

Migration: Neoliberalism, Migration, and Labor Exploitation

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The subjects of neoliberalism, migration, and labor exploitation stand at the forefront of political, economic, and human rights concerns. Wendy Brown's "American Nightmare" and Harsha Walia's *Border and Rule* offer distinct perspectives on the contemporary debate of these issues, specifically the role of neoliberalism as the root of "nightmarish" immigration policy.

Wendy Brown's "American Nightmare" is primarily concerned with the internal dynamics of the United States. It delves deep into the repercussions of neoliberalism and neo-conservatism on the nation's democratization process. Brown scrutinizes the privatization of public services, a quintessential facet of neoliberal policies, which has eroded public institutions and the welfare state. The outsourcing of governmental functions to private entities, as Brown points out, signifies a profound shift from a citizenship-based model to a consumer-based one. Additionally, Brown underscores how neoliberal economic policies exacerbate economic disparities, as evidenced by tax reductions benefiting the affluent and perpetuating wealth concentration in the hands of near-oligarchy levels. However, Brown suggests the juxtaposing governmental philosophy of neoconservatism often plays into the hands of neoliberal policy (pg. 698). This dangerous intersection enables neoliberal economic policy to gain clear support from a conservative government - edging towards the de-democratization of the state and destruction of individualism (e.g., the reclamation and privatization of the commons, as discussed in section) (pg. 700).

Conversely, Harsha Walia's *Border and Rule* offers a global outlook, surveying individual nations to dissect migration policy, border enforcement, and labor exploitation across diverse countries. Walia's focus centers on the

concept of “temporary labor migration:” the migration of workers seeking higher pay and better living conditions supported by employment-tied sponsorship and visas. Notable instances include Ghanaian farmworkers subjected to substandard housing and meager wages and devoid of labor rights in Italy (ch. 7) and the discriminatory treatment of migrant domestic workers in the Middle East, under the Kafala system, grappling with harsh working conditions and minimal legal safeguards (ch. 8). These case studies serve as saddening reminders of the precarious situation of temporary labor migrants and illuminate the instrumental role of neoliberalism in perpetuating their exploitation through corporate visa sponsorship, rights exclusivity to citizens, and the perpetuation of cultural assimilation as the standard for migrant workers to thrive.

A comparative analysis of these two texts exposes their distinct yet comparable approaches. Brown's inward-looking examination, replete with American-centric examples, accentuates the erosion of public institutions and wealth concentration within the United States attributable to the intersection of neoliberal corporate lobbying and a neoconservationist government. Walia's global perspective, on the other hand, focused on the diverse depictions of the exploitation of temporary labor migrants by corporate and governmental systems (e.g., the Kafala system), underscores the ramifications of neoliberalism and immigration policies (as she terms “border imperialism”) on an international scale. Yet, today, we can credit each of the argumentative points originating, or at least salient, in many countries worldwide. Walia's discussion of the Kafala system is hardly unique to the Gulf states; similar policies can be seen even in the United States as the caps of F1 and H1 visas are raised, and the residency of immigrant workers is determined by employment-sponsored “citizenship” (in the natural sense). Correspondingly, Brown's enforcement of a perilous intersection of neoliberalism and neoconservatism is most evidently seen in communist

states and their influence - take China, for example. China's government-sanctioned corporations have devastated the housing market and the availability of shelter, a human right, to millions due to policies incentivizing mortgage payments before the construction of the apartments. These are only a microcosm of the globally relatable examples, but nevertheless highlight neoliberal policy's rising interconnectedness and ubiquity.

Wendy Brown's "American Nightmare" and Harsha Walia's *Border and Rule* provide invaluable insights into the nexus of neoliberalism, migration, and labor exploitation. These works cast light on the palpable consequences of these issues by relying on ongoing contemporary examples. Whether through dismantling public institutions within the United States or exploiting temporary labor migrants globally, these two texts significantly enrich our understanding of the diverse challenges confronting our 21st-century society.