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The Invisible Burdens of Burden-Sharing

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In the global humanitarian realm, there is much discussion and concern for the burdens that states endure when it comes to refugee populations. The word "burden" appears in the Preamble of the 1951 Refugee Convention in reference to placing "unduly heavy burdens" on specific host countries and compels the international community to intervene in such situations. While there have been attempts to change the language from burden-sharing to responsibility-sharing, the emphasis on states assuming the "burden" of hosting and providing for refugee populations continues. Even as the 2018 Global Compact for Refugees has brought refugees into the discussions of an international response to refugee situations, the language and concerns about burden-sharing remain relatively unchanged. This is clearly demonstrated by the first ever Global Refugee Forum, which was held in December 2019, through its central theme of burden- and responsibility-sharing. In the forum, refugees advocated for their continued and increased inclusion, but while state delegations and humanitarian organizations acknowledged this as a benefit for all, their statements continued to assert their own concerns about their positions as the donor and host countries. This continued privileging of the state, even amidst the added language and practices of inclusion of all humanitarian actors, still renders invisible the burdens that refugees bear, many of which are exacerbated by the language and logic of burden-sharing applied to states. A prime example of this is Trump's anti-immigration policies and rhetoric, which demonstrate how state attempts to lighten their burden have far-reaching effects, including long-lasting everyday burdens for those who have already been resettled. Long-term ethnographic research in refugee camps and with resettled refugees provides empirical evidence to engage in the critical policy analysis and discourse analysis of burden-sharing in this piece.

Keywords: refugees, resettlement, burden-sharing, Trump, anti-immigration, reunification, responsibility-sharing

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INTRODUCTION

"When will I see my husband again?" (September 19, 2019).

"When will my husband meet our second son?" (April 17, 2020).

These are questions that Vinii cannot answer. A Congolese refugee, she arrived in the USA in 2019, with a 9-month-old baby and pregnant with her second child. Her family had qualified for resettlement years before she was married. Her husband was not able to join their resettlement case because although he lived in a UN camp in Tanzania, he did not have official refugee status.

Even if he did have refugee status, many refugees do not add their newly married spouses to their resettlement cases because it will delay their cases. UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) officials in the camp often also recommend that refugees do not try to add new spouses to their resettlement cases because it can add years to the process. During the Trump era, delays often meant more than just added years. It meant missing one of the dwindling numbers of resettlement slots available each year.

Vinii's story is not unique. People trying to reunite with spouses and other family members often hear from their immigration lawyers that this already slow process has been even more drawn out, first due to Trump's anti-immigration policies and now due to COVID. One of the most profound burdens that resettled refugees endure is an inability to escape from a life of uncertainty and unwelcome. Refugee camps are marked by uncertainty and precarity (Malkki, 1985; Stein, 1987; Horst, 2006, 2008; Agier, 2011; Oka, 2014; Thomson, 2015). Will there be enough rations? Will the government close the camp? Will we qualify for resettlement? If we do, when will we be resettled? Camps are places where these questions often haunt the residents who live there. They are questions that reflect the state of existence in which material provision and the wellbeing of the population are subject to the radical shifts of international relations. As Vinii's story and the many stories like hers illustrate, this uncertainty can be extended into resettlement. When a resettlement country's policies become increasingly anti-immigrant, refugees not only suffer the social consequences of knowing their kin—and by extension, themselves—are no longer welcome, but they also suffer the familial burdens of seeking reunification in a system that does not facilitate it. They do not know when, or even if, they will be reunited. These are burdens that individuals, families, and cultural groups bear.

I use the word burden intentionally. I use it to problematize the way the concept has been, and continues to be, deployed within the realm of international humanitarianism. I also use it to expose the ways in which the burdens that refugees and resettled refugees bear are rendered invisible by the humanitarian system. The way this term is typically wielded indicates that refugees themselves are the burden, rather than the primary bearers of the burdens caused by conflict and displacement. Humanitarian organizations, such as the UNHCR, and scholars of refugee studies call for "burden-sharing" (Stein, 1987; Suhrke, 1998; Boswell, 2003), which is "the principle through which the diverse costs of granting asylum assumed by the host state are more equitably divided among a greater number of states" (Milner, 2005, p. 56). Of course, these organizations and scholars do not directly label refugees as burdens. However, the "costs" incurred would not be there without the presence of the asylum seekers themselves, and so it is obvious to refugees that they themselves are perceived as the burden or at least the cause of the burden. They certainly feel as though they are treated as burdens.

Within the humanitarian realm, including the refugee literature studies (Thielemann, 2003; Dean and Nagashima, 2007), burdens are discussed at the level of institutions, particularly states. There is little, if any, literature that offers a critical analysis of the representation of refugees as a burden at various scales. In this article, I illuminate that while states and humanitarian organizations make claims about burden sharing, refugees bear the brunt of the burdens that these institutional decisions address. I argue that the language and logic of burden-sharing obscure and can even exacerbate the burdens placed on refugees themselves, in that these invisible burdens are often the result of decisions that state entities have made by using the logic and language of burden-sharing.

