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COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIPS

IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE RIGHTS

(CHAIRPERSON)

TRANSPORTATION

(VICE-CHAIRPERSON)

BUDGET

COMMITTEES AND RULES

PUBLIC SAFETY

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WAY

July 3, 2024

SUPPLEMENTAL DOCUMENTS FROM THE
COMMITTEE ON IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE RIGHTS
SUBJECT MATTER HEARING / COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD JULY 2, 2024 AT 12:30 PM

ITEMS

1. 'Indigenous Ecuadorians: Challenges and Advocacy for TPS' presentation from Edith Freeze, Pachacamak Foundation;
2. 'Climate Migrants and Receiving Communities' presentation from Dr. Anne Junod and Dr. Rachel Drew;
3. 'Climate migration: the role of city government' presentation from Dulce Guzmán, Alianza Americas, and Jose Robles, UIC Latino Cultural Center.

Indigenous Ecuadorians: Challenges and Advocacy for TPS

This presentation explores the pressing issues faced by indigenous Ecuadorians, including displacement from traditional lands, economic marginalization, and cultural preservation challenges. It also examines the recent political crisis in Ecuador and the involvement of cartels in human trafficking. The information presented aims to advocate for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Ecuadorians in the United States, highlighting humanitarian grounds and the economic and cultural contributions of this community.

 **by Edith Freeze**

Good Afternoon everyone,

My name is Edith Freeze and I am a proud Kichwa woman dedicated to advocating for indigenous rights and well-being. With a background in Economics and Policy Analysis, I have used my skills to address the complex challenges our communities face. Currently, I work as a researcher at Northwestern University, have been honored with the position of Community Scientist at the same institution, and direct the Pachacamak Foundation, which is committed to promoting sustainable development and cultural preservation for Indigenous communities.

Growing up in Ecuador, I witnessed firsthand the struggles and resilience of our people. This experience fueled my passion for creating sustainable solutions that uplift our communities. At Pachacamak Foundation, I focus on research that highlights the economic and social disparities faced by indigenous populations, ensuring that our voices are heard and our needs are addressed.

Through my work at the Pachacamak Foundation, I strive to bridge the gap between academic research and community advocacy, ensuring that policy recommendations are not only data-driven but also culturally sensitive and effective. By leveraging my education, position, and foundation, I aim to empower indigenous communities to achieve economic stability, preserve our rich cultural heritage, and secure our rightful place in society.

Together, we can create a future where indigenous voices lead the way in shaping policies that impact our lives. Thank you for your support and commitment to this vital cause.

Displacement from Traditional Lands

Indigenous Ecuadorians face significant challenges due to land grabbing and resource exploitation. In 2021, the Ecuadorian government approved new mining concessions in the Amazon region, affecting indigenous territories. According to a 2022 report by Amazon Watch, over 200,000 hectares of indigenous land have been allocated for mining projects without proper consultation, displacing thousands of indigenous residents.

Environmental degradation further exacerbates the situation. Despite legal victories like the Waorani community protecting half a million acres from oil drilling in 2022, other areas continue to face threats. The Rainforest Action Network reports that oil spills in the Ecuadorian Amazon have affected over 20,000 indigenous people in the last five years, contaminating water sources and farmland.



Economic Marginalization

Poverty and Lack of Opportunities

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated economic inequalities, hitting indigenous communities particularly hard. Many indigenous people, reliant on informal labor, faced job losses and increased poverty rates. A 2023 study by ECLAC found that the poverty rate among indigenous Ecuadorians surged to 68% during the pandemic, compared to a national average of 32%.

Informal Labor and Exploitation

Indigenous Ecuadorian migrants in the U.S. continue to face exploitative labor conditions. In 2022, reports emerged of indigenous farmworkers in Florida being paid below minimum wage and subjected to hazardous working conditions. The National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) 2022 highlighted that indigenous farmworkers in the U.S. earn 25% less on average than other agricultural workers, often lacking basic labor protections.

Cultural Preservation Challenges

1 Erosion of Cultural Practices

Urban migration has led to a decline in the use of indigenous languages among younger generations. In 2023, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education reported fewer children learning Kichwa and Shuar in schools. UNESCO's 2023 report classifies Kichwa as vulnerable, with the number of fluent speakers declining rapidly due to migration and assimilation pressures.

1

2

2 Discrimination and Assimilation Pressures

In 2023, indigenous Ecuadorians in the U.S. reported increased incidents of discrimination and racial profiling, making it difficult to maintain their cultural identity and traditions. A 2023 survey by the Pew Research Center found that 42% of indigenous migrants in the U.S. have experienced discrimination, impacting their ability to preserve cultural practices and community cohesion.

