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# Dangerous Crossings: Voices from the African Migration to Italy/Europe

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This study adds a deeper dimension to the public image of African migrants by showing their humanity, resilience, endurance, courage, and strategic decision making sometimes even to save their lives, as they journey to Europe through dangerous crossings.

# Dangerous Crossings: Voices from the African Migration to Italy/Europe

Robert Press

*Africans continue to migrate across the Sahara and the Mediterranean Sea, where tens of thousands have drowned. In Libya, many suffer enslavement and other harsh treatment as they flee persecution or poverty, or both. Yet there have been few studies of their journey. This study, based primarily on some sixty interviews by the author in 2014–2016 with African migrants in Italy and France, provides a portrait of resilience, courage, and strategic decisions that differs sharply from media images of helplessness. It suggests reconsidering migrant networks and typologies in view of the breakdown and attempted repair of networks on these journeys, where categories blur, ranging from free to slave and back to free.<sup>1</sup>*

In 2014, Toto<sup>2</sup> and his family fled their village in the Nuba Mountains of Sudan as the government and allied Arab militias continued a genocidal repression of black Arabs in the region. “I was supporting the SLM [Sudanese Liberation Movement]. My friends said: you have to leave, hide, disappear.” After a stint working in Khartoum, the Sudanese capital, Toto, 30, set out on the same journey—across the Sahara, through Libya, and then across the Mediterranean Sea—that hundreds of thousands of others from East and West Africa have taken in recent years in a daring bid for safety and a better life. He had no idea how hard or dangerous the journey would be, or how severely it would test his character.

“I got the idea it is easy to go to Europe, the land of tolerance. They will give you your rights,” he said during a long interview in a tent in a crowded migrant camp (since destroyed by the French government) in Calais, France. After traveling overland to Libya, a journey on which some have perished and many are bought and sold as slaves, he was held nine months as a virtual prisoner in a Libyan home working as a servant. “It was the most horrible time. They are primitive, they deal with you as an animal, they shout at your face.” But exercising the survival skills and strategic decisions African migrants are obliged to use, he escaped after nine months. “I opened the door and said I was going to the market” (Toto 2016).

Being jobless on the streets in Libya leaves refugees<sup>3</sup> prey to those who want to exploit their labor: some are imprisoned, some are tortured, and women may be forced into sexual slavery. Toto, with his earnings, managed to buy passage to Italy in one of the rubber rafts smugglers use: "You have to be strong. If you die in the sea, it will be your end, but if you get there [to Europe], you'll find protection." At sea, they faced big waves: in such conditions, many rafts and boats overturn, drowning the passengers: "After two or three hours, the waves were so high, all of us said, 'This is our end; if we die, this is our destiny.'" Toto was among those fortunate to be rescued; usually, it is the Italian navy that comes to the rescue. He later migrated from Italy to France. In April 2017, Italy announced a deal to provide equipment to help Libya block and arrest migrants heading toward Italy. If fully implemented, this deal could result in massive detentions in ill-equipped Libyan prisons and increased slavery, with captured migrants being bought and sold, as many have been while trying to pass through Libya.<sup>4</sup>

The flow of migrants from the Middle East has often overshadowed the continuing migration of Africans to Europe. A rich literature of international migration studies addresses this issue, but the journeys themselves remain "a significantly under-researched theme in refugee and forced migration studies" (Benezer and Zetter 2014:297). This qualitative study, informed by the Benezer and Zetter argument and building on previous studies of African migrant journeys, focuses on the dangerous crossings: the Sahara, including Libya, where some die in transit and many are bought and sold like slaves, and the Mediterranean Sea, where thousands have drowned when their vessels have capsized.

The findings provide additional insights into the character and the characteristics of African migrants, including their resilience, courage, and strategic, sometimes life-or-death choices for survival. The resulting portrait contrasts sharply with the typical public portrayal of African migrants as weak and helpless survivors of the sea crossing. A more accurate portrait is important because both the general public and policy makers are influenced by their image of migrants. Benezer and Zetter note:

Enhanced knowledge of the often profound and transformative impacts of the journey into exile, and an understanding of the (re-)construction of identities and social worlds, can help to better inform policy makers, who can shape reception and settlement policies in host countries that are more responsive to the transitional (or transit) experience. . . . The reason for embarking on the study of the journey and understanding its impacts is as a medium for better *informing policy*. (2014:304; original emphasis)

This study does not explore public and political reactions to African migrants arriving in Europe; it does, however, explore the journeys they made through the Sahara and coastal Libya and across the Mediterranean. It makes several

theoretical arguments regarding networks, mobility, and typologies that can lead to a better understanding of migrations in dangerous zones. These are developed in the section on theoretical perspectives. The presentation is organized in several sections: methodology; theoretical perspectives, including a review of some of the literature on migrant journeys; a closer look at the dangerous crossings—the Sahara, including Libya, and the Mediterranean Sea—with an eye to the characteristics and character of the migrants making them and their theoretical implications; and a conclusion.

## Interviews

This study is based on some sixty interviews by the author with African migrants during three summers (2014–2016), mostly at a migrant-reception center in Perugia, Italy, but also in several other locations, including a migrant camp in southern Italy, where the author stayed for three days, and a migrant camp in Calais, France.<sup>5</sup> All but twelve were with men; females were a distinct minority of the migrants observed, and they were often more reluctant than men to be interviewed. The author used a semistructured interview method. To protect the migrants' identities and privacy, the author used nicknames, often ones chosen by the migrants themselves.

## Methodology

Benezer and Zetter (2014) argue that narratives are “the most obvious and powerful tool in researching journeys,” adding, however, that they are “time-consuming, . . . pose challenges for interpretation, . . . [and require] great sensitivity.” Berriane and de Haas (2012:2–3), in a study of methodologies of African migration research, note “many methodological challenges facing researchers of African migration,” including that “the often vulnerable position of migrants within Africa makes it difficult to approach and interview migrants.” Winning migrants' confidence for interviews for this study was not easy. It was necessary to win that confidence one by one. It often took a lot of time just being around them, at reception centers, or camps. In some cases, confidence came quickly; in others, it was slow coming or didn't come at all. The researcher was probably more hesitant to ask detailed questions the first of three summers (2014) than was necessary, since a few migrants welcomed the opportunity to talk. But others were uneasy with detailed questions. One question the researcher avoided until the second and third summer was about whether the migrant had received permission to stay. Once the question was broached, however, many migrants responded readily, if they were confident with the author's legitimacy.<sup>6</sup>

The study gives examples from the narratives linked to theories of mobility and im/mobility,<sup>7</sup> networking, and the broader concept of agency,

and it argues for using narratives as a primary focus, recalling Geertz's argument that thick descriptions "present the sociological mind and bodies stuff on which to feed" (1973:23). They also present the migrants' voice, one partially muted in academic debates that sometimes miss the human drama of mass abuse of human rights, as well as the migrants' courage. This study uses a combination of grounded theory to develop notions about the African migrants based on a back-and-forth analysis of the interviews as they progressed and reflections on their significance.

