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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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A community psychology for migrant justice: Critically examining border violence and resistance during the COVID-19 syndemic

Francesca Esposito[1,2] | **Dora Rebelo**[3] | **Moshood Olanrewaju**[4] | **Megan Vine**[5] | **Maria Fernandes-Jesus**[6] | **Debi Bodden**[7] | **Aminata Kalokoh**[8] | **Bradley Olson**[4]

[1]School of Social Sciences, University of Westminster, London, United Kingdom

[2]Instituto de Ciências Sociais da Universidade de Lisboa, Lisbon, Portugal

[3]CIS-Iscte, University Institute of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal

[4]School of Psychology and Behavioral Sciences, National Louis University, Chicago, Illinois, United States

[5]Department of Psychology, University of Limerick, Ireland

[6]School of Education, Language and Psychology, York St John University, York, United Kingdom

[7]School of Social Work, University of British Columbia, Okanagan Campus, Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada

[8]Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees (AVID), Nottingham, UK

Correspondence
Dora Rebelo, CIS-Iscte, University Institute of Lisbon, Lisbon, Portugal.
Email: dhroo@iscte-iul.pt

Abstract

This article explores the magnifying lenses of the COVID-19 *syndemic* to highlight how people racialized as migrants and refugees have been—and continue to be—disproportionally harmed. We use empirical evidence collected in our scholarly/activist work in Europe, Africa, South Asia, and the United States to examine migrant injustice as being produced by a combination of power structures and relations working to maintain colonial global orders and inequalities. This is what has been defined as "border imperialism." Our data, complemented by evidence from transnational solidarity groups, show that border imperialism has further intersected with the hygienic-sanitary logics of social control at play during the COVID-19 period. This intersection has resulted in increasingly coercive methods of restraining people on the move, as well as in increased—and new—forms of degradation of their lives, that is, an overall multiplication of border violences. At the same time, however, COVID-19 has provided a unique opportunity for grassroot solidarity initiatives and resistance led by people on the move to be amplified and extended. We conclude by emphasizing the need for community psychologists to take a more vigorous stance against oppressive border imperialist regimes and the related forms of violence they re/enact.

KEYWORDS

border imperialism, border violence, community psychology for migrant justice, COVID-19 syndemic, no border solidarity and resistance

Highlights

- People on the move have been, and continue to be, disproportionally harmed by the COVID-19 syndemic.
- Migrant injustice is produced by a global system of border imperialism.
- The COVID-19 syndemic has worked as a multiplier of border violences.
- The COVID-19 has been a driver of grassroots solidarity and resistance led by people on the move.
- Community psychologists need to take a more vigorous stance against border imperialist regimes.

INTRODUCTION

For many months, COVID-19 has cast a shadow on our daily lives—and still continues to do so. COVID-19 has placed several unprecedented challenges at the health, economic, social, and political levels (Engler et al., 2021; Kurlantzick, 2021; Poudel & Subedi, 2020). During this period, the statement "we are all in this together" was repeatedly circulated in consumer culture and health campaigns (Sobande, 2020), thus creating the sense that we

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were all being affected equally by the virus. However, as many have argued, we were—and are—not all in the "same boat" (e.g., Crenshaw, 2020; Esposito, Giuliani, et al., 2022; Nolan, 2021; Quantin & Tubert-Bitter, 2022; Sitrin & Sembrar, 2020). COVID-19, in fact, has exposed and exacerbated long-standing social inequalities based on race, gender, class, and citizenship, among other structural factors (e.g., Mengesha et al., 2022; Obinna, 2021; Riou et al., 2021). These factors intersect with health-related stigma and inequality, disproportionately affecting racialized people, as well as other historically marginalized communities (O'Connor et al., 2020; Pareek et al., 2020; Triandafyllidou, 2022).

It is based on these considerations that in this article, we understand COVID-19 as a *syndemic*, rather than a pandemic. First introduced by anthropologist M. Singer (1994), the term *syndemic* appropriately reflects the multi-intersectionality among biologic-health conditions and pre-existing and persisting structural-societal inequalities and harms. An extensive literature has been developed over the years on syndemics (e.g., Mendenhall et al., 2017; M. Singer & Clair, 2003; Willen et al., 2017; Workman, 2021), and more recently this notion has been applied to COVID-19 by scholars who called for a more nuanced and systemic approach centered on social justice (e.g., Horton, 2020; Irons, 2020; Mendenhall et al., 2022).

Looking at this syndemic period as a case study it is evident, for instance, how governments have used COVID-19 as an "excuse" (Stierl & Dadusc, 2021) to further disenfranchise people at the margins of our societies, including people on the move, and curtail their already limited access to resources, opportunities and protections (e.g., Parolin & Lee, 2022).

Most countries, in particular, appear to have taken advantage of COVID-19 to push forms of border violence, racist policing, and hostile environment policies against racialized communities to new extremes, or, in Ruth Gilmore's (2007) terms, to multiply the forms of organized abandonment and organized violence to which these latter are subject. Significant examples of this trend are the increased recourse to illegal pushbacks[1] in the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas (Watch the Med Alarm Phone, 2021); the deployment of armed militias across the Balkan route (Border Violence Monitoring Network, 2021); and the placement of people seeking refuge in unsafe accommodations, with limited access to information, support networks, and healthcare protections (Briozzo et al., 2021; Santinho et al., 2020). Overall, as many have highlighted (e.g., Guild, 2020), unprecedented border control measures have become acceptable under the hygienic-sanitary emergency logic of the COVID-19 syndemic (Tazzioli, 2020; Tazzioli & Stierl, 2021b), and people on the move have been portrayed not only as "criminals" or "illegal crossers" but also as "potentially infected bodies" and a "threat" to public health (Stierl & Dadusc, 2021; Tazzioli, 2020; Tazzioli & Stierl, 2021b).

In light of this critical evidence, in this article, we examine border violence in the context of the COVID-19 syndemic, as well as the various and creative forms of solidarity and resistance that have sprung in this period to address and counter it. According to Reece Jones (2017), we define border violence as a combination of different forms of *visible* and *invisible* uses of violence and/or power, "against individuals, groups, communities and the environment, resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (Jones, 2017, p. 27). Jones argues that overt forms of violence, such as bodily violence, are only one facet of the violence that borders inflict on people. Borders, in fact, are part of a wider system of systematic racialized violence which is "built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances" (Galtung, 1969, p. 171). A specific instance in which the racialized structural violence of borders reveals itself, as others have pointed out (e.g., Nāre, 2020), is in the violent outcomes of bureaucratic processes. This violence, "administered through processes of decision-making, paperwork, knowledge production, inaction, and exclusion' (Eldridge & Reinke, 2018, p. 95), has been defined as "bureaucratic violence" (e.g., Eldridge & Reinke, 2018; Nāre, 2020). Other more subtle and invisibilized—but also systematic—forms of border violence encompass the insidious effects of what has been defined as "slow violence" (Mayblin et al., 2020; Nixon, 2011), that is, "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all" (Nixon, 2011, p. 2). An example of slow violence is the harm—which persists in time and expands over space—inflicted on illegalized people through the constant threat of deportation, an existential condition described as "deportability" (Horsti & Pirkkalainen, 2021; on deportability see De Genova, 2002). Overall, all these forms of violence, through their entangled operation, produce the effect of increasing the vulnerability of people racialized as migrants and refugees to premature death.

