. Furthermore, perpetuation-related theories broadly discussed the role of social networks (Massey, 1990) and the role of institutions in perpetuating the process of migration (Scott, 2014). The given book explains the perpetuation process of international migration from Punjab by incorporating both the role of kinship and social transnational network and the role of migration consultancy services to derive the emigration process. As far as the role of migration consultancy is concerned, authors state, “a new generation of entrepreneurship and avenues of earning have sprung up in rural and urban Punjab in the form of non-state commercial services that profit by offering migration-related services in the name of migration facilitation” (p. 189). In addition to this statement, the book highlights the fact that 62 per cent of those households who seek any outside help for obtaining the visa to go abroad seek help from immigration consultancy firms and travel agencies. At the same time, only 29 per cent of households receive any help from transnational familial or friendly relations (p. 190). The given fact clearly indicates the penetration and use of commercial emigration services in rural and urban Punjab to a larger extent. Overcharging fees, making false promises, issuing fake documents, and grossly deficient services are the problems of migrant households with immigration or travel agencies as the results of the survey shows. Authors consider inadequate regulatory measures as one of the major causes of these problems (p. 195).

Flows and Utilisation of Migrant Resources

The migrant resources can be classified into four broader categories: household remittances, collective remittances or diasporic philanthropy, direct investments by migrants, and intangible resource flows in terms of social, political ideologies, and technological information (**Rutten, 2012**). The book provides detailed insight into the flows and utilization patterns of all types of migrant resources in Punjab. In the case of remittances, authors analyze the incidence

of inward remittances, size of inward remittances, channels of remittance receipt, source and frequency of remittances, and the use of remittances at household levels. The remittance flows are not unidirectional in the present scenario. The financial resources also flow from the area of origin to the area of destination, which is termed reverse remittances. The book also underlines the reverse flows of remittances from Punjab. Survey result indicates that households with large landholdings and with the highest standard of living embedded with the highest rate of reverse remittances (p. 168) and the volume of reverse remittances lied between Rs. 1.5 Lakh to Rs. 5 Lakh per household from 2005 to 2010 (p. 170). As far as diasporic philanthropy is concerned, one-fifth of the migrant households in Punjab participate in philanthropic activities through their financial support (p. 177).

Direct investment and other intangible flows of resources are mainly associated with return migration. As the book points out, the returned migrants in Punjab lack any upward occupational mobility during reintegration into the labour market. Due to the lack of any policy initiative, the savings of return migrants are also not invested in productive and employment generating activities. Migrants invest their savings into real estate business, purchase of agricultural land, and construction activities.

In nutshell, the international migration from Punjab cannot only be explained from the point of view of wage differential or as a flow of labour from an area of surplus labour towards labour shortage economies without taking into consideration those forces which create economic asymmetries among different localities. The unequal development among different nations becomes base of international migration and unequal development is an inherent character of given politico-economic world order. Furthermore, international out-migration can also be characterized as an inherent character of structural transformation of the economy, as evident from the historical analysis of European countries are there (Kuznets, 1960, pp. 51-56).

Nowadays when globalization forces, governed by neoliberal ideology, give birth to the unprecedented international economic inequalities and the immigration policies of the global north are more or less restricted and biased towards the flows of the skilled labour force,

the consequences of international migration cannot be altogether similar as Europe experienced. Therefore, the given book represents the causes and consequences of international migration for not only Punjab but also the causes and consequences that can easily generalize for the different areas of origin in the global south with some regional specificities of international migration from each locality. Nevertheless, more or less, the analytical framework of the book side-lines the issue of Punjab's international migration from on-going global discourse and also fails to link the phenomenon with other migration origins of the global south. As far as the case of international migration from Punjab is concerned, the book provides a detailed explanation of Punjab international migration survey 2010.