The interviews in Italy with African migrants were conducted primarily in Perugia, site of a major reception center for migrants,<sup>8</sup> and in Rome, Naples, Caserta, and Foggia. In addition, the author spent three days in 2016 interviewing migrants in a camp on the outskirts of Calais, France.<sup>9</sup> Italy was a logical primary location because it is a major destination for migrants arriving from Africa. The Italian island of Lampedusa is the southernmost part of Italy, about 70 miles off the coast of Tunisia, though most migrants leave from neighboring Libya.<sup>10</sup> Rome is both a destination and a transit point for migrants heading north to other European countries, Naples has one of the few pro-immigrant social movements in Italy, and Caserta has a reception center that attracts many migrants passing through or seeking asylum. One of the largest African migrant farmworker camps is located just outside Foggia, in southeastern Italy. Also near Foggia are the village of Mezannone and two nearby migrant camps, one designated for asylum applicants, inside a guarded section of a former military base, and the other for undocumented migrants, in an unguarded section of the base. In that village is a Roman Catholic church, from where Italian secondary-school volunteers in the summer of 2015 visited the farmworker camp, offering Italian lessons and other services. Their activity provided an opportunity to begin several days of visiting the camp.

The semistructured method used for interviewing allowed for deviations introduced by the migrants. Notes were handwritten, and interviews were anonymous.<sup>11</sup> The author has no way of verifying their accounts of why they fled. Some migrants, once they were comfortable granting an interview, candidly identified themselves as what is commonly called economic migrants: they came looking for a better life, for work, for a way to get ahead, something they had not found at home. Some had come with the hope of finding a place on a professional sports team in Europe. Others told of political reasons for escaping their country, which, if accurate, would seem to be good candidates for asylum status. What the author initially thought was mistrust may have been reluctance to recall the trauma of their journey. Many had faced death in Libya or at sea. In some places, my notes indicate a migrant turned briefly away, or in one case waved a hand over their eyes when starting to tell of some abuse or danger. "The journey leaves physical, emotional and psychological traces on its survivors" (Mainwaring and Brigden 2016:6); therefore, "researching and writing about migrant journeys requires reflexivity, humility and caution" (2016:251). For example, Diego, a 25-year-old Nigerian migrant said:

We were three days on top of the sea. We saw so many things. We saw a big ship. I don't know which country it was. They put us in the big ship. . . . If not for the rescue at sea, I'd be a dead person. . . . The water can *change your brain*. (Diego 2016; italics added for emphasis)<sup>12</sup>

The study involved time spent with migrants at their reception centers and camps, on apartment visits, and just hanging around and walking around. At one point, to help gain credibility and visibility to encourage African migrants to talk with me, I spent three days in an African camp for farmworkers near Foggia, Italy.<sup>13</sup> The housing consisted mostly of sparse wood frames covered with cardboard and wrapped in rain-protecting plastic, with openings cut for a door and windows. Staying in the camp not only allowed me to appreciate the migrants' willingness to do hard labor in the summer heat, but also revealed the resilient spirit and energy with which the camp came alive in the evenings with music, conversation, even dancing at a tiny, one-light disco. Being there resulted in a series of informal conversations with migrants about their journeys, travails, and hopes.

### Limitations of the Study

Analysis of interviews with some sixty respondents can provide only a limited window on the topic. That hundreds of thousands of African migrants have made the journeys noted in this study is irrefutable, but the conclusions drawn here are open to challenge or different interpretations. Others may argue for different methods and approaches, and indeed, multiple approaches to understanding the journeys of migrants are useful. As noted above, the study does not analyze European politics or public sentiment with regard to African migrants' arrivals in Europe. It provides examples, but not an in-depth, separate examination, of the business<sup>14</sup> of migration: the smugglers, the traffickers, the handoffs between one smuggler and another, and the conditions in prisons where migrants are often held in Libya. All interviews (not the brief conversations) were transcribed by the author and conducted mostly in English or French. In cases involving some of the Eritreans and Arabic speakers, informal translators were used.<sup>15</sup> Errors may occur in the translations and the author's interpretation of French.

### Theoretical Perspectives

There is a "relative absence of African migrations in wider theoretical debates on migration" (Berriane and de Haas 2012:13). To date, the number of studies focusing on the journey of Africans to Europe, specifically through Libya, where some of the most horrendous human-rights abuses are occurring against migrants, are few—and they are distinct from the

current study. For example, of the eight methodological studies of African migration in Berriane and de Haas (2012), only two focus on African migration to Europe, and of those, only Brachet's focuses on a portion of the crossing featured in this study: the migrant's route in northern Niger. With innovative field research in the heat and dust of northern Niger, Brachet documents the multiple fees migrants are forced to pay in truck and pickup transit as they head north. Triulzi and McKenzie's edited volume (2013) adds rich migrant narratives of various travels by Africans, including three sections on narrow aspects of the Sahara crossings that are the focus of this study. Triulzi's own chapter offers graphic detail on the journeys of a group of Sudanese. Schapendonk revisits his important theme (2011) of the circuitous routes of a group of African migrants he tracked toward Europe, including through Turkey. The third chapter of Triulzi and McKenzie is a compelling first-person account of the journey of one Ethiopian. Van Reisen and Mawere (2017) provide an in-depth account of the human trafficking of Eritrean refugees. All these studies make original additions to the journey literature.

### *This Study's Contributions*

In contrast to the works just cited, but building on them, the current study focuses on migrants from East and West Africa in narratives that cover their full journey from their homes to Italy or France. This provides a broader and comparative overview of African migrants' mobility today, crossing the Sahara, Libya, and the Mediterranean Sea into Italy and beyond. Instead of trying to examine their journey from a starting point and a destination point, as many studies do, this study listens closely to the migrants' voices telling about their journey. This study lends fresh support to an argument increasingly made by some scholars of migration: that the traditional way of studying migration—from the starting point and the ending point—misses a lot.