Stemming from Jones' definition, our transnational analysis is based on a collective process of critical discussion of the empirical evidence we collected during our work as activists/researchers in Europe (Italy, Ireland, Portugal, and the United Kingdom), Africa (Nigeria), South Asia (Bangladesh), and the United States. We have also all been involved in learning from the knowledge produced by many solidarity groups engaged in the fight for no borders and migrant justice.

Notably, to speak about our protagonists, we decided in this paper to use the terms "people racialized as migrants

[1]Pushback is a term that refers to a set of state measures by which people on the move are forced out of a nation-state territory—generally immediately after they entered it—without consideration of their circumstances and without any possibility to apply for asylum or put forward arguments against the measures taken. Pushbacks violate—among other international laws and safeguards—the prohibition of collective expulsions stipulated in the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

and refugees" or "people on the move," and to use those terms interchangeably. In both cases, we refer to a heterogeneous group of people who are affected, albeit sometimes in different ways, from the violence of borders. This includes people who are still "on the move," people who are detained and people who recently arrived in new countries. It also includes people who have been living in Western countries for several years, or at times were even born there[2], and yet are still racialized as "migrants." Borders in fact, as Walia reminds us, "are not fixed or static lines; they are productive regimes concurrently generated by and producing social relations of dominance" (2021, p. 6). Overall, borders are part of historic and contemporary power relations, including colonial/neocolonial exploitation of land, people, and labor; property relations; capitalist trade agreements; war and climate change.

In line with critical migration and border scholarship (e.g., Jones, 2017; Sharma, 2020; Stierl, 2019; Walia, 2021), as well as claims by people targeted by border violence, we intentionally reject the arbitrary distinctions between migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees reiterated in much scholarship in this field—a distinction which, by reproducing hierarchies of "worthiness" and "deservingness," is divisive and hinders the possibility of creating political solidarity between people sharing common experiences of oppression (Paynter, 2022; Ravn et al., 2020). Notwithstanding their different experiences, desires, and backgrounds, we instead acknowledge that what all of these people have in common is that they are constantly threatened by the risk of being made illegal by states through immigration laws and regulations. These latter, and the overall border regime in its various ramifications, have the effect of exposing people on the move to a condition of "illegalization" and "deportability" (De Genova, 2002), which allows for their disenfranchisement, exploitation, abandonment and incarceration. To the disproportionate distribution of risk and violence to which they are subjected, people affected by border violence nevertheless respond by engaging in daily acts of resistance to sustain their survival and individual/collective struggle (Saunders & Al-Om, 2022). This embodied resistance passes largely through the creation of relationships of mutual support and solidarity from below (Stierl, 2019; Stierl & Tazzioli, 2022). Overall, as Achiume (2019) suggests, migration, as a response to people's diminished capacity to self-determine their lives due to persistent relations of colonial/neocolonial subordination, is in itself a decolonial act.

As critical community psychologists, we ultimately aim with this paper to contribute to a transformative perspective in our discipline and beyond. A perspective which challenges borders, and their constitutions, and engages with the people and communities at the sharp end of this violent system. We indeed believe that critical community psychology, in dialog with other critical bodies of knowledge, can provide meaningful tools to understand and possibly confront complex agents of oppression (Buckingham et al., 2021). To pursue our goal, the article proceeds in this way. First, we present a theoretical section on the connections between border and colonial/neocolonial regimes of exploitation through the lens of border imperialism. This section is followed by an empirical-grounded analysis of what happened during the COVID-19 syndemic, organized around two overarching themes: (1) COVID-19 as a multiplier of border violences; and (2) COVID-19 as a driver of grassroot solidarity and resistance. Finally, in the conclusive remarks, we discuss how community psychologists can contribute to tackling oppressive and multiplying border regimes and propose steps to radically transform our discipline's approach to address these urgent challenges.

LOOKING AT THE COLONIALITY OF BORDERS THROUGH THE LENS OF BORDER IMPERIALISM

A key analytical framework we adopt in this paper, and use to critically engage with our empirical material, is the one of border imperialism. Border imperialism, a concept developed by the activist scholar Walia (2013, 2021), is meant to highlight the links between colonial/neocolonial regimes and neoliberal practices of exploitation, criminalization, and abandonment of people racialized as migrants and refugees. Border imperialism does not look at borders as static divisions between territories, but rather as a set of relationships of power that we are all enmeshed in, one way or another, according to where we are born, our identities and socio-political locations. Border imperialism, according to Walia (2013), ultimately involves both a material and an intersubjective experience, by which the violences and precarities of displacement and migration are created as well as maintained.

In this paper, and in line with the overall focus of this special issue, we use this analytical lens to underline the coloniality of contemporary border regimes. Borders, indeed, are one of the visible tentacles of a system of racial capitalism (Robinson, 1983)—which encompass racialized exploitation and capital accumulation, and whose combined evolution produced "the modern world system, through slavery, colonialism, and genocide" (Laster Pirtle, 2020, p. 504). Borders enforce people's relationships with nation-states and national economies, purposefully rendering those who are racialized as migrants and refugees more vulnerable to exploitative, abusive and dehumanizing conditions (Gahman & Hjalmarson, 2019). Overall, as recently noted by Rigo (2022), borders impose coercive regimes on the reproduction of the life of specific groups.

[2]We are referring here to countries where citizenship law is based on the principle of *ius sanguini* (right of blood) rather than the *ius soli* (right of soil)—for example, Italy, Portugal, and the United Kingdom.

Based on this evidence, there is a responsibility for community psychologists to engage with this critical evidence and center, in their work and analyses, the continuity between past and current regimes of exploitation of people' lives, lands and labor. In other words, to center the coloniality of borders, which is part, and probably the latest mutation, of a historically long-standing effort to govern and manage "racialized others" and produce racialized segmentations in White-dominated societies (Kalir, 2019). That is why, we argue, "imperial algorithms"—reflecting coloniality in action—are critical for understanding the experiences of people on the move and racialized as migrants and refugees, the nature and effects of dehumanizing border regimes affecting them, but also the solidarity, resistance and radical imagination mobilized in response.