Political Crisis in Ecuador

Ecuador faced significant political instability in 2023, with frequent changes in government leadership, widespread protests, and civil unrest. The impeachment of President Guillermo Lasso and subsequent political turmoil led to increased uncertainty and insecurity for many citizens. The International Crisis Group reported over 200 significant protests and strikes in 2023, many led by indigenous groups demanding better economic and social conditions.

Indigenous communities have been at the forefront of these protests, demanding respect for their land rights, better economic opportunities, and an end to resource exploitation. These protests have often been met with violent repression. Human Rights Watch reported in 2022 that over 100 indigenous protestors were injured and dozens arrested during clashes with security forces.

Cartels and Human Trafficking

Cartel Involvement

Drug cartels and criminal organizations in Ecuador have increasingly turned to human trafficking as a source of revenue. These groups charge exorbitant fees to smuggle individuals across borders, often subjecting them to dangerous and inhumane conditions.

Increased Incidents

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported in 2023 that human trafficking incidents in Ecuador increased by 40% over the past five years, with many victims being indigenous people seeking to escape poverty and violence.

Violence and Exploitation

Indigenous migrants attempting to cross into the U.S. often fall prey to human traffickers. A 2023 report by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) found that 60% of Ecuadorian migrants who crossed the U.S. border faced some form of violence or exploitation by criminal groups.

Advocacy Points for TPS: Humanitarian Grounds

The human cost of displacement and violence is exemplified by stories like that of Rosa, an indigenous woman from the Kichwa community, who fled political violence and threats from cartels in 2023. She now lives in the U.S., struggling with legal status and economic stability. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that at least 15,000 indigenous Ecuadorians have been displaced by political violence and cartel activities since 2020.

These humanitarian concerns underscore the urgent need for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Ecuadorians in the United States, providing a safe haven for those fleeing violence, exploitation, and environmental degradation in their homeland.



Humanitarian Grounds Environment

Ecuador has faced significant natural disasters in recent years, including the 7.8 magnitude earthquake in April 2016 and heavy rains and floods in 2023. These events have caused widespread destruction, displacement, and economic hardship. The 2016 earthquake alone caused damages estimated at \$3 billion, equivalent to 3% of Ecuador's GDP at the time. The compounded effect of these disasters has hindered economic recovery and exacerbated poverty and unemployment, making it unsafe or unfeasible for Ecuadorians to return home.

Economic and Cultural Contributions



Economic Impact

Indigenous Ecuadorians contribute significantly to the U.S. economy. A 2023 report by the Center for American Progress found that undocumented immigrants, including indigenous groups, contribute approximately \$12 billion in state and local taxes annually.



Agricultural Sector

In 2023, indigenous workers in California's agricultural sector played a crucial role in maintaining food supply chains during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting their importance to the U.S. economy.



Cultural Enrichment

Events like the 2023 Inti Raymi festival in New York, organized by Ecuadorian indigenous communities, celebrate traditional music, dance, and rituals, enriching the cultural landscape of American cities.

Housing Markets and Migration

Housing is crucial to responding to migrants' needs

Study findings:

- Existing housing market challenges are compounded for migrants.
- Migrants often are unfamiliar with local markets and need assistance to navigate.
- Migrants initially cluster in locations with available housing and/or existing community ties
- Long-term impacts are hard to observe given geographic diffusion and variations in trajectories

Policy Recommendations

Federal	State & Local
Encourage and provide resources for potential receiving communities to build capacity in advance of a migration event	Set up a centralized system for migrants to access available services and resources
Allocate disaster relief to receiving communities when a migration occurs	Increase transportation options and availability for migrants
Provide cash assistance directly to migrants	Bolster coordination between key stakeholders
All	Expand data collection during climate migrations to identify and address both current and future needs for migrants
Plan for a long-term recovery	

Climate migration: the role of city government

Dulce Guzman, Alianza Americas

Jorge Mena Robles, UIC Latino Cultural Center



**ALIANZA
AMERICAS**



**Rafael Cintrón Ortiz
Latino Cultural Center**

Climate Change as an Amplifier

- Migration is the cumulative result of multiple factors (climate is one of these factors).
- Migration is not only a multifactorial but a multi-step process that typically begins with internal migration.
- People are already moving, and climate is already changing. The question we must be asking is how we are changing and adapting our systems to facilitate this movement to make integration into future planning processes.

CLIMATE CHANGE & MIGRATION

“I DIDN’T LEAVE MY COUNTRY BECAUSE I WANTED TO, I LEFT MY COUNTRY BECAUSE I HAD TO.”

— Antonio Lara,
Former coffee farmer, Ocoatepeque, Honduras



CENTRAL AMERICA DRY CORRIDOR

Drought and irregular rainfall in the Central American Dry Corridor, made worse by climate change, has caused food shortages and a loss of livelihoods, leading to migration.