A recurring theme that emerges from the interviews is the resilience and strategic decisions of African migrants in meeting, coping, and surviving in the face of not only commercial exploitation, but ruthless abuse of their human rights. Studies by Brachet (2012), Brigden and Mainwaring (2016), Mainwaring and Brigden (2016), Schapendonk and Steel (2014), and others who have examined African migration to Europe confirm these characteristics. Berriane and de Haas note that these studies

show that most migrants, although living in often very difficult situations and being confronted with exploitative work conditions and hostile state apparatuses, do have agency and actively attempt to improve their destiny. This refutes conventional accounts representing African migrants as (rather passive) victims of warfare, poverty and other sorts of human misery. (2012:11)



This study is located not in the literature of migration during normal times, but in the literature that looks at migration in moments of crisis, specifically in the literature focusing on the journeys migrants are making from Africa to Europe. Benezet and Zetter (2014) are not the only migration scholars calling for more attention to the journeys themselves. "The journeys of migrants have generally been overlooked as an important study object," notes Schapendonk (2011:233). Brachet notes the lack of attention to the journeys: "Nowadays, the majority of the research work on international migration is carried out in two categories of specific points along the route: 'departure' places and 'arrival' places" (2012:95). This "lacuna of research exists in spite of the fact that the journey is a powerful notion in the human psyche," argue Benezet and Zetter (2014:301). "The first and most important argument is that the journey is a profoundly formative and transformative experience and a 'lens' on the newcomers' social condition" (2014:302). They conclude: "We can better understand how the journey painfully enriches individuals and communities and enhances their resilience and capacity for surviving" (2014:314). Mainwaring and Brigden emphasize a necessary adaptability of migrants during their journeys. "Determining the beginning of a journey becomes even more complicated when migrants change their destinations midstream, adjusting to unforeseeable events encountered en route" (2016:245). They argue migrants are anything but passive and helpless:

Despite grave threats to their safety and extreme hardships endured, migrants do not passively accept the course of their journey. They do not surrender full control to their smugglers, the state or their circumstances, but instead leverage ingenious tactics to facilitate their mobility. . . . Thus, the route can become a transformative space in which migrants realise [*sic*] their potential." (2016:255–56).

### *Networking Revisited*

The study adds to the literature on migration networking during the journey. Massey et al. (1994), reviewing international migration, stress the importance of networking in encouraging migration. Akcapar, studying Iranians migrating to Europe, found that network ties in transit countries played a major role in migrants' journeys: "Existing research on international migration has focused on the importance of social networks and social capital in the countries of origin and destination. However, much less is known about the importance of social networks and associated social capital in transit countries" (2010:161). Schapendonk made a similar finding on Europe-bound African migrants, noting that "social networks are shaped 'along the way' by meeting new people" (2011:137). Liu (2013), in his study of networks and migration, focused on direct migration from Senegal to Europe and Senegalese networks in Europe; he did not look at the journeys in transit countries. Without ignoring the importance of the thesis of "strong and weak ties"

(Granovetter 1973; Wilson 1998),<sup>16</sup> it is worth investigating connections that do not necessarily fit into the notion of given and fixed migrant networks helping migrants on their journeys. Networks that one normally views as helping migration can actually create entry points for exploitation, as happened to many of the African migrants. A study that captures this phenomenon in a dramatic way is De León (2015), which documents the uncertainty, danger, and deaths of migrants in a hostile environment as they try to cross illegally into the United States by way of the Sonoran Desert.

The current study shows that while some African migrants had a relative in Europe, or a friend in Libya, they were obliged to form new networks on their journey, adjusting to circumstances. Some new contacts proved helpful; others turned out to be unreliable and part of what one migrant called a desert mafia of smugglers. “These smugglers generally cooperate with local corrupt police, border officials, and intermediaries who connect them to employers in Europe. In the process of crossing the Sahara to North Africa, migrants spend hundreds of dollars on bribes, smugglers, transportation, and daily necessities” (de Haas 2006). In the interviews, African migrants often said they used ad hoc, spontaneous networking, usually in Libya, to find work to support themselves and to pay for passage across the Mediterranean. But the pattern was much more fluid than the “specific migration strategies and itineraries” Liu envisioned (2013:1272). Some migrants did set out with the idea of working in Libya, but most eventually found Libya to be an intolerable place to live, given the physical abuse and danger they faced there. So while some had a friend from home working in Libya who provided help, more typically migrants fended for themselves, making new contacts and new networks. Often this was not a strategy planned in advance and using established networks: it was more typically spontaneous, taking advantage of opportunities when they arose, relying on new contacts or networks.

### *Im/Mobility and Borders*

With regard to mobility and borders, this study notes the work of Schapendonk and Steel (2014) on the so-called im/mobility of several African migrants who were stuck abroad, including in Turkey, waiting for permission to migrate to Europe. In the current study, African migrants were less restricted by borders, bribing their way through them and arriving in Italy without permission. Brigden and Mainwaring interviewed migrants in El Salvador, Cyprus, and Malta, focusing on clandestine mobility and immobility. “Whether a migrant is contained within a hidden compartment or smuggler’s safe house, detained by migration authorities, waiting for remittances to continue, or marooned on a drifting boat at sea, moments of immobility are an inherent part of migrant mobility, especially as states have increased controls at and beyond their borders” (2012:407). In the current study, migrants offered many accounts of their im/mobility, ranging from being crammed into smugglers’ pickups, sometimes covered with tarps to reduce

the danger of detection by police; being imprisoned in small cells so crowded they had no room to stretch out; and being jammed into rafts or small boats with someone sitting on their lap.

### *Overlapping Typologies and Issues*

Finally, this study suggests that the typologies often associated with migration studies blur in the turbulent, unpredictable, and sometimes confusing drama of ordinary people struggling to survive journeys they hope and pray will lead them to a better life.<sup>17</sup> Their journeys involve changing routes, constant recalculations, and quick decisions that can make the difference between life and death; changing networks of contacts, help from friends, and deception from supposed friends; the business of smuggling and the business of trafficking, not always neatly distinguishable. For example, Eritrean refugees smuggled out of the country may quickly be captured or bought by human traffickers and sold, as van Reisen and Mawere and contributing scholars in their volume (2017) document. Or a migrant may have left Nigeria a free person, but in Libya may become a prisoner and held for ransom, later buying passage to Italy as a free person, and arriving undocumented, to be judged as a refugee or refused documentation as an economic migrant. Their journeys are quests that require perseverance and triumph in simply staying alive and not drowning: they are about surviving massive human-rights abuses on a scale not yet generally recognized by the Western public. Though photos of overladen rafts and ships that lead to drownings do appear in the media, much less is known of the beatings, rapes, torture, and selling and buying of human beings that the travelers endure and, for the most part, survive. Their strategies and experiences tend to confound the distinction between refugees and economic migrants, a distinction that states tend to use to classify mobile populations based on their goals. One could argue that regardless of their reason for leaving home, once they have come through the hell that is Libya, they are refugees from Libya fleeing for their lives.