We argue that the COVID-19 syndemic was another historical moment that rendered particularly clearly how imperial algorithms are translated into practices. COVID-19 was only declared a "global pandemic" once serious consequences and disruptions were experienced in the wealthy global North. The rapid and unpredictable health outcomes amongst historically privileged socio-political groups led to the declaration of a "global health crisis." Despite significant variations in planning, implementation, and effectiveness, COVID-19 mitigation responses mobilized in different contexts were largely based on remarkably uniform discourses of economic harm and recovery (Kumar & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2020). These discourses express the preoccupation with "going back to a normal world," which translates to usual productivity, profit, consumption, leisure, and mobility for privileged few. Central to these narratives is the figure of the "economically productive, socially desirable citizen," while, at the same time, marginalized others are systematically neglected and disenfranchised. This is clearly reflected in the experiences of people racialized as migrants and refugees, presented in the next sections. Their experiences unveil a systematic regime of violent border-making, deeming people on the move as undesirable and hence disposable.

OUR METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

All coauthors of this collective paper are engaged in critical projects and actions addressing border violence, as well as in settings, groups, and movements which center migrant justice and solidarity and work toward amplifying the voices and struggles of those at the sharp end of violent border regimes. We are activists/organizers, researchers, and/or community practitioners who have experiences in Europe (Italy, Ireland, Portugal, and the United Kingdom), Africa (Nigeria), South Asia (Bangladesh), and the United States. Some of us also have a direct experience of the violence of borders, and we are using this experience as a ground to advance transformative changes. While our individual work goes back much further, we have been in consistent collaboration for approximately 4 years, communicating on WhatsApp and through regular face-to-face meetings, in which we critically reflect on our work and experiences. Collective forums of discussion, including conferences, have been an opportunity to cement the common views which inform this article.

In our daily work, we attempt to expose the forms and mechanisms of border violence, which intersect with racialized, gendered and class-based power systems, and to support the struggles of affected communities, by amplifying their accounts of individual and collective resistance and solidarity. For us, the idea of radicality, at the core of our activist-scholar praxis, is inspired by Angela Davis' conception that "radical simply means grasping at the roots" (Davis, 1989, p. 29).

Our methodology in this article relies on the critical analysis of the empirical evidence and accounts we collected in our respective contexts of engagement, in articulation with critical scholarship and evidence produced by transnational solidarity groups working for no borders and migrant justice. In particular, we look at transnational continuities and discontinuities within our data, simultaneously acknowledging the significance of local contexts and the role of global geopolitical orders. In doing so, we aim to challenge the tendency of much scholarship in this field to rely on "methodological nationalism," which has been defined as the assumption that "the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world" (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002, p. 302). Although we are aware that our analysis is partial in its scope (being mainly based in UK, US and European contexts), and that much more research is needed looking at other border zones, this methodological choice, we argue, is scientifically rigorous and much needed. We indeed believe that the "imperial algorithm," the underlying theme of this special issue, speaks to the urgency for traditional scholarly norms—including the naturalization of the nation-state—to be disrupted. Our academic communities can grow by unlearning some of the persistence of these well-grooved patterns of our positivistic and colonial-derived approaches to knowledge production (Boonzaier & van Niekerk, 2019). In short, this transnational critical analysis of border violence and resistance during the COVID-19 syndemic, which is far from global in scope and rejects any universalistic interpretation, is intended to disrupt the traditional way in which the process of creating and publishing knowledge is conceived, interrogating—and creating friction against—hegemonic academic norms and practices.

COVID-19 AS A MULTIPLIER OF BORDER VIOLENCES

Reflections on the past 2 years and a half highlight how the people most affected by structural and systemic inequalities have been made even more vulnerable in COVID-19 times, with racialized communities and people on the move being included in this group.

For instance, a WHO survey involving 30,000 people racialized as migrants and refugees indicated that the syndemic significantly worsened these participants' living and working conditions (WHO, 2020). Among other impacts, COVID-19 increased their experiences of perceived racism and discrimination and levels of psychological distress. These communities, who have often avoided seeking medical care in case of (suspected) COVID-19 infection (e.g., Patients Not Passports Medact Migrants Organise and the New Economics Foundation, 2020), have stressed the lack of financial means, fear of deportation, lack of availability of healthcare providers and/or uncertain entitlement to healthcare as the reasons for not seeking medical support in this difficult period (WHO, 2020).

Additionally, people racialized as migrants and refugees are more likely to live in extended cohabiting families, substandard accommodations, and overcrowded dwellings (OECD, 2020); and these unsafe housing conditions are evidently intertwined with how they have been affected by COVID-19. Particularly those living in extremely precarious housing conditions—for example, on the street, in insecure accommodation, in reception centers or in refugee camps—have reported a lack of access to information on the virus and a higher risk of developing mental health challenges (Irish Refugee Council, 2020; Mfaco, 2020; WHO, 2020). An early report on the COVID-19 impact on housing highlighted how the imposed lockdown measures (e.g., shelter and social distancing) were affecting housing rights and struggles, deepening pre-existing housing inequalities and exposing the lack of governments' response to housing issues (Accornero et al., 2020).

It is finally worth noting that while most countries have closed their borders to ostensibly curb the spread of COVID-19, at the same time, governments have encouraged the entry of specific groups, considered strategic for national purposes, for example, healthcare and seasonal workers to be employed in the agro-industrial sector (Sharifah & Rawson, 2020). These subjects, in fact, are those deemed "desirable" in syndemic times, as they allow for the maintenance of the racial capitalist engine of Western societies by putting their (disposable) lives at risk. Conversely, many racialized people and communities who do not fit into these standards of productivity have increasingly been subjected to old—and new, often worse—forms of border violence, including migration-related incarceration.

Racialized stigma and symbolic annihilation in the public discourse

Despite the multiple intersecting factors exacerbating the effects of COVID-19 on people racialized as migrants and refugees, in the mainstream media discourse racial categories have been essentialized and racial inequalities largely ignored (Georgiou & Khan, 2021). In doing so, media platforms have supported the idea that non-White groups are somehow genetically inferior and, therefore, inherently more susceptible to the virus (Yearby, 2020, 2021). The consequence of this narrative is that people on the move have often been portrayed as "carriers" or "vectors of disease" and thus blamed for the spread of COVID-19 in our communities (Lucifora, 2021; Molenaar & Van Praag, 2022).

An illustrative example of this phenomenon, documented by Francesca, is when the UK Home Secretary Priti Patel blamed people on the move confined inside Napier barracks, in Kent (UK), for a COVID-19 outbreak inside this overcrowded ex-military site; despite few or no resources for physical distancing or sanitation had been provided (Williams, 2021). Newspapers reported that in a session before the Home Affairs Committee, Patel commented that: "within contingency accommodation, initial accommodation for asylum seekers, people do mingle"; "People were also not following the rules, and that we also have to bear in mind that COVID being as contagious as it is spreads" (Tolhurst, 2021).