To establish this argument, I have structured the sections of this article as a series of interrelated key points. The first section, Methods and Materials, details my research methodology and the additional materials analyzed. The second section, A Brief History of the Language and Logic of Burden-Sharing, establishes how burden-sharing emerged and evolved as a state-centered principle and practice. The third section, Contemporary Language and Logic of Burden-Sharing, examines how the inaugural 2019 Global Refugee Forum was novel in its inclusion of refugee representatives present at the meeting, and yet the discussion of burden-sharing still focused on states and never named the problems refugees face as burdens. The fourth section, Refugees: the Invisible Burdens of Burden-Sharing, details how the state-centered language and logic of burden sharing have created and obscured certain kinds of burdens for camp-dwelling refugees. The fifth section, Burden-Sharing as a Justification to Reduce Responsibility, shows that in addition to ignoring and obscuring refugees' burdens, states use burden-sharing logic as a means to reduce their humanitarian assistance to refugees. The sixth section, Resettled Refugees: Still Burdened by Burden-Sharing, explains how even refugees who have already been resettled in a third country continue to experience burdens, particularly when states reduce their burden sharing. The seventh section, Everyday Burdens of Trump's Stance on Resettlement, broadens the discussion to show how burden-sharing logic connects to global political, economic, and racial hierarchies and how these hierarchies are felt in the everyday life of both camp-dwelling and resettled refugees. The conclusion circles back to Vinii's story to once again illuminate the ways that burden-sharing language and logic erase and compound the burdens refugees bear and to ask readers to imagine what might result if the language and logic were to change.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

As a cultural anthropologist, I have been conducting research with refugees, primarily Congolese, since I first began my research in 2008. The primary methodology of cultural anthropology is participant observation, which means that we both partake in the daily lives and activities of the communities with whom we do our research and also study them at the same time (Malinowski, 1922). Participant observation positions anthropologists to research how broad social phenomena affect lives of individuals, and to use experiences of individuals to illuminate the everyday life effects of social phenomena. Here, I aim to do both. I analyze the discourse of burden-sharing as well as policies related to it and show how

they affect refugees and resettled individuals' lives. I also use the words and experiences of refugees to critique the discourse of burden-sharing and related refugee policies. In other words, my long-term ethnographic research has provided the empirical evidence to engage in critical policy analysis and discourse analysis of humanitarian practices for this article.

Participant observation means that ethnographic research is not as discrete and bounded as many other types of social science research. In the course of my work, I have spent more than 26 months conducting ethnographic research in refugee homes, humanitarian compounds, and government offices in the African Great Lakes Region, between 2008 and 2014. My primary field site during that time was the UN camp called Nyarugusu, located in Tanzania. One of the primary foci of my research has been the process of resettlement and the ways the selection process plays out in refugee camps (Thomson, 2012, 2018a,b). It has extended into the ways in which resettlement states' changing policies, particularly the USA, have impacted refugee camp residents, humanitarian organizations, and host governments (Thomson, 2017b). The nature of long-term ethnographic research means that I have been learning how this has affected families, like Vinii's, who have been separated as a result of unpredictability of resettlement.

Conducting fieldwork in Nyarugusu provided me with a network of people connected to the process of resettlement through the camp, and conducting ethnographic research with them both in-person and virtually has demonstrated how the policies and rhetoric employed by Trump and his administration have burdened those who have already resettled in the USA. While I was building relationships with people in the camp, many also introduced me to their family and friends who had been resettled elsewhere, particularly the USA. This is because the USA has received the majority of resettled refugees, and also because I am a USA citizen. I now know many people from Nyarugusu camp who have been resettled, and I have visited several in their new homes in the USA. I keep in touch with them and others who have been resettled in Canada, Australia, and a few European countries.

Newly resettled refugees call me to help them make sense of the legal processes for reunification in the USA. Refugees still living in Nyarugusu camp, other camps, or elsewhere also call, text, email, and message me about resettlement, reunification, and how they are impacted by these processes, their delays, and the waiting. In fact, I often learn a lot about what life is like in the USA from camp residents and much about life in the camp from people now living in the USA. Among the latter are five Congolese families who visited me at my home in Colorado between 2013 and 2019, one of whom came to see me several times every year since they were resettled in Denver in 2016. My research also draws on multiple visits with six Congolese families in Denver each year from 2016 to 2019 and on trips that I made to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (2013), Boise, Idaho (2014), and Cedar Rapids, Iowa (2019) to welcome four recently resettled Congolese families to the USA. The purpose of these visits was not explicitly to interview any of these families, but conversations about the burdens of resettlement and the decreasing numbers of resettlement and reunification inevitably arose.[1] In addition, I have had numerous conversations *via* social media, text, and phone about the burdens related to camp life and resettlement. Waiting for resettlement or reunification compounds the experience of precarity for refugees; for those still in a camp, it adds to the sense of spatial confinement and an inability to plan for the future (Thomson, 2015), and this weighs on those who have been resettled, who often continue to feel unsettled until they can be reunited with their loved ones.