### *An Analytical Framework*

Benezer and Zetter (2014), whose work focuses on the migration of Ethiopian Jews to Israel, only briefly mention of the migration of Africans across the Sahara, Libya, and the Mediterranean, and many of the questions they raise are psychological ones, which would require the long-term study of individual migrants. Their main argument—that migrant journeys are a “transformative experience”—is probably correct, though to confirm that, one would have to know the migrants before they started their journeys. It is reasonable to argue, however, as this study does, that the migrants’ challenges en route had major effects on them, not only physically, but emotionally. Some of the questions Benezer and Zetter suggest in a four-part analytical framework would require days of interviews with each selected migrant and a knowledge of psychology; nevertheless, part of their four-point

framework is practical and usable. (1) The trip itself: when does it start, how long is it, where does it end? This study asks these questions. Benezet and Zetter note, as does the current study, that “for many refugees and forced migrants, arrival at their first destination is not necessarily the end of their journey” (2014:306). This point comes up repeatedly in the interviews and is the argument of Schapendonk (2011). Many migrants interviewed for this study, for example, had no original plan to go to Italy, but after the horrors they experienced in Libya saw that destination as their only hope. (2) Why do they leave, and what do they expect to find? The current study examines these points. (3) How do migrants travel, and how do they cope with the new languages and cultures? While the current study reveals details of their transportation, the focus is not on adaptation to languages and cultures along the way, but on how they coped with often life-threatening circumstances. (4) What are their personal characteristics? While the current study gathers information on the migrants’ characteristics, the deeper focus is on their character: how they reacted to dangers on the way, what strategic decisions they made, what survival skills they used, and what resilience they displayed in the face of adversity. The study now turns to the narratives of the journeys.

## **Dangerous Crossing #1: The Sahara<sup>18</sup>**

### *Traffic and Trafficking*

The once fairly quiet desert town of Agadez, Niger, is today a bustling, chaotic, and dangerous transit point for Europe-bound African migrants, who arrive daily from Ethiopia, Sudan, Nigeria, The Gambia, and other countries. It is the gateway to Libya and the Mediterranean, to hopes and dreams of a future of dignity and work, of money to send back to families struggling at home. En route to Agadez, migrants have frequently adjusted their destination plans depending on conditions along the way. In contrast to the literature that focuses on migration departure and arrival points, as noted previously, the migrants interviewed for this study spoke of a series of journeys, multiple destinations that changed according to circumstance. Some set out with Italy or elsewhere in Europe in mind, but many others did not, attracted by the promise of jobs in Libya, where Africans have worked for decades, sometimes maintaining ties back home and luring others northward.

Eventually, most northward-bound African migrants today pass through Agadez. Crowded buses and trucks arriving daily from the south are met by hustlers from the departure countries. The new arrivals may have a name of someone to meet in Agadez; many do not. From the moment they arrive, they begin calculating, judging whom they can trust, where to go, and with whom. Amid the swirl of dust and heat, newcomers are quickly led to one of the countless connection houses, where they await transportation for

1500 miles north to Tripoli, capital of Libya. Prostitution is part of the mix, as women, trafficked unknowingly or knowingly, await the next step in their journey. Those trafficked may have onward fares paid and have nothing to do but wait. Others may do sex work as they live in one of a maze of homes in crowded neighborhoods around the city to earn their fare for onward travel, usually passing through the Libyan city of Sabah on their journey across the Sahara to Tripoli, from where most eventually risk crossing on smugglers' rafts or unseaworthy, overpacked boats. In Libya, many are bought and sold as slaves, held for ransom, forced to do work, or simply imprisoned in miserable conditions and possibly under torture.

Queen left Nigeria freely in 2014, though under false promises—which led her to Agadez, Niger, as a victim of trafficking. She agreed to tell her story (Queen 2016).<sup>19</sup> We sit on a stone ledge in the courtyard of a former church now used in part as a reception center for migrants in Perugia, Italy. She is wearing a blue dress and sandals, and has decorated her hair. She carries her cell phone, as do practically all the migrants at this center. Her story is a mixture of forced international sexual trafficking starting in Nigeria, her struggle to survive and escape, and finally a story of hope for the future. Queen was taking Italian lessons at the reception center, which provides temporary apartments and a small stipend while migrants wait for the Italian government to decide whether to grant permission to stay. The Italian immigration service has been turning down most requests for political asylum for Nigerians, but the courts often grant temporary permission to stay on humanitarian grounds. Since arriving in Italy in 2016, she says she has been mostly free from her previous fears and abuse. “I could reflect on my life. At times I began to sing.” She smiles, hesitates, and then speaks with animation: “The past will be part of my history; I have hope.” Her dream: “Protection; work will come later.” Queen’s story, like that of other migrants interviewed, is impossible to verify, but it fits the general profile of female migrants trafficked across the Sahara according to published reports from humanitarian and human-rights groups.

My father was dead; my mother no longer spoke with me. [Her uncle abused her.] They beat me; they chased me. It wasn't easy for me. [She lifts one pant leg, then the other, to show bruises. She decided to seek a way out.] If you're at home, your mind says: let me go, let me go. Some went on the promise of becoming housewives; others knew they would do prostitution. When they [recruiters] come to Nigeria, they don't go to a rich man's home: they find people who are suffering. They [promise] things. I asked help of a Nigerian woman. I wanted to change my life. She took me to Niger. She promised to send me to school. She put me in a room. They brought men to me. One man said “make love to me.” He said she'd sold me to him. After a few months, I escaped when he was not there. I didn't know where to go. I slept in the street.

Her refusal to await her fate passively in Agadez is one of the many examples migrants described that illustrate their alertness to opportunities to move on, to escape harm, to survive. After her escape, she ended up in one of the crowded complexes of homes around the city, many of which were used as connection houses for migrants waiting for transport north. But they are also sites of prostitution. Asked if she was abused there, Queen turned away and did not answer. At that point, she had been trafficked and immobilized, her journey interrupted, her destination left uncertain, betrayed by someone in her network. But her journey was far from over.

A man met me in a shop [in Agadez]. He wanted to help. He asked me could I follow him to Libya. In Nigeria, I was only paid 14,000 naira; he promised 50,000 per month. It wasn't that I wanted to come to Libya. When I got to [Sabha in] Libya,<sup>20</sup> he didn't do what he said. There was no work in Libya except prostitution. They put me in a hotel. . . . They ordered many guests to rape me. They said if I know what's good, I should submit. They kept me in a hotel. They didn't beat me. They paid money. You will die if you run away. If you run away, they will take you to prison or a home. They will rape you.