This pattern of stigma and blame was repeated in other contexts (Mfaco, 2020; Murphy, 2021) and served to construct people on the move and racialized communities as scapegoats for the COVID-19 syndemic while obscuring the structural racism and violence against them. Stigmatization, as Link and Phelan (2014) explain, is a process which works to dominate and exploit others by "keeping them down" and gaining status for the dominant group, that is, those who stigmatize. This process devalues and disempowers people and communities and affects their ability to self-organize and improve their conditions (Link & Phelan, 2014). Intersecting health, immigration status and racialized stigma during the COVID-19 syndemic contributed to the proliferation of hate speech and direct attacks against people racialized as migrants and refugees, particularly against those with precarious immigration status (Vega Macías, 2021). Blatant racism toward people of Asian and Pacific Islander (AAPI) descent, for example, increased dramatically in the United States during 2020, no doubt fueled by the then President's rhetoric about the "Chinese virus" (Gover et al., 2020; Lee & Kim, 2022; Yellow Horse et al., 2021). This tragic situation contributed to "unique mental health disparities and the presence of race-based trauma among AAPIs residing in the United States" (Litam, 2020, p. 1).

In Ireland, a grassroots movement of asylum seekers (Mfaco, 2020) followed by Megan was able to document how a COVID-19 cluster in a town called Caherciveen was traced by the Health Protection Surveillance Center (operated by the Irish Department of Public Health) to people on the move. These latter were then transferred from a highly congregated emergency accommodation setting to a Direct Provision (DP) center, which was a converted B&B located in a small Irish town. Local residents directly associated the displaced group with infection, causing them to be confined to their accommodation and deeply stigmatized by the community. In a report published by the Irish Refugee Council, one participant reported: "I do not want to send my child to school here. We had a bad experience while the community rejected us, saying 'covid people'. [Threw us] out of the supermarket and told us not to come out of the building. It's a stigma on us to continue here" (Irish Refugee Council, 2020, p. 38).

Symbolic annihilation (Gerbner & Gross, 1976) is another means of "keeping people down" and refers to the strategic absence of marginalized groups from news media. Syrian refugees, for instance, were one of the most structurally vulnerable and least protected groups during the COVID-19 syndemic in Turkey. Nevertheless, the news media mostly ignored their plight, and focused on the need for more secure Turkish immigration policies (Yücel, 2021). Such erasure can be found in various other contexts, such as in the media portrayal of African asylum seekers in Israel (Shomron, 2021), another illustrative example of how mainstream media in this period further hindered the safety of people on the move.

Structural racism and degradation through unsafe housing and containment

Essential public health advice to contain the spread of COVID-19 was primarily based on "stay at home" orders, isolation of the sick, and physical distancing. As essential as they are, these protocols tend to overlook the fact that many people racialized as migrants and refugees lack the resources to protect themselves adequately from COVID-19 due to the structural, bureaucratic, and slow violence they endure. This includes unsafe living conditions, inadequate and overcrowded accommodations, lack of access to healthcare and other community resources, and systematic exposure to detention and deportation. The harsh conditions people on the move normally experience have made them more vulnerable to COVID-related illness and death than the general population (Public Health England, 2020). Due to structural disparities, such outcomes only reinforce the effects of stigma discussed above while also further normalizing the marginalization and violence to which this group of people is subject (Dutta et al., 2016).

In 2020, as people across the world were retreating into their homes to avoid the spread of COVID-19, people living in refugee camps and detention centers found themselves in far more precarious situations, unable to protect themselves and follow public health guidelines (E. K. Singer et al., 2022). Overcrowding and lack of access to healthcare are common problems in these settings (Community Action Group, 2020), with large numbers of people living in close quarters. As Dora and solidarity/activist groups from across Europe were able to document, in Moria refugee camp, in Greece, due to a possible COVID-19 outbreak within the camp in the latter half of 2020, the approximately 12,500 people living there were subjected to a "strict, cruel lockdown" (Community Action Group, 2020; Médecins Sans Frontières, 2020a) imposed by the Greek authorities. This, combined with a lack of healthcare and available support, has led to repeated calls for evacuation by human rights groups (Community Action Group, 2020; Médecins Sans Frontières, 2020b). Camp residents' mental and physical health deteriorated drastically, culminating in protests and the fire which destroyed the shelters of 12,000 residents and caused the evacuation of the site (Community Action Group, 2020; Gatopoulous, 2020).

In other European countries, governments used private contractors to "accommodate" people on the move seeking sanctuary in hotels, hostels, and even army barracks (Grayson, 2020). Many living in these settings have experienced overcrowding, lack of access to healthcare and information, poor quality food, and inability to distance themselves physically, thus being exposed to a greater risk of contracting COVID-19. Control and surveillance of residents were also expanded, with some hotels in London enforcing a 23-h curfew, amounting to "false imprisonment" (Taylor, 2021). For people who may have already experienced traumatic journeys, violence, torture, and state-sponsored violence, including detention and other forms of incarceration, being confined within institutional, 'prison-like' settings can be deeply re-traumatizing (Williams, 2021). As mentioned earlier, right after the first wave of COVID-19, in September 2020, the UK government reopened Penally and Napier barracks, former army sites, to serve as congregated accommodations for single asylum-seeking men. Francesca closely followed these developments by participating in local solidarity demonstrations in front of the Napier barracks and keeping contact with people confined therein.

The approximately 665 people initially transferred to these facilities were squeezed into dormitories of up to 30 people, forced to sleep in bunk beds separated by sheets and share bathroom facilities. As a result of this harsh scenario, in mid-January, a major outbreak of COVID-19 infections took place at Napier barracks, with nearly 200 people testing positive. Although the conditions inside Napier and Penally military sites were particularly harsh, evidence of unsafe conditions and COVID-19 outbreaks were also collected in some of the hotel accommodations used in this period to house people on

the move across the United Kingdom. For example, in the Crowne Plaza Hotel, near Heathrow Airport, more than 400 people were accommodated regardless of public health guidelines. Consequently, when Francesca went there to visit a friend, she found garbage all around the site. As a man also reported to a local newspaper: "It is not a good system—people are too close together." Another resident added: "After 3 months here in this hotel I feel like I am going crazy" (Powell, 2021).