Despite some aforementioned limitations and theoretical gaps, the book is equally important for academicians as well as for the policymakers of Punjab. The former group can pursue further research by understanding the magnetism of international migration among the inhabitants of Punjab and the latter group can get enlightenment to formulate an effective policy to ensure management of international mobility from its pre-departure phase to the reintegration phase after returning. In addition, the global migration system, along with other dynamic transformations, has drastically changed in the last decade. To gauge the impacts of these changes, the state requires another full-fledged survey related to international migration, in addition to the micro-level multi-disciplinary studies to frame an evidence-based policy for safe, orderly, and regular migration, besides full utilization of migrant resources for the multi-faceted development of the state.

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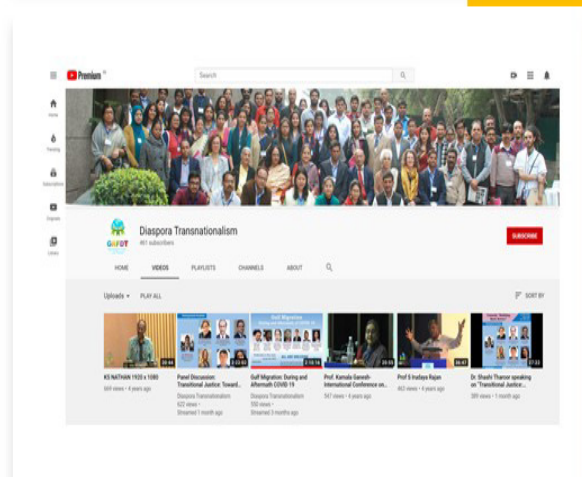
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First Person Plural: From a Personal Perspective a Subtle Glimpse at the ‘Quiet Migration’

Documentary. In English. Running time: 1 hour.

In the heartbreaking documentary *First Person Plural*, Deann Borshay Deann, a Korean adoptee traces her emotional journey from Sun Duk orphanage in South Korea as Cha Jung Hee to growing up in the US as Deann Borshay and finally rediscovering her real identity as Kang Ok jin and her “real family” in South Korea. Beyond the story of reconciliation and rediscovery, the documentary provides the viewers a glimpse into transnational adoption, denoted as the “Quiet Migration” by demographers, from the perspective of the adoptee.

Transnational adoption has been treated as a form of unusual migration and focus on its adoptee immigrants have largely been absent from migration studies. Particularly there is a dearth of studies on the implications of such immigration. In the light of this, a documentary such as *First Person Plural* that explores the personal experience of the adoptee in navigating notions of identity and belongingness is of great significance.

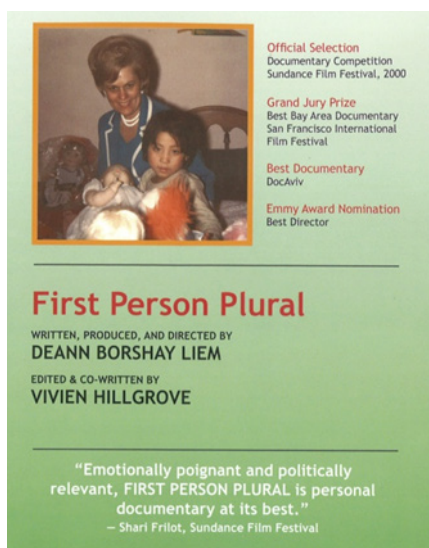


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Push and Pull Factors

However, the documentary is not confined to a depiction of the aftermath, rather it allows a peek at the push and pull factors that set this migration in motion. Historically placing Deann’s adoption in the 1960s, and taking into consideration her mother’s narration of the events leading to her adoption, it is clear that the adoption was motivated by humanitarian gestures. We can also see the role media played in influencing the pull factor when Deann’s mother discloses that it was the Gary Moore show encouraging people to contribute towards the cause of the needy children in the east that prompted her. In the current anti-immigrant, anti-refugee climate, it is ironic that children of the “underdeveloped” world and their needs are sacralized in the discourse of transnational adoption, but at the same time refugees adults and minors, fleeing the very same poverty-stricken countries are rejected.