But Queen did run away, again, in another example of the kind of stubborn resilience so many of the migrants interviewed recounted. At some point, apparently in the hotel in Sabha, she met a Hausa Nigerian who offered to help take her to Tripoli. He said: "You are my sister. He was very sad about [my] story. He discussed how I could [escape.] He didn't do anything [abuse]. He piled us into a car, one on top of the other."<sup>21</sup> Everyone was crying." This account of a good Samaritan appearing unexpectedly, often someone of the migrant's own country, is another recurring theme. But while most accounts were positive, in some cases the would-be rescuer turns out to simply be another part of the smugglers' business. Later in her account, she told of being in a prison in Libya: "They lashed me; I was in prison in Libya [for a month]." Queen eventually made it to the Libyan shore, where she was crammed into a boat. After two days at sea and a rescue (probably by the Italian navy), she arrived in Italy. What is next? Queen sighs: "What I want to do if God helps me pursue my dream—because I have a dream: running." She shows the author her cell-phone photo of a woman running the 400-meter relay. It is not clear if it is Queen or someone she admires. She is smiling as she looks at the photo. An Italian state official, or even a researcher who looked only at her voluntary departure from Nigeria and her aspirations in Italy, would fail to see the trauma, incarceration, and slavery she experienced between the departure and destination points. This raises humanitarian and legal questions and a rethinking of categories of migrants concerning dangerous journeys.

*Negotiating the Business of Migration: Borders, Transportation*

About the same time Queen was adrift in a sea of danger in the Sahara, Dawda, from Senegal, was being transported in a pickup toward the border with Libya by a driver who was a Nigerian Hausa and part of the smuggling business. Africans from various countries are part of the smuggler's network all along the routes, including in coastal Libya. Migrants interviewed offered insights and examples of how they survived the harsh business of migration in the Sahara. Repeatedly ransomed, they are often bought and sold as slaves, beaten, sometimes employed for pay, and then robbed; they are typically forced to work, being charged at every border and for each portion of the journey northward from Agadez. They become adept by necessity at surviving the business of migration amid multiple threats to their lives. Borders are permeable; few migrants are turned back—if they pay. Passports help (no one mentioned visas), but money is the point of the business all along the migration routes, as Prince Delay, a Ghanaian migrant from Kumasi, home of the Ashanti kingdom whose people for years had battled the colonial British, explained in an interview (Prince Delay 2016).<sup>22</sup>

They have barriers. If you don't have documents, they'll beat you. [He reached the Burkina Faso border at night.] They told us to show an ID card. They requested money. I only had money for transport. I was being beaten at the border [by police]. Niger, Libya, every border: if you don't pay money, you'll be beaten.

Migrants' options regarding transportation are limited; they act out of desperation and a will to survive, but they may still manage to negotiate prices, to work to raise funds for onward travel, and to adjust their travel routes. These findings support an observation by Schapendonk: "As an in-depth study on the smuggling process indicates (van Liempt 2007), many migrants also have some room to negotiate the direction, the destination and the means of travel" (2011:149). For example, Dawda was able at one point in his journey to negotiate downward the price his transporters were demanding (Dawda 2016).<sup>23</sup>

At each frontier, they asked for money. It's a business. They put you in a small room; they hit you with a stick. At Burkina Faso, I had no money. [They were held for six days.] I called a friend in Senegal. . . . I got my money the day before I went to Niamey [Niger]. In Niamey, I had 35,000 CFA. I paid 20,000 CFA to get to Agadez. [He was in Agadez six days before leaving with thirty-four others jammed into the back of a pickup.] I have a friend who fell four times [off a pickup.] He was refused a ride; they left him.



## Desert Mafia

Some migrants die abandoned along the desert routes; others tell of walking long distances to reach a village. As many as thirty would be piled onto the back of a pickup and up to a hundred atop the baggage on trucks. Dawda left Agadez in a caravan of about thirty pickups. Drivers often traveled in groups for safety from desert rebels and bandits. Often for protection, drivers would leave Agadez alongside the Niger military when it would make its patrols. The first leg of Dawda's trip took nearly twenty-four hours. "It hurt the legs. We put on a mask against the dust. You have to believe in God that you'll survive." They slept out in the open without blankets.<sup>24</sup> After staying overnight in a village in northern Niger, a different driver of the pickup demanded more payment. To avoid Libyan border police, the driver made a wide circle into the country, but later the driver passed military camps without a problem; the drivers had probably paid off some military officers. The military, local militias, bandits, and police all form a clandestine transportation system, which keeps the migrants moving toward coastal Libya. "They form a mafia," Dawda said. Police, military, and tribal groups may attack the convoys, demanding money.

### *The Business of Slavery and Ransom: Desert ATMs*

Given the history of slavery in Africa, both internal and international, it is a painful irony today that many African migrants heading to Italy become temporary slaves along the way, held for ransom, imprisoned, bought and sold for profit. Migrants negotiate—or perhaps the word is simply *survive*—complex payments in the desert, forced to use cell phones as desert ATMs to wring out of supportive friends and families back home enough ransom money to continue their journeys and not be killed. Dawda of Nigeria was the only migrant interviewed who said he had earned enough on his northward journey to send money home. What has become common in the African migration to Europe is the reverse of anticipated remittances home to families counting on their sons (and daughters) to reach Europe and help support their family. Instead, families end up sending them money, most obviously in cases of ransom along the way. Prince Delay of Ghana was ransomed.

If you don't have money, they'll kidnap you and call your family. I was kidnapped [in Libya]. I was held in a camp for one week. I called my family, my uncle. They raised money for me [12 million cedi]. I had a room in Ghana that my late father left for me. My uncle rented this single room. . . . I asked my uncle to send . . . money. . . . He gave the rent to someone [whom the Libyan captor designated]. (Prince Delay 2016)

In Calais, France, at a sprawling camp of mostly tents not far from the cross-channel tunnel, which the migrants hoped would lead them to the



U.K., two Eritrean women agreed to an interview, speaking through a male interpreter.<sup>25</sup> Semra, talking animatedly, said she had entered Libya from Sudan with a group of a hundred girls and witnessed the deaths of some twenty men and women in accidents, with some of the trucks traveling at high speeds and overturning (Semra 2016). Aresena, the second woman, said some Eritrean girls had been kidnapped and sexually assaulted (Aresena 2016): “Women have to pay to be free. If they don’t pay money, they can kill you and take body parts.”<sup>26</sup> Then she said in English: “Yeah, yeah—business no good.” Aresena said she had been put in prison for four months in Libya. She estimated that 300 to 600 people were in the prison. “If you pay, you can go.” Asked if the women had been sexually attacked in prisons, she said: “Yeah. They had guns; no one can leave. They beat us. They don’t care. All Libya—no good.”