Ireland has also been using hotels, hostels and B&Bs to house people on the move seeking sanctuary through the DP system since 2000, creating a perfect storm of conditions for the transmission of COVID-19. People in DP met by Megan over the years of her research and activism have reported a lack of access to sanitation, overcrowding, and sharing rooms with nonfamily members during the COVID-19 syndemic, making them feel unsafe. A resident of DP interviewed by the Irish Refugee Council explained the situation like this: "Overcrowded room. 12 people in a room and no ventilation. Roommates were coughing badly and possible infections. In fact, I caught [an] infection from those coughing" (Irish Refugee Council, 2020, p. 19). In response to the public health advice that nonfamily members should not share sleeping spaces, the Irish Department of Justice argued that the 1700 nonfamily members sharing rooms in DP could be defined as "households" instead of moving people out of the rooms (Irish Refugee Council, 2020). Across Ireland, activist and advocacy groups widely criticized the situation and campaigned to move people out of congregated DP and into "own door" accommodation, where people could adequately protect themselves (Mfaco, 2020). Residents of some centers were eventually moved out to other locations to avoid overcrowding, only to experience the same or worse conditions in the new sites, although "own door" accommodation was provided temporarily for a minority (Gusciute, 2020; Irish Refugee Council, 2020).

In Portugal, people racialized as migrants and asylum seekers were also housed in overcrowded hostels and military camps during the syndemic (Santinho et al., 2020). On April 2020, Portuguese media broadcasted the alarming news that out of 181 people residing in a city hostel, 138 tested positive for COVID-19 (Pereirinha et al., 2020). The hostel was evacuated for sanitization, and all residents, regardless of their test results, were brought into a military base to quarantine, guarded 24/7 by armed soldiers (Santinho et al., 2020). This event brought into light a reality that has been denounced many times before by refugee-led solidarity groups (Fórum Refúgio, 2020; Rebelo et al., 2020), but is systematically unaccounted for by state authorities. Portugal has effectively managed to keep the spotlight on its progressive migration policies, embedded into a hegemonic narrative of "institutional good practices" and to avoid recognition of the violence of its border regime (Santinho et al., 2020). During the COVID-19 syndemic, however, the impact of this violence, embedded in a matrix of longstanding racial inequalities (Braga, 2020; Castelo, 2021; Reis & Oliveira, 2018), has become striking. While more people on the move tested positive for COVID-19, the state strategy was to hastily relocate them to different sites to prevent further media attention on this situation. Nevertheless, on the ground, refugee-led activist groups with whom Dora collaborated continued to raise complaints about the process, including lack of access to information about COVID-19, shortage of food, and unaddressed physical and mental health problems (Santinho et al., 2020).

On one hand, the hostels denounced for unsanitary conditions continued to be used, with the only change of accommodating fewer people. On the other hand, those who were moved to the military base after the 14 days of prescribed quarantine were still waiting for information about their release and unable to access their personal items left at the hostel (including passports and medication). The very symbolism of this forced isolation in a military space, under the direct responsibility of military personnel without any ad-hoc training, made the situation unbearable, particularly for those who had suffered previous experiences of incarceration. Some people were also suspicious of the state's real intentions. A man met by Dora underlined: "Every day a different institutional representative comes, yet no one knows where our stuff is, and no one has answers for us." Protests at the site were dealt with authority and repression, and institutions blamed residents for being "too problematic."

The proliferation and exacerbation of migration-related incarceration

The COVID-19 syndemic has evidently worked as an accelerator of racialized mechanisms of dispossession, violence, and exclusion. Border control, in particular, has been shaped in this period by a hygienic-sanitary logic of social control and justified in the name of both migrants' and citizens' protection. As Tazzioli (2020) argued, currently, "migrants are not seen (only) as subjects 'at risk' nor as 'risky subjects'; rather, they are spatially confined and hampered from getting access to asylum in the name of safety." Tazzioli (2020) defined this shift as the "hygienic-sanitary border," or rather a set of "bordering mechanisms which enact forms of racialized containment predicated upon health and safety." These mechanisms have ultimately strengthened the hierarchies between "citizens" and "noncitizens."

COVID-19 has resulted in countries around the world partially closing their borders, which has largely impeded deportation enforcement; however, in most cases, immigration authorities have continued to detain people even in the absence of a reasonable prospect of deportation and in violation of their right to health

(Esposito, Caja, et al., 2022; Griffiths, 2021). Furthermore, new unofficial forms of detention have started to proliferate (Tazzioli & Stierl, 2021a). Particularly illustrative in this regard is the Italian case where, in early April 2020, so-called quarantine ships were installed to confine people on the move arriving by boat through the Mediterranean Sea (to know more, see, Stierl & Dadusc, 2021; Tazzioli & Stierl, 2021a). Remarkably, even people racialized as migrants and refugees already hosted in accommodation centers on Italy's mainland, including those who had tested positive for COVID-19, were later transferred onto these ships.

The use of quarantine ships, initially conceived as an "emergency measure," continued well beyond the first national lockdown (March–May 2020), becoming a crucial node in the Italian containment industry (Esposito, Giuliani, et al., 2022; Gennari et al., 2021). Indeed, it was only in June 2022, after two and a half years of advocacy by grassroots activist groups and strategic litigation by militant lawyers, that the quarantine ship program was discontinued. Yet, until December 31, 2022, the Italian government has the power to reintroduce them as "an emergency measure to fight the COVID-19 crisis." The Italian Guarantor for the Rights of Persons Detained or Deprived of Liberty (2022) reports that, overall, 35,304 people were confined in quarantine ships in 2021 alone. These latter have experienced highly degrading conditions; tragically, some have even lost their lives (ASGI, 2021; VVAA, 2020).

Francesca closely followed these concerning developments while working with other activists to produce a report on the conditions inside Italian detention centers during the first lockdown (Esposito et al., 2020). From rescue operations at sea, to hotspots, to quarantine ships, a continuum of escalating confinement unfolds. Immigration detention centers are the ultimate node of this containment industry.

During the COVID-19 syndemic, people held at Italian detention centers were left abandoned and exposed to the most precarious living conditions. Overall, the critical trends already identified over the years by activists/scholars engaged in anti-detention work have further intensified during the COVID-19 syndemic. We documented, for instance, the increasing isolation of detained people, who sometimes were not even provided with appropriate information about the virus and personal equipment to protect their health. As reported by a man interviewed by an Italian radio station:

> We are like horses inside the stables, closed. No one is listening to us, no one of those, both the internal bodies here or those outside…No one is looking at us anymore, because this is now a national, international emergency (cit. in Esposito et al., 2020).

This situation has been aggravated by the thickened veil of opacity created around these institutions, resulting particularly from the suspension of visits from relatives and friends as well as from external associations/groups. The limited number of NGOs who have traditionally entered these sites were forced to abruptly interrupt their work, on the basis that this "ensured the protection of those detained." For example, the feminist NGO Befree, which used to provide support to survivors of gendered violence detained in Ponte Galeria, was stopped from visiting the center by Rome Prefecture in March 2020, and their activities were never resumed. In light of this reality, it has become more difficult for activists, solidarity groups, and civil society more broadly, to know what happens behind the gates of these custodial institutions. This situation has also further intensified the proliferation of abuses and violence against detained people. Tragically, in Italy alone, eight people[3] have died in—and from—immigration detention since the COVID-19 outbreak (Accardo et al., 2022).

