Welcoming Acts

Temporality and Affect among Volunteer Humanitarians in the UK and USA

Rachel Humphris and Kristin Elizabeth Yarris

■ **ABSTRACT:** This article compares local volunteer mobilizations offering welcome to forced migrants in the USA (Oregon) and UK (Yorkshire). We contribute to literature on volunteer-based humanitarianism by attending to the importance of affect and temporality in the politics of welcoming acts, presenting the notion of "affective arcs." While extant literature argues that volunteers become increasingly contestational, we identify a countertendency as volunteers move from outrage toward pragmatism. Through long-term ethnographic engagement, we argue that affective arcs reveal a particular understanding of "the political" and an underlying belief in a fair nation state that has not reckoned with colonial legacies in migration governance. By carefully tracing affective arcs of volunteer humanitarian acts, this article offers original insights into the constrained political possibilities of these local forms of welcome.

■ **KEYWORDS:** affect, asylum, ethnography, humanitarianism, solidarity, temporality, volunteers

In this article, we compare local mobilizations of volunteers working through civic organizations to welcome asylum seekers in the USA (Oregon) and the UK (Yorkshire). Contributing to extant literature on "volunteer humanitarians" (Sandri 2018), we argue that affect and temporality are interwoven as central factors shaping the contours of volunteering within the local governance of asylum seekers. Our comparative approach explores how the welcoming acts of volunteers are often construed out of an affective posture of positivism and optimism that assumes the functioning of a rational nation state, which in turn is perceived as needing to be redirected through grassroots advocacy and democratic reform. From this perspective, "the state" is a site that provokes powerful affective responses (Aretxaga 2003; Laszczkowski and Reeves 2015), including anger over perceived injustice toward asylum seekers. Affective responses are tied to the temporality of volunteers' welcoming acts, oriented toward the temporal present and eliding the ways in which historical inequities in the national governance of migrants have perpetuated hierarchies of deservingness (e.g., between "refugees" or "asylum seekers" and "economic" or "voluntary migrants") (Chauvin and Garcés-Mascareñas 2014; Yarris and Castañeda 2015). Tracing these dynamics in volunteer humanitarian movements in the UK and USA over time, we identify what we describe as affective arcs characterizing volunteer humanitarian work with asylum seekers, whereby initial outrage over the perceived injustices of an exclusionary state shifts, over time, to a politics of resignation, and wherein volunteers begin to accommodate to

the structural, political, and fiscal limitations of their work. With time, therefore, evidence from our two sites of ethnographic engagement suggests that the politics of welcoming acts extended toward asylum seekers reflect the affective resources available within volunteer humanitarian movements, contracting as emotional and economic resources diminish.

This finding is an original contribution to the extant literature on volunteer humanitarians that broadly argues that volunteers become "progressively political" (Vandevoordt and Verschraegen 2019) or increasingly contestational toward national migration governance over time. Our focus on affect and temporality reveals the constraints of volunteer mobilizations on behalf of asylum seekers and argues that there is a countertendency to become less explicitly political. However, we also suggest ways in which understandings of welcoming acts can be expanded through Black feminist conceptions of "the political" that give greater attention to the intersectional and relational dynamics sustaining affective commitment within informal humanitarian groups over time.

This article is guided by the following questions: what are the historical conditions that shape the perception among volunteer humanitarians that certain groups of migrants are worthy of welcome? How are volunteer mobilizations on behalf of asylum seekers constituted around specific affective responses and how do these affective stances, in turn, reflect political values about fair and humane migration governance? How do volunteer welcoming acts reproduce political hierarchies of migrant deservingness through particular affective stances? Further, what insights are gained by applying affective and temporal analyses to critical humanitarian studies? In what follows, we situate this article within recent scholarship on humanitarian governance of migration, which suggests that volunteer movements may (un)wittingly reproduce ideologies and practices of deservingness among the groups of migrants they seek to support. We then offer a reading of cultural studies and affect politics to argue that affect and temporality are central to understanding the possibilities and limitations of volunteer humanitarian efforts on behalf of migrants and asylum seekers. After reviewing our comparative approach to ethnographic fieldwork and analysis, we present the key themes that have emerged from our work with volunteer humanitarians, illustrating these themes with ethnographic examples from across our two sites.

Humanitarian Governance of Migration

To analyze welcoming acts, we situate this article within critical studies of humanitarianism and cultural studies of affect politics. With anthropologists of humanitarianism (Fassin 2011; Ticktin 2014), we develop a critique of volunteer-based humanitarian efforts to aid asylum seekers that aims to reveal the ways in which these efforts reproduce hierarchies of deservingness that typify state governance of migration (Feldman and Ticktin 2010) and thus reinforce the very inequalities in access to inclusion that a politics of welcome portends to offer. Our critique also sustains the political possibilities of volunteer-based humanitarian efforts, drawing on Black feminist conceptions of "the political" to reveal the contested, relational, and affective dynamics at play within local politics of welcome. In other words, in what follows, we analyze volunteer solidarity movements with asylum seekers as both reflecting and contesting the racialized and colonialist legacies within state systems of migration management.

Critical humanitarian studies argues that, regardless of its intentions, humanitarian intervention maintains an element of dehumanization and repression (Vandevoordt and Verschraegen 2019; Sandri 2018; Steinhilper 2018; Rozakou 2016). This is due largely to asymmetrical power relations (Fassin 2011) between volunteer "helpers" and migrant "others." This tension has been widely examined, particularly since the "refugee crisis" in Europe and the ongoing

contestations over the treatment of asylum seekers at the US–Mexico border (Nyers and Rygiel 2012; Della Porta 2018; Agustín and Jørgensen 2019; Ataç et al. 2016; Feischmidt et al. 2019; Stavinoha and Ramakrishnan 2020). The "progressive politicization" of volunteer collectives is a core theme that cuts across much of the emerging empirical literature on humanitarian volunteering in Europe, showing how initial motives to help may lead volunteers to becoming more overtly political and contestational in their work. We provide a complementary perspective, arguing that while some volunteers in movements assisting asylum seekers may become political through this work, a countertendency is also at play whereby volunteers become less overtly outraged over management of migrants and more concerned with the resource constraints facing their asylum seeker resettlement work.