Some migrants interviewed in Italy gave accounts of how they demonstrated agency, strategic action, by escaping from confinement. In Foligno, near Perugia, Italy, Laity, 18, from The Gambia, shared his account. In a Libyan desert town, he was kidnapped and held for ransom: “We were locked in a house. They were selling us to people; they were talking price. I said let’s not wait here; let’s try to escape” (Laity 2015). They pushed a short migrant in their group up through the roof; he apparently unlocked the door, and the group fled. They found a resident Malian in the town, whom they paid to let them stay with him until they could arrange onward transportation to Tripoli. Such brutal treatment of human beings on their migration journey is evidence of the vulnerability of traditional networks and how migrants are prey to others along the way, especially in dangerous zones. Such realities challenge the efficacy of voluntary migrant and transnational migration networks.

### *Strategic Networking and Jobs on the Journey*

When migrants run out of transportation money, they typically network to find a job, often with people they do not know, seeking someone who will treat them fairly. Unlike in Italy, many migrants, especially in coastal Libya, primarily Tripoli, said they found temporary work in a variety of ways, including car washes, as house servants, in shops, in manufacturing. On their journey sometimes they are still traveling with a friend from home, but often it means forming new networks among fellow migrants, with Libyans or African residents in Libya who, for one reason or another, take an interest in them. They cannot know in advance who is going to be reliable and who is going to take advantage of them. Dawda took his chances and found work on a farm, but the area turned out to be unsafe.

I’d paid [transportation] for Sabha. In Sabha, I worked for three weeks, but “small boys” [he said these two words in English instead of French] demanded money. They didn’t leave you alone. We slept with our shoes on to escape the police. We

couldn't stay; bandits would attack; police attacked. If you didn't give them money, they hit you. (Dawda 2016)

In another example of strategically responding to events, Dawda and several other African migrants called a taxi and rode to the next town, a jumping-off place for Tripoli. He stayed there for a week. But it, too, was unsafe: "There had been an attack by bandits at 2 a.m." the day before he had arrived. "They stabbed people for money. At night, you could hear the gunfire." So he continued north to another town. He found many Africans there, including some working in a clothing store. Next, he and seven others paid for a ride to Tripoli, this time openly with three of the migrants sitting facing outward in the open trunk of the car. Some African residents along the migrants' journey were helpful; others sought advantage and ended up demanding money. The men who held Prince Delay, for example, were fellow Ghanaians. When he got to Tripoli and searched for work, he went to a Ghanaian from his hometown.

I was doing mason work for about seven months. I worked with forty Ghanaians. They give you half the money. [His friend was the crew boss.] We stayed with him, sleeping on the job site. What my friend did to me. . . . [Prince shakes his head silently.] It pains me. All the work we did; he *gave me small money* [he said loudly]. To take someone's share, someone's sweat: it's a taboo to do that. He's Ashanti [like Prince]; a Moslem.<sup>27</sup> (Prince Delay 2016)

### *Tripoli: Dreams of Palaces, City of Terror*

By the time African migrants reach Tripoli, the Libyan capital, or other coastal cities, they can accurately be called survivors. Their trajectories, if plotted on a map, have generally been from West Africa to Niger and then northward from Agadez to Libya, or from Eritrea and Ethiopia to Sudan and Libya, but other routes lead northward from Sudan to Egypt and from Niger to Algeria, and then east to Tripoli. Libyan smugglers have forced some migrants coming out of Sudan to travel circular routes and be held repeatedly for ransom before being taken to Tripoli (Triulzi 2013). For decades during the time of Muammar Khadafy (1942–2011), some Africans migrated to Libya and found work there. In the current migration, many said they had heard of jobs in Libya; some had been encouraged by friends or relatives already there. For many, Italy was not their original destination.

Bâ, from Senegal, tried other options before turning toward Libya.<sup>28</sup> "I suffered there [at home.] My mother was dead; my father was dead since I was 10. I worked in the bush on corn, tomatoes, rice. I ate two times a day—[usually] corn." Showing initiative, he began a series of regional migrations looking for opportunities. In 2006, he went to Mauritania looking for work, returned home, earned some money in his village, and then went to The

Gambia in 2011, but “it was no better.” In The Gambia, he farmed and did masonry work; then he went home again and worked in a gold mine. “I heard about Libya. I thought there were palaces in Libya.” Despite having a nice home in his village, he struck out for Libya, passing through Burkina Faso and Niger. Like many others, he unexpectedly found himself kidnapped in southern Libya and held for ransom. He was in prison for a month in Sabah. “A month is like a year. They beat us every day. They put salt in the food.” He reached Tripoli in 2014, but stayed only four months. “There were bandits; there was chaos, fighting. I said, truly, I thought I’d go to Italy.” Others knew nothing of Italy at first, including Perry from Nigeria.

I never heard of Italy. I was a truck driver [at home]. It was good, but the corruption was too much. It affected me. They can just attack you, beat you up, and take your phone. That’s the reason I left the country. [In Sabah, he had been imprisoned for two months by a Libyan.] A Libyan man, a policeman, chose people [from prison] and said: “You can work.” He’d take you out to construction; then he took you back; you’d never be paid. Later, the same man took two of us to Tripoli.<sup>29</sup> (Perry 2016)

For most of those interviewed, Tripoli turned out to be a nightmare. There was no law, but plenty of orders they had to obey. African migrants were commonly seized on the street, taken to homes or prisons, and held for ransom. They gave accounts of torture in the prisons. Libyans in Tripoli would repeat the pattern Perry cited for Sabah, taking prisoners out to work without pay, as Moussa, a Moslem from Senegal recalled.

In Tripoli, they take you out to work; they pay the police. They take you to a house for one or two weeks; then back to prison. People pay to get your work. A lot of people died. They give you a small portion of bread. [He holds out one hand to illustrate the portion]. I worked in a garden, but they didn’t pay me. I was in Libya two years; in prison three months. If you don’t have money, they lock you up. (Moussa 2016)

At one point, he was promised passage across the sea if he worked six months.

## **Dangerous Crossing #2: The Mediterranean Sea**

Some migrants were unaware of the dangers of the sea: “Lots of people were going to Italy, across a big sea. . . . I didn’t know a lot of people had died” (Kwame 2014).<sup>30</sup> At the car wash in Tripoli where Perry was employed, he met three other Nigerians working there. “I asked them where they were

going. I never heard of Italy. They said they want to cross the river [the sea]" (Perry 2016).<sup>31</sup> Others had seen news accounts of the drownings, but were willing to risk it. The statement heard repeatedly in interviews was that their fate was in the hands of God or Allah.