Similar to other forms of migration that are hard to compartmentalize into clear-cut boxes of voluntary and involuntary, the migration caused by transnational adoption also appears to be located somewhere on a continuum of voluntary and forced migration. *First Person Plural* outlines this aspect very clearly. It also portrays how migration cannot be analyzed solely from the individual level and must be considered in the larger context. The documentary presents the push factors that led to Deann’s adoption against the larger picture of South Korea’s adoption “industry” and commercialization of children that were present at the time. It was extreme poverty coupled with the influence of the adoption industry that forced Deann’s birth mother to give up her child.

Finding Her Place

The first half of the documentary follows Deann’s arrival in the US and her attempts at integration into the family and the American society in general, which in many

ways resonates with the attempts of other immigrants as well. Deann narrates her initial efforts at holding on to the memories of her home back in Korea and her real identity, but these memories are soon lost in her struggle to fit in. The viewers also get to comprehend how a racially different little girl in a predominantly white suburb grapples with the racialized disconnect between her body and her surroundings. Growing up Deann struggles with her looks, she is upset about not being able to make her eyes look like her sisters, she even goes on to get plastic surgery for her ears to stop them from sticking out. In the documentary, Deanne states that she looked up to her brother and sister to understand what was “American” and tried to emulate that. “I think I somehow had created this sort of collage of things and made myself over to fit all the little things that I had seen”. The importance of representation and providing transnational adoptee children exposure to their roots is made apparent through these scenes and narrations. Would little Deann have had to struggle with her appearance and the “American” way, if she had encountered people similar to her?

Rediscovery and Reconciliation

The American spell is finally broken and Deann embarks on a journey of self-rediscovery when she moves out from her home and hometown. But the documentary does not divulge the reason as to why she suddenly starts to regain the suppressed memories from her childhood. Here we are left to speculate whether it was the interaction with the outside world without the protection of her white adoptive family that situated her existence in a racially different world that led her on a search for her roots. Although transnational adoptees are not regarded as immigrants and are accorded greater respect, the similarity of appearance connects them with immigrants and this leads to them being excluded and discriminated against as other immigrants are. This confrontation with racism can come as a shocking contradiction to these adoptees’ years-long attempt at emulating the identity of those around them and the sense of self they had created.

The second half shows Deann again struggling with her identity but this time it’s a different sort of struggle. While before she had been trying hard to fit into the American society, suddenly here she finds herself with

two different identities. Exploring her real roots, Deann comes to know that she was not an orphan and her real name is Kang Ok Jin. She grapples with not knowing where she truly belongs. With cultural and linguistic connections with her native society lost, Deann is unable to even communicate with her birth mother. Nonetheless, in Korea, Deann feels a sense of familiarity and affinity with the people, the place, and things while simultaneously in some ways she still was a stranger, just a visitor. In order to establish a connection with both identities simultaneously, Deann decides to bring both her worlds together to one place. When the two families meet in Korea, we see the complexities and confusions this adoption has created but concurrently we witness a surreal reunion filled with tears, joy, and gratitude. Perhaps it is here that the viewer is still after all that happened can appreciate transnational adoption. Even though her family in Korea is deeply saddened about the time and connection they lost with Deann, they are thankful that she had a loving family and was able to get a lot of opportunities, including education which she would not have got if she had stayed back.

Through First Person Plural, Deann Borshay Deann was successful in capturing the first-hand experience of a transnational adoptee. It highlighted the complexities and hardships that an adoptee experience even with well-meaning, and loving adoptive family. The core themes of the documentary are identity and belongingness and the bond between families. Yet it has also managed to record the various aspects of the quiet migration. Considering the moral panic that conservatives across the world are creating about immigration, First Person Plural uncovers the significance of listening to the experience of the transnational adoptee immigrants. The unique position of privilege that these transnational adoptees occupy when compared to other migrants was clearly visible in the documentary, however, this comes at the price of not fully belonging to either identity and finding themselves in a minority who are placed somewhere in-between.

Anusree P is a sociology postgraduate from Pondicherry University. Her areas of interest include internal displacement, forced migration, refugees and their governance. Twitter: <https://twitter.com/anusreepp2>

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