The racialized growth of containment in the aftermath of the COVID-19 syndemic can also be found in other countries, such as the United Kingdom, where people have been placed in army barracks (Griffiths, 2021). The prison-like design of these sites is evident in the perimeter fences topped with barbed wire and padlocked gates guarded by uniformed security personnel. Following the COVID outbreak, people in Napier barracks were locked inside the camp for a month and threatened with arrest should they try to leave. A man interviewed by Open Democracy reported: "If we go out we will breach the regulations and the police will arrest us and the police are surrounding the area" (Williams, 2021). This measure underscores the hidden detention nature of these sites.

As a result of these unbearable living conditions, reports show many suicide attempts of barrack residents, as well as hunger strikes, protests, and fires to draw attention to their plight (Griffiths, 2021). Following extensive activism and critique, the Penally barracks were eventually closed in March 2021 (ICIBI & HMIP, 2021). Yet, despite a court ruling in June 2021 declaring its usage unlawful due to unsafe conditions, the Napier barracks remain open at the time of writing. Details also continue to emerge about the "disturbing" conditions in this site. Volunteers who tried to access the facility to provide support to the confined men during the syndemic were required to sign confidentiality agreements underpinned by the Official Secrets Act, which is designed to protect state secrets of national security (Grierson, 2020). Such sinister practices echo those of the Australian

[3] Aymen (Aymed) Mekni (a 34-year-old from Tunisia); Vakhtang Enukidze (a 37-year-old from Georgia); Orgest Turia (a 28-year-old, from Albania); Moussa Mamadou Balde (a 23-year-old from Guinea); Wissem Ben Abdel Latif (a 26-year-old from Tunisia); Anani Ezzedine (a 44-year-old from Tunisia); Arshad Jahangir (age unknown, from Pakistan); El Amrani (38-year-old from Morocco).

government's offshore detention centers in Papua New Guinea and Nauru (e.g., Gleeson & Yacoub, 2021). Overall, they are aimed at increasing obscurity and impunity, further isolating and estranging people on the move from outside communities and hindering their access to solidarity/activist networks.

COVID-19 AS A DRIVER OF GRASSROOT SOLIDARITY AND RESISTANCE

Research evidence suggests that cooperation and solidarity increase during disasters, conflicts, emergencies, and other extreme situations (e.g., Beverlein & Sikkink, 2005; Drury et al., 2016; Unanue et al., 2020). Several examples have been reported including the community solidarity that emerged after the events of 9/11 in New York (Beverlein & Sikkink, 2005), after the 2010 earthquake in Chile (Drury et al., 2016), after the 2017 hurricanes Irma and María in Puerto Rico (Unanue et al., 2020), and more recently, at a global scale, during the COVID-19 syndemic (e.g., Al-Mandhari et al., 2020; Black et al., 2020; Sitrin & Sembrar, 2020; Pleyers, 2020).

The so-called "pandemic solidarity" (Sitrin & Sembrar, 2020), which we prefer to rename "syndemic solidarity," expressed itself differently according to time and context, exposing state failures in social welfare (DORAS, 2020; Sahin & Abbas, 2020). In Greece, for example, grassroots solidarity increased in neighborhoods, workplaces, health clinics, hospitals, prisons, and immigration detention centers (Sitrin & Sembrar, 2020). In Turkey, solidarity networks were involved in food delivery initiatives, legal help, mutual aid initiatives, and educational support and awareness initiatives (Özdemir, 2020). In the United Kingdom, more than 4000 mutual aid groups have been created since the first reported case of COVID-19 (Power & Benton, 2021). Millions have purchased and delivered food, collected prescriptions, walked dogs, engaged in community gardening activities, and provided informational, emotional, and material support to the most affected ones (e.g., Fernandes-Jesus et al., 2021; Mao et al., 2021). These mutual aid groups proved to be critical during the syndemic. Too often, though, there has been a lack of heterogeneity of concern, particularly where those of other socioeconomic statuses and racialized backgrounds were neglected (O'Dwyer, 2020). Balogu-Mwangi (2022) claims that a possible explanation of this phenomenon has to do with intergroup empathy, suggesting that racism plays a significant role in the reduced empathy observed by White people toward racialized communities. Additionally, the crucial role played in this period—and not only—by grassroots groups led by people racialized as migrants and refugees has rarely been acknowledged and these collectives have often resisted with little or no support from more visible nonprofits groups as well as from state institutions (Santinho et al., 2020).

Across the different transnational contexts we engaged in, we documented several forms of grassroot solidarity and resistance involving people racialized as migrants and refugees. As Buckingham et al. (2021) point out, it is important for work on migrant justice to consider both the harms produced by oppressive global immigration regimes and the forms of resistance enacted at different levels (e.g., individual, family, collective) and across different settings (e.g., community, faith-based, direct care, workplace, educational, municipal and transnational settings). Overall, as the authors note, resistance can be conceptualized as "the engagement in *any* action that undermines oppressive power structures, regardless of intent or outcome" (Vinthagen & Johansson, 2013, as cited in Buckingham et al., 2021, p. 271). This action can have different targets (e.g., individuals, groups, policies, structures, and systems); purposes (e.g., undermine oppressive power structures or bolster the power of those oppressed); actors involved (individuals, groups or communities); and, it can take different forms (e.g., active or passive, organized or unorganized, overt or covert, ranging from social movements to everyday acts of resistance). Regardless of these characteristics (target, purpose, actors, and forms), resistance "reverberates across ecological levels and is thus simultaneously local, regional, and global" (Mittelman & Chin, 2005, as cited in Buckingham et al., 2021, p. 271).

Below we provide some examples of resistance and grassroot solidarity we came across, and often engaged with, during this syndemic period. Although evidently partial, we believe these accounts can offer critical lessons to boost our radical imagination.

From communities to sites of confinement: Building solidarity and resistance across borders

Portugal refugee-led organizations, such as Fórum Réfugio, with which Dora and Francesca collaborate, worked tirelessly throughout the COVID-19 syndemic to support people on the move seeking sanctuary, providing them with personal protective equipment (PPE) and other essential resources that state authorities did not supply. In addition, a number of antiracist campaigns were set up in the main Portuguese cities, such as the Antiracist Campaign for Immediate Support in the city of Lisbon or the Antiracist Campaign for Immediate Support in the city of Coimbra (Gomes Duarte & Lima, 2020). These initiatives, along with local community organizations, have provided essential solidarity platforms for Black, Roma, and people racialized as migrants and refugees, as well as for families and people in very vulnerable situations. The two antiracist campaigns also jointly promoted an open letter calling for a ban on house evictions during lockdown as well as for

the continued provision of essential services, particularly to marginalized communities living in poor neighborhoods, most of which have a migrant background (Gomes Duarte & Lima, 2020).