A Brief History of the Language and Logic of Burden-Sharing

Burden-sharing as it is understood and practiced within the international humanitarian realm emerged in 1950s. The term "burden" appears in the preamble of the UN 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, which established the international definition of refugee and related policies and continues to serve those purposes to this day. It states, "the grant of asylum may place unduly heavy burdens on certain countries, and that a satisfactory solution of a problem of which the United Nations has recognized the international scope and nature cannot therefore be achieved without international co-operation…." The preamble makes it clear that the concern is centered on the institution of the nation-state, not other entities and certainly not the refugee population, and that to relieve the burden there must be the involvement of other states, although this call for international cooperation is not necessarily limited to state entities.

There are two main ways in which states participate in burden-sharing. The first is *financial burden-sharing*, in which states contribute financially to countries of asylum "to help them with the care and maintenance of refugees" (Boswell, 2003). The second is *physical burden-sharing*, which involves the "dispersal of refugees among states" (Boswell, 2003). In other words, this specific form of burden-sharing entails the actual hosting of refugee populations. While it primarily refers to states who host refugee populations from neighboring countries, it also involves third states accepting refugee populations and currently occurs primarily through official resettlement in a new country. How these burdens can and should be measured and shared has long been a subject of debate within the humanitarian realm, and within the refugee studies scholarship (Robinson et al., 2003; Bhattacharya and Biswas, 2020).

Recently, there has been a shift from using the language of burden-sharing to using the phrase "responsibility-sharing" (Betts, 2015, 2018; Dowd and McAdam, 2017; Martin et al., 2019). It is an institutional move away from the negative connotations of the word burden, which implies a duty, or even misfortune, that causes hardship. Responsibility still connotes the same sense of obligation but pairs it with accountability

[1]I use the term conversations because these discussions were not unstructured interviews or open-ended interviews. We did not sit down with the purpose of discussing the invisible burdens refugees bear, but rather these topics arose naturally through the anthropological methodology of participant observation. For more on dialog as essential to anthropological methodology and writing (please see Thomson, 2020).

rather than hardship. However, this shift has been partial at best, the term burden-sharing has not been fully replaced by responsibility-sharing. In fact, the two phrases are often used together. States and institutions, including the UNHCR, now often label this international commitment in terms of "burden and responsibility-sharing." A search of the phrase "burden-sharing" in the *Journal of Refugee Studies* yields 103 results, while a search of the phrase "responsibility-sharing" yields only 29 results.[2] Of course, burden-sharing's longer history is a factor here, but even when the search was narrowed to only publication dates in 2021, there were ten results for "burden-sharing" and only three results for "responsibility-sharing." It has been less of a linguistical shift from the term "burden" to the term "responsibility," and more of an addition of the term "responsibility" to accompany the term "burden." Moreover, this new terminology has not been formalized or systematized and remains *ad hoc* in its usage.

In addition to linguistic changes, the history of burden-sharing has undergone some changes in practice as well. In his chapter, "Burden-Sharing and Refugee Protection," Gottwald demonstrates that when burden-sharing began with the advent of the 1951 Convention, it was state-centered and portrayed refugees as passive victims whose problems would be solved by repatriation to their countries of origin (Gottwald, 2015). More recently, this atomistic approach has broadened to include interventions such as prevention, protection, and solutions as part of the burdens that should be shared by not only by states but also by refugees' transnational networks, NGOs, and private-sector organizations (Gottwald, 2015, p. 535). However, the broadening of this definition still only focuses on remedying of the burdens that states face. Furthermore, there is no recognition of the burdens that refugees face, some of which are the result of burden-sharing negotiations and arrangements.

Contemporary Language and Logic of Burden-Sharing

There have been several attempts by the UNHCR to formalize burden-sharing arrangements. Recently, in 2018 the UN General Assembly affirmed the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR), which put in place a new refugee response model with the aim of increasing support for both refugees and their host communities. A central tenet of the GCR is the Global Refugee Forum, which brings together states and other actors, including refugees themselves, every 4 years to enact technical and policy changes to fulfill the goals of the Global Compact. The first even Global Refugee Forum (GRF) took place in Geneva, Switzerland, from December 16 to 18, 2019. The forum's main focus was burden- and responsibility-sharing. It was unique in that it was the first time refugees had been included in one of these meetings, and yet the results reflected those of previous meetings with the similar language and urging for responsibility-sharing without the formal implementation of global mechanisms. This is reflected in the closing remarks by the High Commissioner, Filippo Grandi.

> "The central theme of the Forum was burden- and responsibility-sharing. These have been very imperfect since the establishment of the Refugee Convention in 1951. All the instruments talk about it, but the reality is that there has been no real systematic burden- and responsibility-sharing. That sharing, as the Secretary-General pointed out yesterday, can only be real if we all take on responsibilities.
>
> Let me be very frank, if we move into a world (as some political leaders want us to), in which some countries are precipitated into crises and produce displacement, a few countries nearby take all the refugees, and other countries pay the bill, this is not responsibility-sharing." (UNHCR, 2019).

The High Commissioner's speech highlights that when it comes to burden-sharing, there has historically been a division between what are called "donor states," that "pay the bill" and "host states" that "take all the refugees." And, this division continues despite attempts to broaden the definition and practices of burden-sharing to include entities other than states. The High Commissioner's critique that this does not actually constitute responsibility-sharing demonstrates that while there was a clear call to action, there has been no implementation of mechanisms or standards to ensure that real change occurs.