I heard about people dying; I watched it on CNN. If we make it, fine; if we go down, fine. You cannot [predict]. I give my life to God. I thank God I'm still alive. Of course you're afraid; you just believe in God. Every five to ten minutes, we all prayed, the whole group. (Larry 2015)

A pattern developed in Tripoli. After suffering much hardship and abuse, migrants turned toward Italy as an escape. They depended on newly forged networks in Tripoli to get them to the edge of the sea. They either earned enough money for their passage, or, in rare cases, the fare was paid by sympathetic Libyans or other Africans who took them to a beach. There was no turning back to the desert and its horrors: there was only one way forward in a migration that had featured many twists and turns in destinations and circumstances. Upon arriving at a departure camp, seeing how people were being jammed into small boats or rubber rafts, some migrants would say they wanted to turn back, but smugglers would threaten them to prevent their returning and warning other migrants not to cross the sea.

I decided to come to Italy. I couldn't return to Mali or Algeria. Libya was too dangerous. To leave was not easy. . . . If I went back to the house [and described the overcrowding onto rafts and small boats], others would not come. They said if you go back, we'll kill you. He [the man who brought him to the beach] put a pistol to my face; he fired once in the air. (Hamid 2016)<sup>32</sup>

It was Christmas Eve, 2014. Mamadou, who had fled Mali during a military uprising, worked in Algeria then Libya, and never feeling safe on his journey, had managed to pay for passage to Italy. He was squeezed onto a rubber raft with so many others that any large wave or shift of weight could flip it, as had often happened. Even the small boats that smugglers use are so packed with migrants they can and do capsize. Between 2,000 and more than "30,000 migrants died in their attempt to reach or stay in Europe."<sup>33</sup> Even a rescue by the Italian navy or others can be fatal. In one case, some 300 people drowned near a rescue ship when passengers panicked and tried to get off all at once. Mamadou was at sea three days in an overcrowded raft: "We didn't have food; not even water. We thought we'd die. For one day, our motor failed. There were waves. [He raises his hand to indicate high waves.] It was very dangerous" (Mamadou 2015). On the third day, the Italian navy rescued them.

Some migrants had even closer calls with death. In 2016, Tolessa, a seventeen-year-old Sudanese boy, wearing a blue T-shirt and a black cap, was

living in an alley camp of cardboard boxes and cloth near the Tiburtina railroad station. Suitcases were lying open on the street; bags with clothes were hanging off chairs. A fight broke out among migrants but was over quickly. Of the 150 persons he estimates were on board his small boat, only thirty-six survived. He draws a diagram of his overcrowded ship. "There was a fire in the ship. All the people on the ship were black. Some were swimming; some don't know how to swim." A boat rescued them. Faven, a seventeen-year-old Eritrean girl in the same alley camp, said she had nearly drowned on her trip (Faven 2016). Her boat had capsized at sea. "I was in the water one hour. Libyan people saw us but didn't help. People drowned. It was hard to swim. A small fishing boat came." She spoke through an interpreter. In Tchad, she said, she had been bought and sold several times. She was obliged to have "sex all the time: you had no choice." Here in the alley camp, she added: "Now I'm safe." Then she complained: "I haven't had a shower in three days, and the toilets aren't good." Faven said she has an older brother and sister in the U.K.

It is hard for someone who has not survived such a journey to appreciate fully the fear that migrants said they had felt as waves rocked their craft, splashing water on them, many of whom were vomiting. The crossing proved to be the most dangerous part of their journey, so traumatic, coming on top of the abuses suffered in Libya. In the same alley camp, Yussuf, sixteen, a member of the Oromo, an ethnic group oppressed in Ethiopia, said he had been trapped in Libya for five months, held hostage at one point for ransom (Yussuf 2016). "They hate black people. I hate my life in Libya. I lost my mind." He holds his hands to his head. "They beat you. There were a lot of Oromo people. I was the baby; they gave me everything." Asked about his sea crossing, he shakes his head slightly. "It is so bad. Oh my God! A lot of people said 'I'm dying.'" On his boat were 400 people, rescued by an Italian ship, probably in the navy.<sup>34</sup>

The accounts of the sea crossing are similar in pattern, a mixture of fear and hope. Migrants were crammed onto rafts or boats, filling every available space, with people often so jammed together their legs grew numb for lack of movement and circulation. On the boats, some were locked below deck near the toxic fumes of the motor, unable to escape in case of an accident. In every case described, they were rescued by a larger ship belonging to the Italian navy or another country, or in some cases private boats. The journey typically lasted from ten hours (less in a few cases) to two to three days at sea.

### *"Back from the Grave. . . We Begin Another Life Here in Italy"*

Amanuel, 35, an English teacher, fled Eritrea when called up again for military service. After ten hours at sea, his boat was rescued.<sup>35</sup> The interview took place in 2015 in a Red Cross camp behind Tiburtina railroad station, Rome. The day before, he had borrowed a phone and spoken with his family for the first time in eighteen months. "Now I'm happy. They thought I was dead. I came back from the grave. They said 'we miss you; please come back

again.” One of his children asked: “Do you love us enough to come home again?” He had no cell phone at the time of the interview. When I showed him his Facebook profile photo of his children, he cried. “We begin another life here in Italy.”

## Conclusion

The present study presents a bold contrast to the public image of helpless and hapless migrants going from Africa to Europe. It not only provides fresh insights into the personal struggles of African migrants to Europe, but suggests the need to rethink some of the traditional concepts of international migration networks and typologies. The methodology involves interviews by the author of some sixty African migrants over three summers about their journeys: with the focus not on the departures and arrivals, but on the full journeys. This approach contributes to the small but important literature on African migrants trying to reach Europe; most other studies have focused on a specific aspect of those journeys. The interviews were conducted in Italy and France (2014–2016).

This study shows a lacuna in some of the international migration network theories that are based primarily on studies on the departure and destination points. These studies miss a lot in the middle—on the journeys, where preexisting networks often fail. Along the way, the migrants, as they move through dangerous crossings, forge new networks, often ad hoc. Sometimes they help; sometimes they prove to be false and cause more problems. This study suggests that the usual typologies do not work well because the migrants’ status keeps changing along the dangerous journeys: they may start out free, on the journey become slaves, and then end up free at their destination, seeking documentation to stay. The present study supports the literature that argues that migration is often more than a point-to-point endeavor, since most migratory journeys involve a meandering, at times almost in a zigzag pattern, from country to country, from site to site, voluntary or forced. It thus agrees with the literature that points to migrants’ potential im/mobility: confinement in houses or prisons when held for ransom, or simply tortured as prisoners, for example.

Ultimately, this study adds a deeper dimension to the public image of African migrants by showing their humanity, resilience, endurance, courage, and strategic decision making—sometimes even to save their lives—as they journey to Europe through dangerous crossings.