During this period, important forms of grassroot solidarity and resistance have also emerged in sites of incarceration, such as prisons and detention centers. Francesca and colleagues have documented the protests in Italian detention centers during the first COVID-19 wave and related national lockdown (Esposito et al., 2020). For instance, in mid-March 2020, a Tunisian woman detained inside Rome Ponte Galeria detention center, one of the largest Italian migration-related detention facilities, swallowed bleach to call the attention of managing authorities that women inside the center did not feel safe (Hurrya, 2020b). Furthermore, from the 25th to the 31st of March 2020, four women, including the one mentioned above, went on a hunger and thirst strike to demand the improvement of their living conditions and the immediate end of their "unsafe" confinement (Hurryia, 2020a). Despite the women's protest having lasted for 6 days, it ended due to the deterioration of their health conditions and, unfortunately, their demands were not accepted (Radio Blackout, 2020).

In other countries, however, the struggles of people incarcerated in migration-related detention centers have caused more transformative impacts. In Spain, for instance, the struggles of the people detained in the CIEs (*Centros de Internamiento de Extranjeros*), supported by external activists and allies, have forced the government in May 2020 to close all detention facilities in mainland Spain and the islands (the situation was different in the two Centers for Temporary Stay of Immigrants located in the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla, where conditions worsened instead, see Ballestros Pena, 2022). Notwithstanding all the limitations associated with this process, and mainly the fact that the closure of detention centers was a temporary measure linked to the COVID-19 outbreak and since September 2020, people have started to be detained again (Muñoz & Vargas, 2020), this was an unprecedented victory. It was indeed the first time that these facilities in Spain have been emptied since their creation (Global Detention Project, 2020). This outcome, above all, demonstrates that it is possible—and not utopian—to end migrant detention and let people move and live in our communities freely.

Grassroot solidarity and resistance in refugee camps in Africa and South Asia

People racialized as migrants and refugees living in camps and reception centers have been engaging in acts of resistance since the very beginning of the COVID-19 syndemic (Europe Must Act & Samos Advocacy Collective, 2021; Stierl & Tazzioli, 2022), for example, by using their phones and social media to advocate for their fundamental rights. Dora participated in a collaborative report based on accounts by people on the move confined in Samos "Closed Control Access Center" in September 2021. Camp residents revealed the impacts of living under constant surveillance, barbed wire fences and almost complete isolation from the local community, and made a call for political action: "We call on leaders to stop portraying closed and controlled centers as the only solution and to offer space for safe and dignified accommodation schemes in urban areas. And we ask leaders to listen to people living in these camps" (Europe Must Act & Samos Advocacy Collective, 2021, p. 6).

Stierl and Tazzioli (2022) described in an Open Democracy *Op-Ed* how people on the move detained in Libya staged a 100-day protest, from October 2021 until January 2022, when Libyan security forces violently ended it. The protest was documented through social media (*Refugees In Libya*), which were also used to visibilize the activists' struggles and their demands for justice. In particular, in their political manifesto, activists demanded protection from abuse and evacuation to safe countries. They declared: "We had no other choice than start organizing ourselves. We raised our voices and the voices of the voiceless refugees who have been constantly silenced. We cannot keep on going silent while no one is advocating for us and our rights." (Refugees in Libya, 2022).

Grassroot networks of community solidarity in this period have been particularly relevant in countries facing multiple challenges, such as COVID-19, structural poverty and climate change. Connected to a long-standing history of colonial and neocolonial exploitation, many African countries struggle with severe environmental challenges, including land degradation, deforestation, biodiversity loss, and climate change consequences. The situation in Nigeria, in particular, where Moshood comes from and where he was engaged in research and activism, is the result of the profound damage inflicted by British colonization and the political elite's continuous exploitation and mismanagement of available resources, made increasingly scarce due to climate change (Fagbule & Fawehinmi, 2021). The consequences include a long-lasting food security crisis, ongoing higher inflation rates affecting the growth of local investment, and a breeding ground for the advancement of the terrorist group known as "Boko Haram" (Eka, 2017). Despite these problems, humanitarian access to Northeast Nigeria, a particularly affected region, has been limited to government-controlled "garrison towns," leaving large swathes of the area and its population unable to access assistance (Pozo Marín & Ben Ali, 2021). These "garrison towns" are also increasingly populated with overcrowded camps for internally displaced people[4], who

[4]According to United Nations Guiding Principles, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border" (UNHCR, 2022, p. 1).

face limited opportunities to meet their basic needs and depend almost entirely on humanitarian aid (Adejoh et al., 2022). COVID-19 has worsened this already dire situation, both in Northeastern Nigeria and in many other African countries.

Due to increased medical trash, such as surgical masks and gloves, filling landfills, sanitation issues have become particularly critical (Deutshe, 2020). At the same time, and as a result of the lockdown measures implemented across the African continent, many humanitarian programs have been interrupted. Local staff was furloughed or put on voluntary unpaid leave, and international staff left. For those left behind, the most vulnerable, the only option remained to form grassroots solidarity networks of support and resistance to deal with the escalated levels of organized violence and organized abandonment (Gilmore, 2007).

South Asia's situation was similarly critical, and the grassroot community response was essential. Data gathered by Moshood suggests, for instance, that when international NGO staff left Bangladesh refugee camps in panic, or contracted the virus and had to self-isolate, residents forged alliances with community-level health workers to provide health and hygiene education in the already overcrowded camps. Moshood accompanied people with medical experience, including refugees with prior training in their countries of origin, when they sprung into action in areas where access to health services and information was challenging. Thanks to these grassroot community solidarity networks, many lives were saved. Some members were sourcing for international donations paid in cryptocurrency to fund local projects. At the same time, others were building local lung ventilators and delivering these and PPE and disinfectant fluids to COVID-19 patients free of charge, cycling or walking to hard-to-reach vulnerable communities.

CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

As we write this paper, the American Psychological Association (APA) published a public "Apology to People of Color for APA's Role in Promoting, Perpetuating, and Failing to Challenge Racism, Racial Discrimination, and Human Hierarchy in US." This apology elaborated on a resolution entitled "Psychology's Role in Dismantling Systemic Racism" (APA, 2021). While we commend this much-needed act, we note that almost no mention is made in the document about border regimes and the systematic racist violence they perpetuate. There is only a timid reference to the "mistreatment and criminalization of undocumented immigrants" and their exclusion from citizenship rights. Encampment, detention, deportation, and other forms of state-sanctioned violence against people racialized as migrants and refugees are overall neglected. This neglect, however, is not new.