The meeting also demonstrated a continuation of the opposing positions of large donor states, such as the USA, and refugee-hosting states, such as Tanzania. The focus of the USA Ambassador's statement was on solutions, with a notable exception that there was no mention of resettlement whatsoever.[3] He named all of the actors present at the forum—"governments, the private sector, development organizations, humanitarian responders, communities hosting refugees and internally displaced persons, and IMPORTANTLY, the people themselves that have been forcibly displaced" (emphasis in original) – and urged them to "help uprooted communities build resilience and prepare for voluntary, safe, and sustainable return" (United States of America, 2019). While this statement seems to implicate all the humanitarian actors involved in the forum, it ultimately places the onus for solutions on the refugees themselves and the states from which they fled.[4] In contrast, the Tanzanian delegation emphasized the burdens of being a host state. The delegation stated that "Although we observe the gradual increase in burden and responsibility-sharing in addressing refugee related issues, we call on the international community to do a lot more to ease the burden on Tanzania by addressing some of the major challenges" (United Republic of Tanzania, 2019). The challenges the delegation noted were the lack of sustainable sources of energy and the lack of provision of basic social services to a group of more than 50,000 Burundian

[2]This search was conducted on January 31, 2022.

[3]This is notable because resettlement in a third country is one of the three solutions outlined by the UNHCR (the other two are repatriation to the country of origin and naturalization in the country of refuge). Resettlement can transform donor states into host states in that it allows them to choose refugees to come resettle in their countries. The USA has drastically reduced its resettlement quotas in recent years. One week after Trump took office, he reduced Obama's original resettlement quota of 110,000 refugees for 2017 to 50,000. Each year he reduced that number further, and he set the 2021 allotment for 15,000.

[4]This stance not only demonstrates that the USA does not see itself as part of the solution but it also does not see itself, or its decreasing resettlement quotas, as part of the problem.

refugees who fled in 1972. The delegation framed these issues as refugee needs that take their toll on Tanzania's limited resources. So, again these states' remarks at the GRF illustrate that while they make a reference to refugees' needs, they continue to frame them in the ways that illustrate the burden they pose to states (Tanzania) or blame the burdens on other states and refugees themselves (USA). In other words, the presence of refugees at the GRF has not substantially changed the language and logic of burden-sharing.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Refugee Closing Plenary at the end of the program made no mention of burdens. Rather, the refugee speakers called for their continued presence and involvement in the refugee responses, and reminded host and donors states and other humanitarian actors that "Shared responsibility is shared humanity" (Refugee Co-Sponsors., 2019, p. 7). Their specific calls to action—more access to education opportunities, more support for combatting sexual and gender-based violence, and more investment in refugee youth—all point to the ways in which refugees want to see better and more productive services and opportunities for their communities. When hosting and providing for refugee communities are seen as a burden, these are areas of social service provision that are overlooked. They are areas that lose funding when donors and host states downsize because they perceive their burden to be too much. The lack and insufficient provision of these services is directly related to informal mechanisms of burden-sharing. Provision of these services cast refugees as people who are worth investing in, supporting, and developing, but the burden-related discussions focus only on states' needs and resources. Refugees recognize this, which is why they called on the non-refugee humanitarian actors to do their part. These are some of the burdens of burden-sharing that refugees endure—having to convince states and other humanitarian actors of their community's worthiness and humanity.

The Global Refugee Forum, while historic in its inclusion of more than 70 refugee representatives as co-organizers, speakers, and experts, shows how the humanitarian system continues to privilege the state when it comes to burden-sharing. The host and donor state delegations at the forum demonstrated that the language of "burdens" continues to be used in regard to states, not in regard to refugees. The hardships that refugees endure are not afforded the label of burden, while the assistance and services that states are expected to provide are. Moreover, there was no discussion about how the language and practices of burden-sharing harm refugees by making them feel unworthy of assistance and by excluding them from the governance of their own populations.

Refugees: The Invisible Burdens of Burden-Sharing

> "We are tired of being treated as a burden" (May 14, 2012).

Nyarugusu residents have made similar statements to me over the many years I have conducted research in the camp. As marginalized groups often do, Nyarugusu residents understand how those in charge of the camp—the Tanzanian government, the UNHCR, and their partnering organizations—view them. And this statement in particular cuts to the core of the matter: refugees are treated as, seen as, and even indirectly labeled as burdens. The day Arnold told me this, he was angry. He was lamenting all of the restrictions in the camp that the Tanzanian government has implemented, including the demolishing of the markets and the inability to travel more than 4 km outside the camp without the threat of detainment, even deportation. Camp life was, as another Congolese refugee described it, like living in a prison (December 13, 2014). This comparison, that of camp and prison, highlights that in Tanzania being a refugee is akin to being treated as a criminal, in that both are deemed to be burdens to society and need to be contained and detained away from the rest of the population.

