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Book Review

Rosignoli, F. (2022). [Environmental justice for climate refugees](#). Routledge.

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Environmental Justice for Climate Refugees is not a book for everyone, but a readership *does* exist. Because budding social work students who have a passion for macro intervention are emerging, we are beginning to see a growing interest for the humanitarian consequences of climate change. The intervention at this level does not fall within the purview of clinical social work. Rather the content within this book falls into the lap of macro social workers who envision their intervention on a global basis rather employing concepts like municipality. Among Americans, we are witnessing an increasing interest in international social work where the client system is not an individual (with a psychiatric diagnosis), but rather the client system is humanity itself.

How can a practitioner make enough money to survive within the field of environmental social work? The answer to that question lies within the material presented in Rosignoli's book. Money has been trickling into environmental studies — engineers and statisticians are followed by a wide range of natural scientists. Rosignoli gives a road map of how macro social work will become involved in the action. Here is the challenge: Rosignoli makes us realize that the social sciences must become embedded in environmental interventions at this early stage. Otherwise, the foundation

for intervention will become unmanageable, like too many other international humanitarian projects.

This is *not* a book for clinical social workers. Nor is it a book for community organizers who envision their intervention on the community level. In Chapter 1, Rosignoli makes it abundantly clear that there is no universal definition for the central concept housed within this book. On pages 3–6, we see 21 different definitions for the central concept, none of which has reached the point of universal acceptance. They are as follows:

Ecological Displaced Persons	Environmentally Displaced Persons
Ecological Refugees	Climate Displaced Persons
Economic Refugees	Environmental-displaced Persons
Environmental Refugees	Climate Change Migrants
Environmental Migrant (1)	Disaster Displaced Persons
Environmental Displaced Persons	Climate Displacement/Displacee(s)
Ecomigrants	Survival Immigrants
Environmental Migrant (2)	Climate Immigrants
Climate Change Refugees	Climate Exiles
Displacees	

Table 1: Definitions of the central concept housed within this book

None of these terms precisely share the identical definition. No big deal? Yes, it turns out that the lack of consensus is extraordinarily problematic for two reasons.

First, social workers are intimately familiar with the concept of “multicultural.” The term is used and understood among social workers within their geographical catchment area. Every country has a multicultural citizenry. However, on an international level we lay witness to “hypermulticulturalism.” The multicultural problematic issues within a single country are child’s play when compared to global interaction from a much greater range of ethnic identities. Where can we witness the hypermulticulturalism dilemma? After World War I, our global community faced a disastrous problem of material and estate loss among an

extraordinarily diverse population with no home nor homeland. The League of Nations ⁶ began to work on this problem in 1918. But why worry about the “refugees”? The social worker’s answer would be to rely on the basic professional values. However, the real world is not comprised entirely of social workers. Rosignoli clarifies that international policy **is not** formulated on a humanitarian basis. An internationally accepted, legally binding statement in 1951 was forced to be developed and adopted by the United Nations because of the recognition that refugees have emerged into a permanent “structural and global phenomena.” In addition, we see a conflict between economic greed and the value of human life.

Second, the topic of refugees is an historical nightmare that is constantly tied up with an unbelievable bureaucracy. Why? The answer lies within hypermulticulturalism. The vast amount of difficult, unsuccessful, and incomplete work completed by the League of Nations and the United Nations was conceptualized to create “peace and stability.” It was an effort to reduce tensions among nation/states. An absurd example is the international case of [Iaone Teitiota v. New Zealand](#), which addressed the needs of a citizen from the Republic of Kiribati. Due to climate change, the island is slowly sinking into the ocean, and Iaone Teitiota applied to New Zealand for refugee status. However, in accordance with international law, the *defined* criteria for refugee could not be met. Teitiota was not facing man-made danger, violence, or political threats. Within international law (going back to the importance of defining terms), refugees who emerged as a result of climate change are not protected by any international refugee statute.

⁶ Young readers are not likely to be familiar with the League of Nations. Established in 1918, the League of Nations was the precursor to the United Nations. The League was established out of the rubble of World War I – “the war to end all wars.” The primary mission of the League was to solve disputes between nations before warfare could erupt. The violence that emerged from the actions of Germany, a League member, caused the collapsed of the League. The United Nations emerged from the rubble of World War II.

International attitudes are changing. In accordance with the United Nations' [Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration](#) (GCM) of December 10, 2018, all known dimensions of international migration are addressed in a comprehensive manner. However, in 1951, the international position in formulating a comprehensive approach was assumed to be successfully and finally resolved. It was not. Time will tell if the new approach, GCM, has successfully weaved through the complexities of hypermulticulturalism.

Rosignoli has anticipated my concern with hypermulticulturalism. Will GCM emerge as a success? In Chapter 3, Rosignoli begins to weave through the theoretical failures addressed in the earlier parts of the book. Keep in mind, *Environmental Justice for Climate Refugees* is an important but extraordinary difficult book to read. I do believe that the typical MSW student would become frustrated with it. To comprehend the profound meaning of the book requires a graduate school status *but with* an intense interest in international or global social work. Without this prerequisite, the book will be unmanageable.

For the past seven years, I have been conducting research with and for internationally known mathematicians, statisticians, and engineers regarding climate change. We are beginning to tackle the concept of "climate injustice," and these mental gymnastics are a Herculean task. Once again, I identify the issue of hypermulticulturalism as our dilemma. In her last chapter, Rosignoli effectively addresses the process of defining "climate injustice" by dissecting it. She lays out three separate components of it. Her successful mental gymnastics deserve an Olympic gold medal. Her work will be an asset for decades.

In the end, I must note that this is a very difficult book for any macro social worker who is not intensely passionate about climate change and global warming. Another prerequisite for reading this book is an understanding of how the United Nations functions. Readers must comprehend and appreciate implications of hypermulticulturalism. For graduate MSW and Ph.D. students, I would strongly recommend that

Rosignoli's work be required reading for any social work course that focuses on international issues and/or global analysis.

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