We are aware of the enduring history of complicity and collusion between psychology as a discipline and psychological organizations and professionals with oppressive powers. Recently, psychologists have been heavily employed by border control agencies, such as Frontex (the Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union), well-known for their prominent role in enforcing border violence at the European level (Campbell & D'Agostino, 2022). Many of our professional colleagues are also employed in migrant prison-like camps and detention centers, supporting immigration enforcement operations in fundamentally corruptive and dehumanizing settings.

Politicized or critical forms of psychology have historically attempted to merge psychological theory with anticolonial struggles (e.g., Fanon, 1963, 1967), feminist struggles (e.g., Gilligan, 1982), and liberation struggles (e.g., Martín-Baró, 1994). These repeated attempts to open up psychology to a more proactively engaged stance and critical focus have not, unfortunately, always been taken seriously by the mainstream discipline gatekeepers. Such mainstream reactions reveal, more than anything else, how deeply the relations of power are enmeshed in our discipline (Beals et al., 2021). Too often, seemingly 'empowering' projects, including activists, social mobilization, and participation, have fallen short in dismantling power structures and often hindered more transformative forms of change (Kessi, 2019).

In particular, psychology, including community psychology, has yet to find a way to speak to the increasing violence of border regimes (Esposito & Kellezi, 2020). So far, community psychology has also failed to link border violence to long-standing histories of racial-capitalist accumulation and imperial oppression. To more fully connect these dots, we must more seriously begin to question our own discourses and practices and understand when and how they serve to sanitize, normalize, or conceal violence and domination. This means, for instance, that rather than "diagnosing" people racialized as migrants and refugees, as most psychologists currently do (Boochani et al., 2020), we must start better "diagnosing" and exposing the policies, institutions, structures, and power mechanisms which are (directly and indirectly) harming them—which are overall embedded in a border imperialist project.

However, other crucial changes need to occur (see also Esposito & Kellezi, 2020). First, there must be a shift in the language and discourses used by psychologists and in general by all scholars and practitioners who work in this field. *Naming* is a creative act that is both political

and epistemic (Tofighian, 2019). Therefore, a first step for any action envisioning a transformative change is to reject the language of border violence. For instance, the focus on a "migration crisis" shifts the discourse from the needs and experiences of people on the move to the priorities and concerns of wealthy Western countries. This language also effaces the long-lasting imperial projects of exploitation of people, land and labor, which frame individual and collective experiences of cross-border mobility and determine structurally generated vulnerabilities. Another example of how border violence manifests itself through naming is provided by the vocabulary of trauma and vulnerability, so often used by psychologists and health professionals in a very individualized and decontextualized way (disconnected from the structural realities that contour people's lives and determine their suffering/traumatic outcomes). In this light, trauma assessments have become key technologies for re/producing "hierarchies of inclusion and deservingness," and defining the selective and gradual access to protections and rights of those who accept to embody the figure of the "victim to be saved" and "willing to be rehabilitated." Future research on this issue and on how the language of border violence is uncritically adopted or, conversely, rejected by psychologists is particularly crucial.

Second, the implications of de-personalized, belittling, and criminalizing accounts and practices should be better understood and challenged. The symbolic representation of people on the move as "threats" and "vectors" not only creates racial and nationality-based divisions within our communities but also justifies the perpetration of hostile and dehumanizing policies that limit access to rights, resources, and protections for people racialized as migrants and refugees. Community psychologists should promote an alternative vision which stands at odds with such harmful rhetorics, and engage in critical awareness and antihegemonic training to provide students, colleagues, and the general public tools to work as allies in healing justice. They should also commit themselves to imagining radical solidarity initiatives centered on dignity, freedom, and justice for all.

Third, as argued by Boochani et al. (2020, p. 126). This means that community psychologists with the privilege of a secure immigration status can contribute to the formation of spaces and settings dedicated to amplifying the voices and insights of people at the sharp end of the border regime. This is not about mediating their voices, which can ultimately be a way of speaking for them, but rather creating conditions for them to be listened to (which is different from simply being heard), accessing platforms, getting resources (as a form of wealth redistribution), and defining their own agendas in terms of socio-political transformation. Community psychologists should stand alongside these protagonists and offer their power and privilege to build strategies of resistance, solidarity, redistribution, and transformation. In other words, and as pointed out by Buckingham et al. (2021), we should act as "allies, accomplices, and partners" (p. 285), resisting any temptation to consider ourselves "saviors" and to see, on the other hand, people on the move as "passive victims in need."

Overall, we maintain the need for community psychologists to make more vigorous efforts to challenge border violence, to work to abolish (rather than uphold or reform) imperialist border regimes (Walia, 2021), and to transform our discipline. In this process, a key role is played by professional organizations, such as the SCRA or the ECPA, which need to take concrete actions to establish ethical standards and mechanisms of accountability to prevent psychologists' complicity/collusion with these systems of power. Research exposing the harms and injustices perpetrated by border regimes is also much needed at the moment and professional organizations should actively support their members to engage in such critical investigations, and protect them from possible consequences of taking anti-system stances.

To take it a step further, community psychologists should bring about more engaged forms of multi-level scholar-activist work aimed at challenging the white supremacist and colonial power structures of our societies, including academia, as advocated by other colleagues (e.g., Beals et al., 2021). Community psychologists endowed with the privilege of academic affiliations have the responsibility to disrupt and transform oppressive ideologies at the roots of the academic-industrial complex and its extractivist modes of knowledge re/production—in other words, they have the imperative to decolonize academia. An essential component of this process requires envisioning alternative—creative and collective—forms of knowledge sharing and production.

To conclude, people on the move, through their courageous and creative resistance, are offering us an opportunity to radically rethink our knowledge and praxes, engaging in what is a common struggle for social justice and helping the world re-imagine sustainable living alternatives and wholesome collective forms of care. The sparks of solidarity and resistance described in our paper open up, we believe, space for transformative change. Critical community psychologists are well placed to intercept and amplify these trends. With their ecological tools, vision for social justice and sensitivity to power asymmetries, critical community psychologists can work to amplify the effect of solidarity and resistance led by people on the move and support their efforts to undermine oppressive border imperialist regimes. Furthermore, as Francescato (2020) argues, community psychologists can channel their efforts toward the development of "a planetary sense of community, which will enable us to confront the systemic problems of climate change, racism, sexism, socioeconomic and power disparities" (p. 140).

If vital grassroots community initiatives, which flourished in this syndemic period, continue beyond the COVID-19 emergency, they have the potential to radically reshape the long-term sociopolitical infrastructures of our communities. In these seemingly small pockets, the transformative power lies to help forge a very different, diverse, and more interconnected world; a world based on interdependent and mutual care, responsibility and reciprocity among humans, and with the more than human world of nature.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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