For refugees, the burdens of burden-sharing are threefold. First, there is the burden of being labeled a burden. Knowing that their presence is considered a burden, one that needs to be relieved through the act of sharing, takes its toll on refugees. In Nyarugusu camp, for example, the burden label is tied into the Tanzanian government's desire to close the UN camps and repatriate refugees. Nyarugusu residents already recognize that they are not wanted in Tanzania, and being labeled a burden only exacerbates their alienation and subordination (Thomson, 2015). Refugees have often told me that they know that the camp management does not want them there. Camp residents are highly aware that their presence is an unwelcome one. The language of burden-sharing only highlights this further for them.

Second, there is the burden of being excluded from the practice of burden-sharing. Burden-sharing has been about a concern for equity among state actors without a concern for how it affects refugee populations. In fact, Kibreab has pointed out that the drafters of the 1951 Convention noted that "if the burden became too much to bear, countries of asylum may be forced not to respect the principle of *non-refoulement*" (Kibreab, 1991, p. 31). *Non-refoulement* prohibits the expulsion or forced repatriation of a refugee "in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his life or freedom would be threatened" [1951 Convention, article 33(1)]. *Non-refoulement* is the guiding principle of international refugee law, and a binding agreement of all state signatories to the 1951 Convention. And yet, if states can claim the burden of refugees is too great to adhere to the key principle of refugee protection, it illustrates yet again that international refugee policy is not only state-centered (Aleinikoff, 1995), but that it also privileges the protection of the state above the protection of refugee populations.

Residents of Nyarugusu feel this exclusion in multiple ways. As William, a Congolese resident of Nyarugusu camp, told me, "The UNHCR should ensure that they provide the opportunity to bring refugees' claims to the Tanzanian government to be heard… These three parts, the UNHCR, the [Tanzanian] government, and the refugees, should collaborate to make sure that they share the burden. However, the first two parts, the UNHCR and the government simply continue to work on their own. And, refugees, who used to be responsible for their families before the war and conflicts occurred, are still made out to be a burden by the government and by the UNHCR in Tanzania" (March 31, 2021). William's expressed desire for refugee inclusion speaks

to how monumental the Global Compact for Refugees and the Global Refugee Forum have been in their inclusion of refugee representatives. However, it shows that this has not yet been extended to the different levels of refugee governance. In this specific case, William was asking for inclusion at the level of the camp, with the explicit hope that this would demonstrate that refugees are not a burden but rather an integral part of the solution.

Third, there is the burden of the consequences of burden-sharing. As both a discourse and a practice, burden-sharing's consequences extend beyond financial assistance to refugee-hosting states and the acceptance of portions of refugee populations *via* resettlement. In fact, Nyarugusu residents would argue that unless they are some of the less than 1% of refugees worldwide to qualify for resettlement, they do not reap any of the benefits of burden-sharing. They do, however, suffer the consequences when states relinquish their burden-sharing responsibilities. States often justify their reductions in funding and resettlement by explaining what is best for refugee populations, citing refugees' need to return to their countries of origin, and demanding that they do not become dependent on humanitarian aid and services. Such state claims correspond to the UNHCR's policy that makes explicit that repatriation is the preferred "durable solution." When such claims are put into action, however, refugees then experience decreased food rations, decreased services, and the growing impossibility of being resettled in a third country.

Using Burden-Sharing as a Justification to Reduce Responsibilities

One consequence of all the discussions about burden-sharing within the humanitarian community is that states can utilize that same logic to reduce their commitments to international refugee protection. A clear example of this is contained in "President Donald J. Trump's Humanitarian and Responsible Approach on Refugees Protects the Welfare of American Citizens" issued on September 26, 2019. The introduction is quoted in full below.

> "A responsible approach to refugees is one that seeks the eventual return of refugees to their home countries so that they can help to rebuild their own nations."
>
> **President Donald J. Trump**

- MOST GENEROUS IMMIGRATION SYSTEM IN THE WORLD: America continues to lead the way in worldwide refugee efforts, both in financial contributions and permanent resettlement.
  - The USA expects to receive more than 368,000 new refugees and asylum claims in fiscal year (FY) 2020—continuing our generous record of providing humanitarian protections.
- This includes the proposed 18,000 refugees and more than 350,000 individuals in new asylum cases.
- Considering refugees and asylum seekers as part of the same relief effort is an accurate reflection of America's generous protection-based immigration.
- This proposed ceiling takes into account the ongoing security and humanitarian crisis on our border and the massive asylum backlog, which now includes nearly 1 million individuals.
  - The overwhelming backlog is completely unsustainable and needs to be addressed before we accept large numbers of refugees.

Stating that the immigration system is "generous" (the term is used three times in this document) and "continues to lead the way" is making a claim that USA has met, perhaps even surpassed, all its responsibility-sharing obligations. At the same time, the document also implies the burden that the country has assumed due to an "ongoing security and humanitarian crisis" on the border and the "massive asylum backlog" is both "overwhelming" and "completely unsustainable" and must be addressed before resettling larger numbers of refugees. It is clear in these statements that refugees are a burden, in fact a deferrable one that must be put on hold until the state can first deal with what has been deemed to be the more important and pressing burden of the asylum seekers. What goes unstated, but is certainly implied, is that this is a justification for Trump's further reduction of the resettlement quota.