In this context, volunteer humanitarian efforts to aid migrants reproduce hierarchies of deservingness, even if unwittingly (Anderson 2013; Chauvin and Garcés-Mascareñas 2014; Gast and Okamoto 2016; Holmes and Castañeda 2016; Sales 2002). In what follows, we focus on volunteer encounters with asylum seekers through informal organizations, wherein volunteers have resisted formal incorporation into NGOs and instead attempted to foster nonhierarchical relations of solidarity with the asylum seekers they are welcoming. These interactions constitute "an important analytic angle for investigating humanitarianism" (Feldman 2007: 692), as they allow us to trace the emergent tensions that unfold in concrete humanitarian settings. Adopting the view that such interactions are the basis of a politics of welcome, in this article we present moments in volunteer humanitarian acts that reinforce asymmetries but contain possibilities for more equitable and inclusive relations of political belonging.

Affect Politics and Humanitarian Movements

Central to our analysis is an attention to the ways in which the political possibilities of acts of welcome are shaped by affect and temporality. Berlant (2011) has outlined how national political sentiment is shaped by historical realities and how shared emotionality in turn is reciprocally related to conditions of political constraint and possibility. Building on Raymond Williams, Berlant uses an analysis of affect politics as a means of describing how the configuration (and disintegration) of political systems is associated with striking emotional responses among the public. In particular, Berlant argues that global mediascapes provide the material grounds for people to develop shared sentiments in response to images of suffering and injustice, and that these sentiments differently lead people to engage in political actions. A similar process has been observed as mobilizing informal humanitarian acts in response to globally shared images of migrant suffering (e.g., in the Kurdi case) (Armbruster 2019). We find these insights from cultural studies to be of central importance for understanding the potential of volunteer humanitarians to contest exclusionary practices of state governance of asylum seekers and to offer alternative, local political possibilities grounded in inclusion and welcome. In other words, it is important to view affect both as a product of concrete historical-political conditions and also as generative of possibilities for political contestation.

Our comparative analysis of volunteer humanitarian mobilizations suggests that temporality and affect are intricately interconnected through the political work of welcome. Humanitarian groups are often studied within an "extreme present" (Brun 2016), focused on the immediacy of current crises evident in the very language of refugee "hotspots" used by international aid organizations (Pallister-Wilkins 2020). A scholarly focus on the temporal present is reinforced by global mediatized images of migrant suffering, as explained above. In this article, we shift the temporal frame to understand how volunteer humanitarians' affective responses change over

time beyond crises as they engage in political acts of welcome. Our attention to temporality follows the protracted waiting that asylum seekers are subjected to in contemporary migration governance, and also situates contemporary volunteer humanitarian efforts within longer histories of colonial and postcolonial state projects of migration management (Achiume 2017; Danewid 2017; Mayblin 2017).

Tracing how volunteers in the UK and US are initially mobilized into action on behalf of asylum seekers through powerful affective responses, we argue that these affective stances reflect broader political commitments—for instance, an assumption about the state as a rational, functioning, bureaucratic entity in its treatment of migrants (Altman 2020; Doidge and Sandri 2019; Karakayali 2017; Sirriyeh 2018). Following these movements over time, we are able to show how volunteers' optimism toward the state shifts, accompanying both a deepening recognition of injustice toward immigrants and volunteers' acknowledgment of their affective and economic limitations. In this way, local, volunteer-based efforts to welcome asylum seekers are bound within what we describe as affective arcs that mobilize aid efforts over time, responding to state policies and to the relational politics of humanitarian efforts, and ultimately shaping the inclusionary possibilities of these movements.

In our analysis of the politics of temporality and affect within asylum seeker volunteer networks, we are informed by feminist, and particularly Black feminist, thinking about "the political." We consider the politics of volunteer humanitarians as bound within, reinforcing, and contesting broader structural politics of race, class, and coloniality. And yet, the "politics" of these movements, as we describe them here, are constituted through interpersonal relationships, for instance a phone call from an incarcerated asylum seeker to a volunteer bail-poster or a volunteer letter to a local politician advocating for greater access to affordable housing for refugees. As Patricia Hill Collins (2010: 7) has powerfully argued, highlighting the ways in which various types of social communities—such as those of the asylum seeker humanitarian networks we analyze here—are "political" provides avenues for investigating social inequalities along lines of class, gender, ethnicity, nation, and race. Collins argues that the idea of "community" has powerful political potential, both within the formal sphere of electoral politics and within the emotional sphere, wherein people assert identities and foster collective action on issues of shared concern (ibid.: 12). Applying an intersectional feminist analysis (e.g., Collins 2012), in what follows, we view the politics of temporality and affect as reciprocally related to broader systems of social power, organized along lines of coloniality, race, and class, which structure the opportunities for inclusion and exclusion that volunteer asylum networks offer. We also push our analyses of temporality and affect to consider the political potential of these volunteer humanitarian efforts, which, while they may reinforce existing hierarchies of deservingness between various migrant subgroups, may also contain the possibilities of new forms of inclusion and welcome for migrants.