PUSH FACTORS

Some combination of these six factors affect the decision to migrate.

*Climate change amplifies these factors and their interactions.



87%

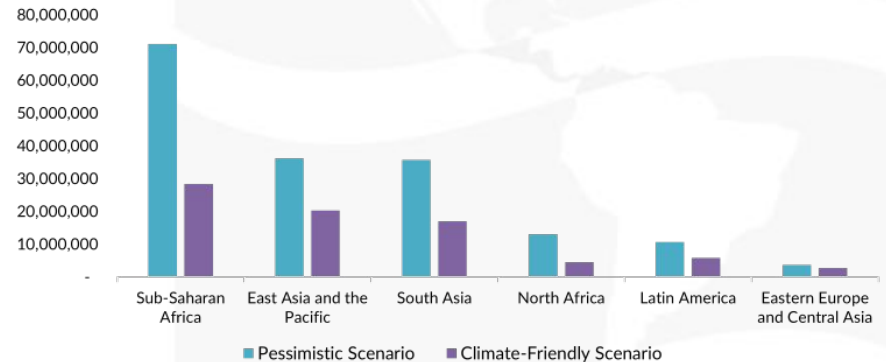
of Central American immigrants in the U.S. come from El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

3.9 MILLION

The World Bank estimates weather will force 3.9 million migrants to flee Central America in the next 30 years.

Climate Displacement in Countries of Origin

- Climate-induced disasters have already uprooted 21.5 million people
- It could force 216 million people across six world regions to move within their countries.
- In Latin America, climate displacement is projected to be around 17 million people ([World Bank's Groundswell report](#))
- The number of Africans apprehended at the southern border jumped to [58,462](#) in the fiscal year 2023 from 13,406 in 2022.



Note: Figure shows average number of internal climate migrants predicted under the different scenarios.

Source: Viviane Clement et al, *Groundswell Part 2: Acting on Internal Climate Migration*, (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2021), available online.

Examples of Recent Climate Events

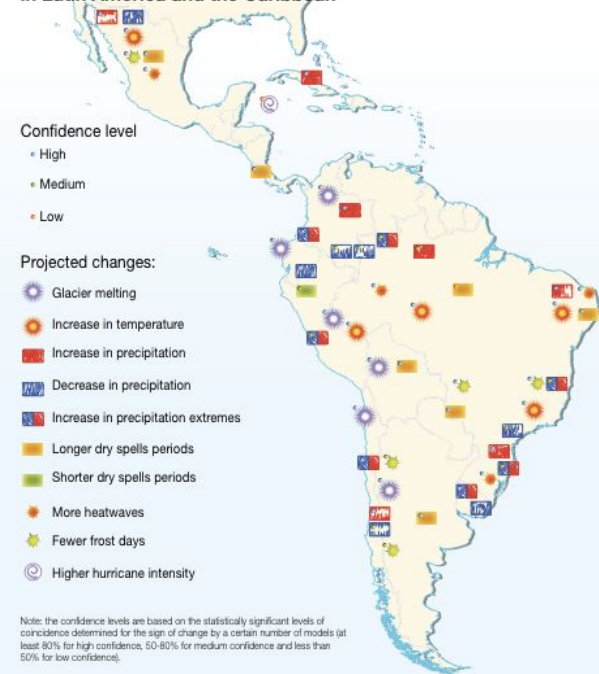
Mexico: Mexico has been experiencing extreme droughts and excessive heat, contributing to the water crisis they are experiencing in several areas that rely on agriculture for their survival.

Central America: In 2020, Hurricanes Eta and Iota destroyed housing, farms, infrastructure, and still working to rebuild communities.

Puerto Rico: 2017, Hurricanes Irma and Maria caused massive power grid failures. Also faces rising sea levels, stronger and more frequent hurricanes, increased flooding.

The Caribbean: Rising sea levels, marine pollution and degradation, and stronger hurricanes.

Summary of climate change patterns projected for 2100 in Latin America and the Caribbean



Source: ECLAC, on the basis of information from the National Institute of Spatial Research (INPE) of Brazil.

Current challenges to understanding and managing climate migration

- It is very difficult to document climate as the main factor for migration. Most migrants point to other factors, not always making the connection between climate and migration.
- There is no legal definition to describe people who have been displaced from their homes due to climate change or disasters. “Climate migrants” cannot claim the same internationally-recognized protections as refugees or asylees.
- People are migrating from countries that historically have not migrated to the U.S. in the same numbers as those from Mexico, or Central America, making it very difficult for them to integrate without existing social networks.