There is also the disturbing irony that this White House fact sheet illuminated the way that the USA is not subject to the international pressure to provide for refugee populations in the way that refugee-hosting states, like Tanzania, are. The USA does not host refugee camps for the asylum seekers who show up on its southern border. Undocumented migrants in the USA are held in Detention Centers until judges rule whether or not they qualify for asylum. Asylum laws in the USA are based on international refugee law, but their interpretation and enforcement illustrate the inequalities of the global political economy. According to the international norms of burden-sharing, the USA is considered as a donor country, not a host country (Milner, 2016). This designation exists despite the admission that the USA has a backlog of almost 1 million asylum seekers. In other words, as a wealthy country, the USA enjoys its donor status at the expense of the asylum seekers. Their presence, in comparatively large numbers, could also designate the USA as a host state; its status as only a donor state is only possible through the erasure of the asylum seekers. Moreover, the USA is not as generous a donor state as it purports to be. While the figures from the Official Development Assistance (ODA) for 2019 indicate that the USA donates the largest sum of international aid (almost 35 billion USD), when this number is taken as a percentage of the Gross National Income (GNI), the USA ranks 24th rather than 1st.

The leeway afforded to the USA exists, at least in part, because of the practice and principles of burden-sharing. The USA continues to be perceived as a generous donor state due to their financial contributions in spite of the fact that they are increasing rather than sharing the burdens. The Trump Administration's major changes to the US's resettlement practices have had far-reaching effects too, affecting refugee-hosting states, humanitarian organizations, and refugees (Thomson, 2017b). Resettlement reductions have contributed to the creation of an increasingly xenophobic environment for refugees that have already been resettled in the USA. Congolese refugees'

accounts of living in the USA illustrate how they have felt increasingly unwelcome in the USA in recent years. And thus, another unacknowledged effect of the USA abdication of its burden-sharing responsibilities has been the increased day-to-day burdens on the refugees it already resettled.

Resettled Refugees: Still Burdened by Burden-Sharing

"The USA and Tanzania are the same. One is not better than the other. They treat us the same in both places" (February 7, 2014). This is one of the first things Patrice told me when she and her family received me at the airport about 7 months after they had been resettled in the USA. During my entire stay in their new home, Patrice and her husband told me stories of the way they had been treated poorly, particularly by the case workers at the resettlement agency that was supposed to be assisting them in their transition. For example, the agency did not have housing arranged for the Congolese family once they arrived. The family had to live in a hotel, paid for with their government stipends, until the agency secured housing for them. When Patrice's husband asked their case worker about the agency's mistake and how much of their stipend was spent on the hotel, he did not receive an apology much less any sort of repayment. The agency also bought a car for them with their stipend money. Patrice and her husband were frustrated that they were again not consulted in regard to how to spend money which belonged to them. Instances such as these contributed to Patrice's family's sense that their resettlement agency treated them in a manner similar to how they were treated by aid agencies in Tanzania, as a burden.

While there are Congolese people that have resettled in places like the USA who have long shed the label of refugee, there is also a continued burden of knowing that their resettlement was the result of an international burden-sharing obligation. As one Congolese person once told me, "I know that I live here [in the U.S.] now because the U.S. was trying to fulfill its international obligation to share responsibility for us, for the burdens we are seen to be" (February 10, 2014). This statement shows how even though these labels, both refugee and burden, are often shed or no longer applied after being resettled, they can still color the experience of living in a new country. The effects of these labels, which are so essential to the humanitarian system, may never fully be escaped.

Furthermore, throughout the entire resettlement process, refugees are reminded that states' needs trump their own protection needs. Once UN officials have decided that refugees meet the qualifications for resettlement, refugees must wait for a resettlement state to accept their case. They must then wait to be interviewed by the representatives of that state. Sometimes states accept the refugees, and sometimes they do not. If not accepted, refugees then must wait to see if another resettlement state might accept their case. And, once a state has deemed them acceptable, then they wait for that state to be ready to actually resettle them. I have seen this take up to 9 years, and the family received no indication as to why it was taking so long. However, it is perhaps once refugees have been resettled that the privileging of the state becomes even more obvious. Congolese refugees compare their experiences in their new resettlement countries, and these comparisons make it clear that there are no universal standards when it comes to providing services for resettled refugees. The states decide what to provide for the refugees. The USA, for example, makes the refugees pay back their plane ticket costs, and only provides them with stipends for 3 months before they are expected to be self-sufficient and start paying back their loans. If refugees are not able to find jobs to support themselves and their families during that time period, resettlement agencies are sometimes able to provide financial support for a few more months, or the resettled individuals must turn to government assistance. Either way, the need to apply for further assistance is another reminder of how they are perceived as a burden.

One of the main consequences of burden-sharing is that both donor states and host states want to "lighten their burden." This also affects both refugees and those who have already been resettled. When host states, like Tanzania, attempt to decrease their burden it usually means that they are closing camps and repatriating refugees. This means that friends and family hoping to resettle cannot, because if they repatriate, they lose their official refugee status, which they need to qualify for resettlement. Moreover, when donor states retract their funding or reduce their resettlement quotas, this makes the possibility of resettlement even more slim. It also means that resettled refugees must continue to financially assist their friends and family in the camp or elsewhere. Resettled individuals frequently send remittances to friends and family; I have delivered several myself. Other consequences of burden-sharing and states' desires to lighten their load include refugees' everyday knowledge that they are considered dangerous and unwanted and the institutional racism inherent in the discussions of burden-sharing.