Ethnographic Context and Methods

There are broad resonances between UK and USA immigration policy, with both countries historically restricting legal pathways for migration and settlement along lines of racialized hierarchies and assumptions about perceived deservingness (Goodfellow 2020; Paik 2020). Our findings are based on long-term ethnographic engagement with volunteer networks with asylum seekers in our two field sites, offering a broader temporal frame and a comparative ethnographic contribution to scholarly literature on humanitarianism. We each came to know and work with the groups that we describe in this article at specific historical moments.

As part of a larger comparative project on sanctuary cities, which began in 2018, Rachel Humphris (RH) has been engaged with migrant solidarity activities in Yorkshire (UK) since, and continues at the time of writing. She conducted ethnographic fieldwork between 2019 and 2020, with the most intensive fieldwork carried out in Yorkshire between March and July 2019. She volunteered in the "Sanctuary Group" including attending training, weekly meetings, and weekly drop-ins, and helping with the registration desk and with fundraising applications. She conducted 45 semi-structured interviews with volunteers, NGO workers, elected officials, and municipal employees. She also attended numerous municipal meetings, protests, arts events, and talks on the topic of refugees and asylum seekers in Yorkshire. All volunteers discussed in this article were involved in the "Support" group at the time of its establishment in 2002 and continue at the time of writing.

For Kristin Elizabeth Yarris (KY), engaged ethnographic work with the "Network" in Oregon (USA) began in the shadow of the 2016 presidential elections, when local groups of immigrant rights activists across the state mobilized to contest and contend with heightened anti-immigrant political realities. KY was present at the initial meetings of what would become the Network, which were held in 2017 specifically in response to the increasing restrictions on asylum seekers at the US–Mexico border, and she has remained active in the Network to the present day, as the group has shifted its focus to aiding the resettlement of individual asylum seekers (a transformation further described below). KY's research with the Network involved regularly attending bimonthly meetings (which occurred across 2017–2019, on alternate Monday evenings for approximately two hours per meeting), interviewing 12 Network volunteers (during July–August 2019), and participating in community events, such as fundraisers, political rallies, and lobbying activities in front of local legislative bodies during this two-year period. (While she is still a member of the Network, KY's involvement has been reduced during the COVID-19 pandemic, as group meetings went virtual and group activities across 2020 were significantly reduced.)

The groups discussed in this article have similarities and differences in both organization and structure. In Yorkshire, volunteers are split between two groups. The first, "Support," responded to asylum seekers sleeping in the streets following the policy of destitution (introduced by The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999) and therefore has a longer history than the Oregon group and emerged in a different political context. This group began as a small informal group with six members. It now supports 90 destitute asylum seekers a week, supported only by voluntary donations. A second, "Sanctuary" group began as a small informal education campaign in 2005. This small group was instrumental in persuading the municipal government to formally define the city as a "City of Sanctuary." The group gradually grew, taking on more staff and volunteers, and became a coordinating organization for the city in 2016, running a weekly drop-in session for asylum seekers and acting as the liaison between the third sector and the local government.

By comparison, the Oregon-based asylum support organization Network has remained informally organized and entirely volunteer-based (with no paid staff), resisting attempts at formal incorporation and only loosely affiliating with one local 501(c)3 nonprofit organization in order to collect tax-exempt donations. While the group began in 2018 with between 40 and 50 active volunteers regularly attending monthly meetings, at the time of writing in 2020, through dynamics and changes described in this article (as well as in response to the realities imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic), the membership has dwindled and consists of between 10 and 12 active volunteers.

Our methodology in this article is decidedly comparative across our two field sites. By studying these informal volunteer mobilizations in the UK and US, we trace how volunteers engaged in migrant solidarity work position their efforts, given different historical, social, and political

dynamics, and we highlight the commonalities in volunteer humanitarian work across these two sites. Our aim is to understand the work of volunteers as situated within contemporary dynamics of state power vis-à-vis migrant communities and as a productive, albeit contested, source of migrant governance. That is to say, we use comparisons between the US and UK to productively show how volunteer mobilizations reproduce broader political distinctions between "deserving" and "undeserving" migrants, even as these volunteer humanitarians overtly aim to foster welcome and sanctuary. Our analysis involved interpretive code-and-retrieve methods wherein the data was transcribed, read, and reviewed by each author, who identified codes and then undertook an interpretative thematic analysis. These themes were compared and emerged as similar across our two cases (Yin 2012). The narrative examples used in this article were selected to illustrate those key dynamics. Names of individuals and organizations are pseudonyms.

The local humanitarians we analyze are predominantly white, middle-class, middle-aged or retired, living in midsize cities, and engaged in volunteer-based groups. As white, middle-class women, we were able to engage with these groups as participant observers, albeit with some differences due to age (KY, in her late 40s, and RH, in her mid-30s, were both younger than the average age of the volunteers in these groups) and to professional status (at times, given our identities as professional researchers, group members turned to us for "expert" information on migration topics, laws, and policies, sometimes placing us in difficult positions of navigating our insider-outsider status). While critically situating volunteer humanitarians within longer histories of colonial and racist immigration processes in the UK and US, as feminist ethnographers engaged in this research and participating alongside these humanitarians in an ongoing way, we attenuate these critiques of volunteers through careful attention to the ways in which their welcoming work both reinforces but also contains the potential to subvert race, class, and citizenship privilege. Thus, our aim is to treat volunteer humanitarian movements critically but also carefully, drawing out the ways in which these efforts can reproduce problematic hierarchies of deservingness among refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers, as well as the ways in which the humanitarians' commitment to this work over time opens the possibility of a more inclusive politics of welcome that fosters belonging and ultimately expands the boundaries of contemporary citizenship in these two countries.