## NOTES

1. The author wishes to thank the many African migrants who agreed to tell their story despite the difficulty of recalling traumatic events. This is really their story, and I have encouraged

- them to write their own accounts. Where possible, I have stayed in touch with some of them because my interest in them as individuals continues. Without the generous help of Barbara Pilati and her amazingly kind and hard-working staff at the migrant reception center in Perugia, Italy, of the Associazione Ricreativa e Culturale Italiana (Italian Cultural Recreational Association), where the greatest number of interviews were conducted, this study would have been much harder to carry out. The author thanks those who accepted various versions of this study at an annual meeting of the African Studies Association, the Southern Political Science Association, and the International Studies Association. Finally, the author thanks Dr. Matthew Casey at the University of Southern Mississippi for his suggestions and the three anonymous reviewers who provided thoughtful, constructive, and encouraging suggestions.
2. To protect the identity of migrants interviewed, many of whom at the time of writing were still waiting for permission to stay in Europe, the author asked them to suggest a nickname or assigned one if they did not. Ages are ages at the time of the interview; where ages were not given, the author estimated them.
  3. A refugee is a person who leaves his or her country due to “a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (United Nations 1951). Others leave their country in search of jobs, family reunification, or other reasons. Since the purpose of this study is not to determine the legal status of Africans who have left their country, the study uses the term *migrants* to encompass both categories.
  4. Under the plan, Italy would provide ships, helicopters, and four-wheel-drive vehicles and communication equipment to patrol the coasts. “We will stop boats from taking off from the coast ... and stop migrants from crossing into Libyan territory,” said Ahmed Safar, the Libyan ambassador to Italy. “Those apprehended will be escorted to the nearest detention facility” (Faiola 2017).
  5. The focus on African migrants stems from the author’s eight years based in Kenya as a correspondent for *The Christian Science Monitor* and on academic research in sub-Saharan Africa.
  6. After an initial interview, one migrant from Ghana stopped cooperating, explaining that he and his African friends thought the author might be working for an immigration service (Italian or U.S.) Later, when he understood my research, we became friends.
  7. A term used in a study by Schapendonk and Steel (2014) and others.
  8. Associazione Ricreativa e Culturale Italiana (Italian Cultural Recreational Association), where Barbara Pilati and her staff generously welcomed this author.
  9. Most of the interviewees were male—which reflects the strong predominance of males among migrants from Africa to Europe; they mostly ranged in estimated ages from the 20s to the 40s.
  10. The Spanish enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta on the northern coast of Morocco are also popular destinations for would-be migrants to Europe, though the fences there are heavily guarded.
  11. Migrants were applying for asylum, appealing their rejection of asylum claims, or after final rejection were living illegally and undocumented. They were often sensitive about discussing their legal status, especially their reasons for fleeing their country: to win political asylum, they had to present convincing accounts to authorities that their lives would be in danger if they were forced to return home.
  12. Diego, 25, is a Nigerian Christian from Abia state of Nigeria. As during many interviews, he held a cell phone as we talked.

13. This short visit was enough to facilitate a number of interviews with African migrants in the camp, to see the physical conditions of the camp, and to get a sense of how the migrants viewed their situation. My immediate hosts were several Italian radio journalists who invited me to share plastic-covered floor space in a cardboard house.
14. Salt and Stein (1994) provide one of numerous studies on the business of human trafficking.
15. Some Eritreans were interviewed in English.
16. Cited in Schapendonk 2011:137.
17. Schapendonk makes a similar call for this more holistic approach, which allows the “legal/illegal, the smuggler/helper and the mobile/immobile [to] come together in individual migration trajectories” (2012:30).
18. In these accounts, the Sahara includes primarily Niger and Libya, including Tripoli. The second crossing is the Mediterranean Sea. The relevant theoretical perspectives are most prominent in this, the Sahara-crossing narratives.
19. Queen, 25, mentioned the civil conflict by Boko Haram in eastern Nigeria and detailed domestic violence and economic reasons for leaving home.
20. Sometimes spelled Sebha, the city in central southern Libya is described by migrants as a major trafficking area. Like many parts of Libya, it is highly lawless, with rival gangs and militias operating fairly freely. Most migrants heading to the Libyan coast pass through it, where they are typically subject to kidnapping, held for ransom from their families in Africa, and often beaten and abused in other ways.
21. Smugglers often tried to hide their African passengers to avoid police or military or other smugglers.
22. Prince Delay had completed primary school. We were sitting in his tiny, one-room apartment provided by sympathetic social workers. He had received an immediate deportation notice upon arrival in 2016, caught up in the ever-changing Italian response to the continuing arrival of large numbers of migrants from Africa.
23. Dawda, 25, a Senegalese Moslem, traveled through The Gambia, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Libya, and eventually Italy.
24. Having hitchhiked across the Sahara on trucks with his wife years ago, sleeping out at night, the author recalls both the nighttime cold and the beauty of the desert. In those days, the greatest danger was a possible breakdown of the truck, or the driver’s getting lost.
25. To gain access to the women in a guarded section of the camp, the author agreed to help a local kitchen crew serve breakfast to more than 2,000 migrants inside the enclosed area. Eritrea is one of the most repressive states in Africa. Migrants spoke of enforced lifetime military service and said escaping across the border posed a risk of being shot.
26. Organ harvesting among Eritrean migrants is investigated in van Reisen and Mawere (2017, chapter 4).
27. Similar complaints were voiced by West African tomato pickers interviewed in a camp in 2015 near Foggia, in southern Italy. Workers complained of African *caporeli*, crew bosses, who took a portion of wages. But the bosses in turn provided transportation from the camp (later burned down) and agreements with local farmers to hire the crews.
28. B is a Moslem with four years of primary school education; he was wearing a cap, a T-shirt, and jeans, using ear buds to listen to music.



29. Perry, 29, left Nigeria in September 2015 and arrived in Italy in December 2016. He had not completed secondary school, but has a dream of becoming a lawyer or an engineer.
30. Kwame, 35, left Ghana in 2013, driven by poverty and a desire to become a champion runner in Europe.
31. Perry was at sea for about nine hours when rescued, apparently by the Italian navy, which had been out looking for migrants. By the time they were rescued, water was coming into their rubber raft, and it was close to capsizing, he said.
32. Hamid, 25, is a Malian Moslem who fled his country during a military takeover in 2014.
33. The Migrants Files (<http://www.themigrantsfiles.com>) is a consortium of journalists and others who attempted to keep track of the deaths, most of them drownings in the Mediterranean. The project ran out of grant money and ended in June 2016. The journey from Libya to Italy was a major route. The Italian island of Lampedusa is a principal destination.
34. Yussuf's dream is to play soccer on a national U.K. team and write a book about the Oromo people.
35. The author has been in contact periodically with Amanuel by Facebook messenger. By 2017, he had received long-term permission to stay in Switzerland.

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