The Everyday Burdens of Trump's Stance on Resettlement

According to the logics of international burden-sharing, Trump's reductions in resettlement have increased the burdens for refugee-hosting states, like Tanzania. The Tanzanian government officials I know echo this sentiment. Many have explained to me that the plan to resettle 32,000 Congolese refugees in the USA has meant that many refugees have indeed qualified for resettlement, and Trump's subsequent decreases in resettlement quotas meant that these Congolese continue to live in camps in Tanzania. This increased the burden on Tanzania while the USA relinquished not only their international responsibilities to refugee-hosting states but also any responsibility to the refugees they had committed to resettle. It was a blatant continuation of what the Tanzanian delegation had argued at the 1998 UNHCR Executive Committee meeting on "International Solidarity and Burden Sharing in all its Aspects." They argued that any assistance to Tanzania was left up to the discretion of donor states like the USA, and Tanzania had no say in how the USA and other donor countries should assist them (Milner, 2016, p. 7). This is, of course, in addition to the burdens the USA created by abdicating their responsibilities in physical burden-sharing through their resettlement reductions.

Although burden-sharing focuses on state institutions, Trump's reduction in resettlement in the USA has consequences for humanitarian organizations and humanitarian aid workers as well. The aid apparatus that the UNHCR had built for resettlement in Nyarugusu camp had greatly increased the numbers of resettlement staff from 2014 to 2016, but then had to greatly reduce their operations and staff beginning in 2017. Humanitarian operations in Tanzania were affected in general, even those who were not directly involved in resettlement activities. For example, as a Tanzanian friend who worked with the International Rescue Committee wrote to me on social media, "I am sorry that I ever said that I thought Trump would be a good president. You were right [about Trump]. I was out of work for 2 years because of him. Aid organizations were not hiring. It was impossible for me to get a job in my field. His presidency even affected me all the way over here in Tanzania" (March 18, 2019). The consequences of Trump's humanitarian policies were widely felt in Tanzania by government officials, aid workers, and even by Tanzanian citizens who had supported the government's previous efforts to close all of the camps.

Trump's first immigration ban devastated Nyarugusu residents who had already qualified for resettlement in the USA and those who hoped to qualify for resettlement in the future (Thomson, 2017a). It also sent a clear message to those who had already been resettled in the USA. It showed them that even though they had been through many rounds of interviews and specifically chosen for resettlement, the former USA President and his supporters did not believe that these procedures constituted a safe vetting process. Trump's doubt of the resettlement process lays bare his distrust of refugees. He would not question the efficacy of the process if he did not question the character of the refugees themselves. The first ban, all of the subsequent bans, and the yearly decrease in resettlement quotas made it clear to those who had already been resettled in the USA that Trump and his supporters did not believe they belonged there. Though the bans were discrete, and the quota reductions happened once a year, their impact was felt daily by Congolese refugees living in the USA. The knowledge of being unwanted, of being deemed dangerous or untrustworthy, wore on them. Feeling unwelcome was a daily burden.

That daily burden was often both confirmed and exacerbated through Trump's language (Hodges, 2018). One well-known instance of this was on January 11, 2018, when the President and several USA senators met in the Oval Office to discuss the protection of immigrants from Haiti, El Salvador, and African countries. It was a private meeting, but it leaked. "Why are we having all these people from shithole countries come here?" Trump reportedly asked. Trump followed up this statement by positing that in their stead, immigrants from great European countries like Norway, and also from Asian countries, could help America economically. As Kendi argued, these statements illustrate more than Trump's already well-established anti-immigrant stance. These statements exposed the global racial hierarchy as constructed by Trump: one that places white people above Asian people, and both above Latinx and Black people from "shithole" counties (Kendi, 2019). For Congolese living in the USA, this hierarchy clarified and confirmed the racialized attitudes pervasive in their new homes. More than one resettlement agency representative from places in the USA have told me how Congolese refugees and refugees from other African countries are "much lazier" or "more dependent" than refugees they serve from other areas of the world. These representatives often blame this on the specific type of humanitarian aid systems in place in the camps (Kibreab, 1993; Bascom, 2005; Betts et al., 2020). Sometimes, though, they blame it on "African" culture. Even when it goes unsaid, the racism inherent in it stands out because the humanitarian system is a global one, and it implies that certain populations' alleged dependency is some sort of inherent flaw of the beneficiaries, not the providers. Congolese refugees have relayed to me that resettlement workers have made such statements directly to them. Congolese people recognize the racial hierarchy implied in these comments. They know that they are placed on the bottom of that hierarchy. They know it means that their presence is not desired in the USA.