Affective Arcs of Volunteer Humanitarian Work

The key analytic commonality that has emerged from our work with volunteers in these two sites is one that we herein describe as affective arcs of volunteer humanitarian mobilizations. In their initial stages, the volunteer humanitarians with whom we work are motivated by strong emotions, specifically anger or outrage expressed over the unjust treatment of asylum seekers by national governments. Usually, these affective responses are mobilized in response to mediatized images of migrant suffering, such as the images of Syrian refugees stranded in the Mediterranean Sea or the late-2018 images of the migrant caravan of Central Americans seeking refuge in the US who gathered in Tijuana, Mexico. Sentiments that resonated among volunteers in both the UK and the US groups included a shared feeling of "I have to do something" in response to outrage and anger at state governments for failing to uphold national and international laws, and for their subsequent inhumane treatment of asylum seekers.

In the early stages of both groups, the predominant sentiment was outrage at the perceived injustice and inhumanity of state immigration governance. The expressed political aims of both groups were overtly confrontational, with volunteers often positioning themselves as outside

and opposed to official systems of migration governance. For instance, in these early mobilizations, some Oregon volunteers participated in direct actions of solidarity with asylum seekers at the US–Mexico border, while some Yorkshire volunteers traveled to Calais to witness conditions for refugees encamped there; other Oregon volunteers traveled to immigrant detention centers to engage in civil disobedience with the aim of closing these facilities, while others in Yorkshire provided direct mutual aid and cash support to destitute asylum seekers. Notably, as members of these groups became increasingly involved in the everyday lives of asylum seekers, their focus increasingly came to be placed on the individuals they sponsored and sought to resettle—work that involved raising large sums of money for legal fees, hosting asylum seekers in sponsors' homes, and helping asylum seekers access educational opportunities and social service programs. With time, the emotional tenor of these groups shifted from anger at perceived injustice to pragmatic patience in the face of the time needed to navigate social supports and resources for asylum seekers. In this way, the tone and tenor of volunteers' work shifted from an outsider or antagonistic stance to one that sought to work within the immigration legal system to secure asylum for individual cases and resources for individual migrants. As a result, tensions emerged with volunteers who wanted to be involved in more overtly political work (some of whom withdrew from the groups), as well as between these volunteer efforts to aid newcomers and long-standing migrant-serving organizations (often formally incorporated and run by paid staff members with years or decades of experience serving immigrant communities). These temporal changes in volunteer humanitarian efforts also reflect a rationalization of volunteers' emotional labor and financial resources. This shift is best illustrated by volunteers' initial sentiments that "we must do something" changing to a resignation that "we just can't help everyone." This finding resonates with the overarching aim of this special issue: examining differences between "governance through need" and "governance through choice." In other words, volunteer humanitarians change their helping orientation over time from one focused on the human rights and basic needs of asylum seekers (and in turn, their own needs as volunteers to help) to a focus on helping a select few asylum seekers, rationing the emotional and economic resources of volunteer groups along lines of perceived deservingness.

Outrage Mobilizes Activism

In Yorkshire, the volunteer organization Support began because destitute asylum seekers began to arrive from 2002. A retired English teacher, Mary, ran a Conversation Class in the central Methodist Town Hall. Through the stories of asylum seekers in her class, she became aware of their experiences and situations. She was infuriated by how they were being treated and brought together a group of six people around her kitchen table. They were all incensed that the national government had instituted both the dispersal policy (which separated asylum seekers from their support networks) and a policy of destitution. They began collecting money from churches and friends to provide direct cash support to destitute asylum seekers. One volunteer stated, "We can't have this on our streets." Another member of this group explained, "we were telling friends, relatives, neighbors—these people have got nothing. Can you get us some money?" At the outset the aim of Support was overtly about working against and outside government frameworks. As Peter, a founding member, described, "we had this really strong approach—the law is wrong. So we need to do something about it and work outside of it. You've got to be subversive. The legal framework is not a barometer in which you can check whether your activity is acceptable or not . . . because, yeah, the law's wrong." As increasing numbers of destitute asylum seekers were sleeping on the streets of Yorkshire, the group began a hosting program and a more concerted fundraising effort. The group began to call itself "Support."

During roughly the same period, the Oregon group began to respond to a similar political climate of explicit hostility toward asylum seekers under the Trump Administration. In the fall of 2018, community members held a series of coffee house meetings, brainstorming ways to support asylum seekers at the US–Mexico border and oppose the Administration's exclusion and detention of refugees and asylum seekers more broadly. In weekly meetings, volunteers openly reflected on this question: "What can we do from Oregon to help the situation with asylum seekers?" Some of these volunteers had been involved in refugee resettlement networks, active locally since 2015, which found themselves idle given the Trump Administration's refugee admissions prohibitions. Other volunteers were new to migrant activism, but felt called to action by media coverage of the caravans and the so-called "humanitarian crisis at the border." The collective sense in these early Oregon meetings was anger at unjust US immigration policies and a desire by volunteers to counter exclusionary policies through local welcoming acts.

For instance, Camile connected her visceral response to seeing images of asylum seekers shot at with tear gas by US Customs and Border Patrol agents as "pushing me over the edge—it's like I can't sit back and let that happen, I have to *do* something." Another volunteer, Barbara, introduced herself at an early meeting as "new to all this"—referring to migrant rights activism—but added, "I don't know, I just feel like the time has come, and I can't sit back any longer and watch as this Administration acts against all my principles." Barbara's sentiment was shared by other Oregon volunteers, who felt mobilized into action by outrage at what they perceived as the unjust and inhume immigration policies of the federal government. Given the media and public attention paid to detention and separation of migrant families, volunteers' anger was a culturally shared affective response. At times, in early meetings, it felt as though the space of the meeting became a type of support group, where volunteers shared their emotional responses to the Administration's hostile policies and held space for others to share similar feelings of outrage at injustice. From this shared sentiment emerged a collective sense of the need for local actions in support of asylum seekers, as a means of countering group members' outrage and sense of being overwhelmed with concrete welcoming acts.

After several meetings, the Oregon group settled on a name, the "Oregon Asylum Network (OAN)" (a pseudonym) or the "Network." A strikingly consistent feature of early Network meetings was a shared emotional response to news coverage of the caravans of Central Americans arriving at the US's southern border with Mexico. Network volunteers expressed a variety of powerful emotions, especially frustration, anger, grief, disbelief, and outrage. They pointed to these emotional reactions to the US Administration's immigration policies as the key motivating factor pushing them toward "doing something" in their local communities to counter hostile federal policies of exclusion with local practices of solidarity and welcome. These affective responses to perceived injustice, in turn, revealed a broader historical optimism, an underlying idea that the US government's treatment of migrants was fundamentally rational and just—and that therefore, when the state strayed into unjust territory, it could be set straight again through volunteer activism. From the outset, then, the Oregon volunteer humanitarians work was an example of an affective political stance, mobilized by shared and media-motivated anger at perceived injustice, and oriented toward legal and political activism to return migration governance to what was understood to be a more humane past system.

The early meetings of the Oregon Network (in late 2018 and early 2019) were filled with excitement, as swelling numbers of volunteers and interested community members joined each week. Ideas were in abundance as group members brainstormed ways to act locally to foster welcome and inclusion for asylum seekers and other immigrants. Those who had traveled to the border reported on grassroots efforts in need of assistance, and group members responded—organizing deliveries of food and other items directly to the border. Most of these efforts were

outside the channels of established nonprofit organizations, and seemed more like spontaneous mutual aid efforts, offering people an outlet for turning anger into action. In fact, the Network made an explicit and intentional decision early on in this period not to organize itself as a formal nonprofit organization. Quite a bit of conversation was dedicated to this, with the majority opinion in favor of a nonhierarchical and fully volunteer-based group (this later became a problem, when the Network needed to fundraise but lacked the nonprofit status required in the US to handle tax-deductible donations).

From Outrage to Accommodation

In Yorkshire, volunteers grappled with the overwhelming need of asylum seekers, their inability to change the asylum system, and a severe lack of financial resources. Moreover, volunteers narrated how they became resigned to the situation as a way of rationalizing the intense emotions involved in supporting people over time, with little hope of changing circumstances in the future. Many supported young men in their 20s who "have their whole life ahead of them," which was narrated as particularly distressing. Another volunteer explained, "There is some thinking that it doesn't do people any good. People can end up with their life going nowhere . . . a little safety net, that keeps them ticking with no hope is a demotivator. We've seen people just become long-term depressed and just surviving within the charity. And it's not a life." In this context, as volunteers became entangled in the ongoing support of individual asylum seekers and increasingly emotionally invested in their lives, their initial outrage shifted as they became daunted by the realization of the task and resigned to the situation of the asylum seekers they supported.

In this context of protracted limbo, volunteers became so desperate for a resolution that they began to consider advocating for voluntary return. Emotional tensions accompanied this decision, which emerged from despair about how to give destitute asylum seekers a recognizable life. Ingrid explained, "Routes [for] getting out of destitution has become a major preoccupation because it's demotivating volunteers, as well as the people who are supported, to just not think there is any way out of any of this." The experiences of volunteers portrayed a deep unease as their original intentions, fueled by outrage, incredulity, and desire to act against the state, shifted toward resignation and working within the system to support individual asylum seekers, eventually leading them to consider advocating self-deportation to those they supported. Volunteers narrated a deep dilemma about their roles and whether they were complicit in the brutal asylum system through perpetuating what has been termed "slow violence" by giving asylum seekers just enough to be able to live, but no hope or route toward a different kind of life. The notion of slow violence, coined by Nixon (2011) and developed by Davies (2019) and Mayblin et al. (2020), describes the stress, anxiety, shame, and concomitant physical and mental effects experienced by asylum seekers subject to poverty and the protracted waiting institutionalized in migration policies. Volunteers become witnesses and, over time, some perceive themselves to be accomplices in this violence, provoking strong affective responses.

A crucial element driving the affective arc from outrage to practical resignation was limited financial resources. Rejected destitute asylum seekers in the UK are outside systems of social protection (because they have no recourse to public funds) and some are outside the law (because they have evaded deportation). Support relies on voluntary donations from Yorkshire residents. As one volunteer described, "Support is supporting currently just under a hundred people. So that's £20 a week . . . But obviously, there are financial limits. So you just can't keep that up for years." Volunteers' unease is shaped by the reality of a need for unending financial assistance.

The practicalities of gaining public support and financial donations meant that volunteers (inadvertently) propagated and reified deservingness. Support needed voluntary donations, something that was increasingly difficult as migrants were scapegoated in the British press. To counteract these myths, Support began dealing in the currency of refugee stories to elicit affective responses that would move people to donate. As one volunteer, who had been involved with the group from the outset and had taken on the role of fundraising, stated, "I was going around talking to different groups and I would take an asylum seeker or two with me. One time I was at a Tenants Association and he actually said, 'I was carrying a gun when I was a teenager to protect myself' and I said, 'oh no—don't say that again!' That's not the right story." Over time, not only did volunteers become gatekeepers to asylum support, reaffirming racialized hierarchies in migrant activism, they also became managers of asylum seekers' stories in order to provoke outrage at their treatment at the hands of the state, empathy for their destitution, and therefore donations for their assistance. Volunteers were aware of this problematic position, with another stating, "It could be exploitative. There is someone I've been on a platform with who pulled up the nearest refugee to tell their story and then he would almost encourage them to make it more graphic. And I always felt very uneasy about it but I didn't want to interfere." In this context, volunteers resigned themselves to a politics of accommodation. Although they were uncomfortable about these storytelling events, they saw them as pragmatic within the constraints of the context and ultimately as providing the resources to continue to support destitute asylum seekers. Crucially, this also raises issues regarding the difference between the outward-facing claims of the group (and how they raise financial resources through eliciting emotional responses to asylum seekers' stories) and their own shifting analysis and experiences. At first, their views were driven by outrage and empathy, but strategic positioning for funding became the main driver of action, despite uneasiness about how this was obtained.