Of course, these are not the only ways in which Congolese and other Africans experience racism in the USA. Even before Trump began his campaign, resettled Africans experienced the deeply ingrained institutional racism of this country built by enslaved Africans. While Congolese who have discussed this with me are not necessarily surprised by it, they are absolutely exhausted by living it. As a friend who still lives in Nyarugusu camp and is trying to reunite with his family in the USA told me, many of the Congolese people living in the USA have warned him of the rampant and blatant racism in the country. He told me that nothing could deter him from wanting to reunite with his wife and children, but that his friends have been making connections between the white American police officers who have murdered Black people with impunity and the population that support them and those who supported Trump. "These things are connected," he said, "they are all forms of hate, racism, discrimination, and injustice" (January 11, 2021). His friends in the USA were explaining how this is another way in which institutional racism contributes to the daily burdens of having been resettled in the USA.

The institutional racism that Congolese people face after resettling in the USA is connected to the global political economic system that makes humanitarianism necessary in the first place (Ferris, 1985; Zolberg, 1985; de Waal, 2000; Agier, 2010). It is a system premised upon global inequalities and built upon histories of colonialism and imperialism. Humanitarianism is based upon the "national order of things," that not only positions refugees as "matter out of place" (Malkki, 1995a,b), but also as burdens themselves. It privileges the state, and certain colonizing and imperial states in particular. As a result, much of international humanitarian aid contributions seem to correspond to projects of the world's major superpowers (Fearon, 2008; Gottwald, 2015). A system where donor states can continue to be recognized as humanitarian leaders while decreasing their resettlement quotas and refusing to grant refugee status to the asylum seekers on their soil is one that does not recognize that it contributes to, even causes, many the burdens that refugees face. Humanitarianism and the ways it affects refugees' everyday lives cannot be separated from the racist political and economic histories and social contexts that continue to structure our world.

CONCLUSION

"When will I see my husband again?" (September 19, 2019).
"When will my husband meet our second son?" (April 17, 2020).

These questions, the ones Vinii cannot answer, they are burdens. They are practically rhetorical. Vinii's immigration lawyer cannot even provide her with an estimated date in response to these questions. Vinii and her husband both know that the answers will reveal themselves as other people make decisions that greatly impact their family.

I have noted the dates when she first posed these questions here and at the beginning of this article. However, in every conversation we have had since then, these questions loom in the background. Even if Vinii does not explicitly state them when we chat, and usually she does not, they are present in everything we discuss. When we talk about how her husband is managing in the camp, we are both wondering when they will be reunited. When I ask how their sons are doing, we are wondering how old their second son will be when he first meets his father. He was born in the USA, and therefore he has never met his father in person.

These are not the burdens that are implied in the Preamble of the 1951 Convention. They are not the burdens of land and resources of host states, nor are they the burdens of expenditure of donor states. However, they stem from the fact that states and other humanitarian entities conceive of such contributions as burdens. They are burdens born from the concept of burdens.

And they are multiple.

The burdens that resettled refugees experience range from the everyday weight of institutional racism to the consequences of Trump's remarks that paint certain refugees as dangerous. Vinii and her husband were very hopeful that things might change once Biden took office. During the first several months of 2021, it did not seem likely that Biden would keep his promise of increasing the resettlement quotas to the USA. On April 16, 2021, Biden announced that he would keep the 15,000 refugee resettlement quota that Trump had set for 2021. His Press Secretary furthered clarified this statement in a written press release that stated, "Given the decimated refugee admissions program we inherited, and burdens on the Office of Refugee Resettlement, his initial goal of 62,500 seems unlikely." This statement, which uses the term burdens, can be read as blaming the Trump administration for those burdens. In this case, however, Congolese refugees are not concerned with the term "burdens." Rather their concerns have been with the unmet promises of resettlement quota increases and the continuation of finding fault elsewhere rather than working toward solutions. Both of which are indicative of the logic of burden-sharing. It is a logic that intends to promise solutions through the act of sharing among states, but in practice tends to assign blame with the intention of unburdening states.

Biden's Presidential Determination on Refugee Admissions, which set the resettled refugees admissions target to 125,000 for 2022 has given Congolese refugees hope once again. It is a cautious optimism, one that recognizes that the admissions in 2021 did not even reach Trump's set quota of 15,000 (according to the UNHCR, 11,554 refugees were resettled in the USA in 2021)[5]. So Congolese who live in refugee camps and in the USA wait to see what will happen in 2022. Will many more refugees be resettled? What will this mean for family reunification? The questions, the uncertainty, and the waiting are not new. In fact, they are much too familiar. They are continued burdens of the humanitarian system.

Born from burden-sharing, these burdens refugees endure will not change as long as this humanitarian language and logic continue to be used. But what if there were a paradigm shift? What if donor states recognized that they also share responsibility for the harm caused by the humanitarian system and not just its so-called burdens? What if the language of burden-sharing was shifted not to a language of responsibility but to one of support? What if refugees were seen as assets rather than burdens? What might that look like for families like Vinii's who are hoping to be reunited?

Whether they remain in a camp like Vinii's husband or whether they have been resettled like Vinii and their two children, refugees will continue to bear these burdens at least as long as the current logic of burden-sharing persists.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by University of Colorado Institutional Review Board. Written informed consent for participation was not required for this study in accordance with the national legislation and the institutional requirements.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The author confirms being the sole contributor of this work and has approved it for publication.

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[5]https://www.unhcr.org/resettlement-data.html

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