In Oregon, by the summer of 2019, the broader political orientation of the Network had shifted, with the group's sole focus the development of support systems for asylum seekers that members of the group were hosting locally. When Network volunteers had heeded the call of the National Sanctuary Coalition and joined the #SanctuaryCaravan direct action work at the border in 2018, they had met asylum seekers who they referred to as "friends," and signed up to serve as legal sponsors as these "friends" navigated the US asylum process. Under US immigration law, asylum seekers' petitions are facilitated when they have local sponsors who are willing to support them through the legal process and host them upon bonded release from detention. In Network meetings, it became clear that volunteers who signed on to sponsor asylum seekers were ill prepared for what this responsibility entailed. It didn't take long for those who signed up to realize that they were entangled in much larger commitments than merely listing their names and contact information on an immigration form. Network volunteers subsequently struggled to raise funds to post bond for detained asylum seekers, to secure resources for their transportation to Oregon, and to find them local housing or make space in their own homes for asylum seekers and their families. Hosting asylum seekers, by spring 2019, had become the primary focus of the Network, consuming most of the time at meetings and a majority of the resources raised through fundraising events. The demands of securing legal resources for bond payments (which can amount to thousands of dollars) and fundraising for attorney fees (which can amount to additional thousands of dollars for any single asylum seeker's case) consumed most of the group's energies. Gone were conversations about civil disobedience at immigration detention centers or letter-writing to change asylum policies at the border; instead, the Network volunteers focused on raising money to pay legal fees to secure asylum for individual migrants. The affective shift was from outrage to resignation, as the broader political aims of the group collapsed from protest to accommodating the realities of the immigration system. This affective

shift was illustrated by a move from a discourse during Network meetings of "we have to do something to end unjust policies" toward a refrain that "all we can do is help this one individual win their asylum case."

A repeated refrain in Network meetings and volunteers' discourse is that the migrants they seek to help are "real asylum seekers," and therefore meritorious of volunteer support. Similarly to the Yorkshire volunteers, sponsors emphasized asylum seekers' stories of suffering—in home countries, in transit, and in detention centers—as reasons to see them as needing assistance. At Network meetings and over listserv communications, characteristics of asylum seekers were shared (e.g., whether they had suffered violence at the hands of state police, had LGBTQ+ identities, or were victim of domestic violence), ostensibly to demonstrate the worthiness or deservingness of the asylum seeker for sponsorship (and as a means of fundraising for sponsorship activities). A rationing of affective resources is reinforced when volunteers encounter concrete, material constraints to their work (e.g., the economic cost of contracting attorneys and posting bail to release asylum seekers from detention). As this shift occurred, Network volunteers justified a retraction of their welcoming efforts on moral and economic grounds. This was evident when volunteers unwittingly reinforced migrant victimhood rather than agency, for instance when they chose to privilege "their asylum seekers" (those aided by the Network) as worthy of help and support. This affective shift from a broader politics of welcome, justified on the grounds that "we simply can't help all migrants," also erases the historical continuities between asylum seekers and undocumented migrants and elides the political possibilities of broad-based and inclusive organizing across migrant groups.

Volunteer Mobilizations and Affective Politics of Welcome

Through our ethnographic engagements with volunteer humanitarians working with asylum seekers in the UK and US, we have come to understand how the affective politics of welcome are constituted over time in relation to interpersonal dynamics among group members, relations between volunteers and asylum seekers, and interactions with the material realities of migration systems. In both Yorkshire and Oregon, an initial affective posture of outrage and anger mobilized volunteers into envisioning contestational direct advocacy on behalf of broad groups of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. This included witnessing at the US–Mexico border and attending protests in the UK against detention and deportation. Over time, however, our ethnographic engagements with these groups have shown that volunteers' affective stance shifts from outrage to accommodation, as they encounter the political, economic, and emotional constraints surrounding their work. Volunteer humanitarians grapple with these constraints, acknowledging the seemingly unending need for support but rationing their affective resources to attend to those they deem most deserving. In this way, volunteers' affective politics both reflect and reinforce the broader moral economies at work within late-liberal democratic states' systems of migration governance. Thus, despite their initial outrage and overt politics of protest, volunteer humanitarians' accommodations to affective constraints over time may lead them into similar types of "bordering work," meting out support to those they deem most suffering (the forcibly displaced asylum seekers) while overlooking continuities of displacement among longer-term migrant and undocumented communities.

In both cases, limited resources, particularly regarding legal immigration support, financial assistance, and increasing precaritization of migration status, combined to create dynamics of rationalization of volunteer humanitarian work. Volunteer outrage at the Trump Administration and Brexit, or the emotional outpouring that accompanied mediatized images of family

separation or the death of Alan Kurdi, bely longer histories of unjust immigration policy based on racialized hierarchies of migrants' worthiness. Volunteer sentiments such as "the system shouldn't work this way . . ." signal an underlying faith in the rationality of states' immigration systems and serve to invisibilize the racist and colonialist legacies of these systems.

In this way, we observe in volunteer humanitarians what Berlant (2011) referred to as a "cruel optimism" about the functionality and rationality of the liberal democratic nation state. We might understand this stance as a reflection of volunteers' racialized privilege, although, in a contested and uneven way, we also observed these groups explicitly engaging with questions of citizenship, power, and inequality over time. Still, one concrete consequence of disassociating the present from the past was that often, volunteers were unable or unwilling to see continuities between the asylum seekers they helped and the longer-standing migrant communities. This oversight caused tension for both the Oregon Network and Yorkshire's Support as they continued to engage in asylum seeker support work but failed to build strong partnerships with more established community organizations serving immigrant communities. These existing organizations were often staffed by people of color or people with immigrant backgrounds, who in turned viewed volunteers as naïve about existing organizations and support services and as reinforcing hierarchies of deservingness between the asylum seekers they aided and other migrants.

On the Political Possibilities and Limits of Welcoming Acts

A central contribution of this article is to use an analysis of affective arcs to provide a complementary perspective to the notion of "progressive politicization" of volunteer humanitarians on behalf of forced migrants. As detailed above, previous literature has identified how initial motives to help may lead volunteers to become more oppositional to national migration governance. We argue instead that while some volunteers in movements assisting asylum seekers may become increasingly contestational, a countertendency is also at play whereby volunteers become less overtly outraged over political management of migrants, focusing more on the practical realities and resource constraints they face in trying to support asylum seekers within brutal migration regimes. That is, they may move from a politics of contestation to one of accommodation. These movements therefore need to be placed within their broader context, with attention to changes over time—an analysis that is particularly important given the protracted nature of migration governance and its continuities with deeply historicized racialized exclusions.

Given constrained material and affective resources, we are interested in the ways in which volunteer humanitarian gestures replicate or reinforce governmental categorizations of deservingness and sort asylum seekers into those viewed as deserving of their limited helping resources. In other words, and as Williams and Orrom (1954) describe, a dialectic is evident whereby volunteer humanitarians respond to scarcity through an affective stance of accommodation or resignation (rather than protest or outrage). However, by adopting a feminist perspective on "the political," we offer insight into the politics of welcome in volunteer humanitarian groups through affective arcs over time. We observed how volunteer humanitarians may engage in a different kind of "politics" that is not overtly contestational but relational. Over time, however, volunteers in these groups may again move to more overt and contestational political action in response to shifting contexts. In this way, our work interrogates the "black box" of volunteering (Shachar et el. 2019), probing for the political potential within these movements to transform relations between volunteers and asylum seekers while remaining highly attuned to their constraints.

Some volunteers become aware of these dynamics, perhaps even acknowledging their inadvertent participation in forms of "slow violence" toward those they aim to help. These acknowledgments can provoke deeper political reflection and renewed affective commitment to a broader-based politics of welcome, which recognizes and seeks to mitigate the harms of racist and colonial migration policies. We observed these sorts of affective political reckonings as we began drafting this article in the summer of 2020, when members of the Network and Support groups were motivated, in response to Black Lives Matter protests and social contestations over racial injustice, to engage in structured reflection about the ways in which their work as predominantly white volunteers may perpetuate not only hierarchies of deservingness, but also legacies of white supremacy in migration management. While we have yet to follow how these reconciliations play out over time, this moment of critical self-reflection in response to historical events shows how the possibilities of volunteer-based politics of welcome are not static, but shift over time alongside the affective, political, and economic realities of asylum seeker humanitarian work.

DR. RACHEL HUMPHRIS, Senior Lecturer, School of Politics and International Relations. Queen Mary University of London. Dr. Humphris is a political ethnographer whose research and teaching focuses on the relationship between migration and citizenship and the impact on local lives, identities and places. Her work is grounded in contexts of rapid urban change in North America and Europe. Her research agenda touches on several themes including radical positive programmes for urban futures; the influence of mobility on political and moral economies; and the governance of marginality. Prior to joining QMUL in September 2019, Rachel was a Lecturer in Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Birmingham (2017–2019) and Research Fellow at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, University of Oxford (2014–2017). Rachel has been a visiting fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity, University of California - Berkeley, York University Toronto and the University of Sheffield.

DR. KRISTIN ELIZABETH YARRIS, Associate Professor, Global Studies. University of Oregon. Dr. Yarris is a sociocultural anthropologist whose ethnographic research engages with transnational migration, immigrant rights movements, and the social determinants of health and wellbeing. Her research has been previously funded by the National Science Foundation (US) as well as the Wenner Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research. At the University of Oregon, she is affiliated faculty with the Department of Women's, Gender,

and Sexuality Studies; Anthropology; and Disability Studies. She is a Steering Committee member for the UO Dreamers Working Group and the Oregon Humanities Center. In the community, Kristin volunteers with several immigrant rights and social service organizations working with migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees.

▪ REFERENCES

Achiume, E. Tendayi. 2017. "Reimagining International Law for Global Migration: Migration as Decolonization?" *AJIL Unbound* 111: 142–146.

Altman, Tess. 2020. "Making the State Blush: Humanizing Affective Relations in an Australian NGO Campaign for People Seeking Asylum." *Social Analysis* 64 (1): 1–23.

Anderson, Bridget. 2013. *Us and Them? The Dangerous Politics of Immigration Control*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Aretxaga, Begoña. 2003. "Maddening States." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32 (1): 393–410.

Armbruster, Heidi. 2019. "'It Was the Photograph of the Little Boy': Reflections on the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Programme in the UK." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 42 (15): 2680–2699.

Ataç, Ilker, Kim Rygiel, and Maurice Stierl. 2016. "Introduction: The Contentious Politics of Refugee and Migrant Protest and Solidarity Movements: Remaking Citizenship from the Margins." *Citizenship Studies* 20 (5): 527–544.

Berlant, Lauren. 2011. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Brun, Cathrine. 2016. "There is No Future in Humanitarianism: Emergency, Temporality and Protracted Displacement." *History and Anthropology* 27 (4): 393–410.

Chauvin, Sébastien, and Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas. 2014. "Becoming Less Illegal: Deservingness Frames and Undocumented Migrant Incorporation." *Sociology Compass* 8 (4): 422–432.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2010. "The New Politics of Community." *American Sociological Review* 75 (1): 7–30.

Collins, Patricia Hill. 2012. "Social Inequality, Power, and Politics: Intersectionality and American Pragmatism in Dialogue." *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 26 (2): 442–457.

Danewid, Ida. 2017. "White Innocence in the Black Mediterranean: Hospitality and the Erasure of History." *Third World Quarterly* 38 (7): 1674–1689.

Davies, Thom. 2019. "Slow violence and toxic geographies: 'Out of sight' to whom?'" *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space*. doi: 10.1177/2399654419841063.

Della Porta, Donatella. 2018. "Contentious Moves: Mobilising for Refugees' Rights." In *Solidarity Mobilizations in the "Refugee Crisis": Contentious Moves*, ed. Donatella della Porta, 1–38. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Doidge, Mark, and Elisa Sandri. 2019. "'Friends That Last a Lifetime': The Importance of Emotions amongst Volunteers Working with Refugees in Calais." *The British Journal of Sociology* 70 (2): 463–480.

Fassin, Didier. 2011. *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Feischmidt, Margit, Ludger Pries, and Celine Cantat. 2019. *Refugee Protection and Civil Society in Europe*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Feldman, Ilana. 2007. "The Quaker way: Ethical labor and humanitarian relief." *American Ethnologist* 34(4), 689–705.

Feldman, Ilana, and Miriam Ticktin, eds. 2010. *In the Name of Humanity? The Government of Threat and Care*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

García Agustín, Óscar, and Martin Bak Jørgensen. 2019. "Solidarity Cities and Cosmopolitanism from Below: Barcelona as a Refugee City." *Social Inclusion* 7 (2): 198–207.

Gast, Melanie Jones, and Dina G. Okamoto. 2016. "Moral or Civic Ties? Deservingness and Engagement among Undocumented Latinas in Non-Profit Organisations." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42 (12): 2013–2030.

Goodfellow, Maya. 2020. *Hostile Environment: How Immigrants Became Scapegoats*. London: Verso.

Holmes, Seth M., and Heide Castañeda. 2016. "Representing the 'European Refugee Crisis' in Germany and Beyond: Deservingness and Difference, Life and Death." *American Ethnologist* 43 (1): 12–24.

Karakayali, Serhat. 2017. "Feeling the Scope of Solidarity: The Role of Emotions for Volunteers Supporting Refugees in Germany." *Social Inclusion* 5 (3): 7–16.

Laszczkowski, Mateusz, and Madeleine Reeves. 2015. "Introduction: Affective States: Entanglements, Suspensions, Suspicions." *Social Analysis* 59 (4): 1–14.

Mayblin, Lucy. 2017. *Asylum after Empire: Colonial Legacies in the Politics of Asylum Seeking*. Washington, DC: Rowman & Littlefield.

Mayblin, Lucy, Mustafa Wake, and Mohsen Kazemi. (2020) "Necropolitics and the slow violence of the everyday: Asylum seeker welfare in the postcolonial present." *Sociology* 54 (1): 107–123.

Nixon, Rob. 2011. *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Nyers, Peter, and Kim Rygiel. 2012. *Citizenship, Migrant Activism and the Politics of Movement*. London: Routledge.

Paik, A. Naomi. 2020. *Bans, Walls, Raids, Sanctuary: Understanding US Immigration for the Twenty-First Century*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Pallister-Wilkins, Polly. 2020. "Hotspots and the Geographies of Humanitarianism." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 38 (6): 991–1008.

Rozakou, Katerina. 2016. "Socialities of Solidarity: Revisiting the Gift Taboo in Times of Crises." *Social Anthropology* 24 (2): 185–199.

Sales, Rosemary. 2002. "The Deserving and the Undeserving? Refugees, Asylum Seekers and Welfare in Britain." *Critical Social Policy* 22 (3): 456–478.

Sandri, Elisa. 2018. "'Volunteer Humanitarianism': Volunteers and Humanitarian Aid in the Jungle Refugee Camp of Calais." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44 (1): 65–80.

Shachar, Itamar Y, Johan von Essen, and Lesley Hustinx. 2019. "Opening up the 'Black Box' of 'Volunteering': On Hybridization and Purification in Volunteering Research and Promotion." *Administrative Theory & Praxis* 41 (3): 245–265.

Sirriyeh, Ala. 2018. *The Politics of Compassion: Immigration and Asylum Policy*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Stavinoha, Luděk, and Kavita Ramakrishnan. 2020. "Beyond Humanitarian Logics: Volunteer-Refugee Encounters in Chios and Paris." *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development* 11 (2): 165–186.

Steinhilper, Elias. 2018. "Mobilizing in Transnational Contentious Spaces: Linking Relations, Emotions and Space in Migrant Activism." *Social Movement Studies* 17 (5): 574–591.

Ticktin, Miriam. 2014. "Transnational Humanitarianism." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43 (1): 273–289.

Vandevoordt, Robin, and Gert Verschraegen. 2019. "The European Refugee Controversy: Civil Solidarity, Cultural Imaginaries and Political Change." *Social Inclusion* 7 (2): 48–52.

Williams, Raymond, and Michael Orrom. 1954. *Preface to Film*. London: Film Drama.

Yarris, Kristin, and Heide Castañeda. 2015. "Special Issue: Discourses of Displacement and Deservingness: Interrogating Distinctions between 'Economic' and 'Forced' Migration: Introduction." *International Migration* 53 (3): 64–69.

Yin, Robert K. 2017. *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods*. London: Sage.