Photo from Alianza Americas partners ACCSS in Guatemala after hurricanes Eta and Iota devastated communities in 2020.

Impact of influx of new arrivals on Cities like Chicago

- The narrative of migration as a “crisis” has impacted the way cities and states within the U.S. view new arrivals, centering the narrative on what asylum seekers “need” rather than recognizing the cultural values and opportunities they bring.
- Cities like Chicago have been experiencing challenges with an aging worker population and a [decline](#) in overall population and birth rates. The recent arrival of working aged migrants to the U.S. was a missed opportunity to welcome new workers, creating a pathway for a more sustainable integration.
- The last two years have spotlighted what many frontline social service workers have been saying, Chicagoans are in need of greater investment in programs and services that support their well-being and provide for economic opportunity.
- The problem is not the influx of arrivals, it is the many years of disinvestment in Black, Latinx, and other marginalized communities.

Existing Climate and Environmental Challenges in Chicago



- **Altgeld Gardens**
 - Located in Riverdale neighborhood, home of 95% Black population
- **Calumet River**
 - Considered one of the most polluted rivers in the US
- **Little Village**
 - Former site of Crawford Coal Power Plant, botched implosion in 2020
- **McKinley Park**
 - MAT Asphalt plant located across from the 70-acre park
- **Pilsen**
 - Former site of Fisk Generating Station (top EJ offenders in US)
- **Southeast Side**
 - Historically plagued by industrial facilities and pollution

Chicago: Resisting Cycles of Environmental Injustice in La Villita



Rafael Cintrón Ortiz
Latino Cultural Center



1 of 2 →

1987: The Crawford Generating Station closed in 2012 due to local grassroots activism. Courtesy of Library of Congress.

THE
PROBLEM

THE
ROOTS

THE
SOLUTIONS

TAKE LOCAL ACTION

In the 1990s, the frequency of dramatic climate events and start of NAFTA increased the influx of migrants across Central America, Mexico, and the U.S. Settling in La Villita, immigrants confront toxic environments due to old zoning laws and discrimination linked to 19th century policing to protect industrialist interests



RACISMO AMBIENTAL EN EL NEGRABO FLEHIO Y SUEVA Y

MAT ASPHALT

- PLANTA DE PRODUCCION DE ASPHALTO CALIENTE
- EN CERCA PROXIMIDAD A UN PARQUE Y VARIAS ESCUELAS
- INAGURADA SIN CONCIENCIAMIENTO Y APROVECHANDO COMUNITARIA

TAMBIEN CAMBIO COMO "EL CAMBIO DE LAS ENFERMIDADES" POR SER EL GRANIZERO INDUSTRIAL MAS GRANDE NACIONALMENTE, HASTA LOS 1970'S

POR SU INFRAESTRUCTURA INDUSTRIAL Y CONCENTRACION DE FLEHIO CHARLES Y BOY, TIENE POCAS CALLES CON DIRECTO ACCESO

HIG CHEMICALS

- FABRICA PRODUCTORA DE QUIMICOS VANTAGE™, PRODUCTOS OLIOQUIMICOS, MAYORITARIAMENTE ACEITES, GLICERINA, SURFACTANTES, ESTERS Y INGREDIENTES BIO-ACTIVOS.
- HIG CREA PRODUCTOS PRIMARIAMENTE BASADOS EN ACEITE DE PALMA, UN PRODUCTO MONOCULTIVADO Y FUNDAMENTAL EN LA DEFORESTACION GLOBAL.
- PRODUCE EMISIONES QUE ELEVAN EL RIESGO AL CANCER

Map showing the locations of Mat Asphalt, Flehio, and Hig Chemicals relative to Duval and Smith streets. A north arrow is present.

Illustration of a row of houses.

Climate Change and Migration

Environmental Justice Movement in Chicago



BLACKS IN GREEN



Climate Change in Mexico and Central America

- Migration to Chicago is driven by a combination of political, economic, and climate factors.
- Storms, droughts, floods, temperature fluctuations, and sea level changes are just some of the recent manifestations of climate change that continue to uproot the lives of thousands, creating unbearable living conditions across Mexico and Central America.
- Climate change is jeopardizing access to food, water, and other necessities.
- Migrants are seeking refuge in Chicago where they bring their assets and build cultural connections and integrate with local communities.

Recommendations

- **Advocacy before federal government** to do the right thing on immigration policy, like the many cities that have passed local resolutions supporting TPS. This can also include supporting policy that creates a pathway to regulate climate induced migration, and updating the definition of a refugee to include individuals currently seeking asylum.
- **Investment in more quantitative and qualitative analysis** that documents international and internal displacement to better understand mobility to the city of Chicago.
- **Building city-level welcoming ordinances and supports for newcomers** that enable their integration into local workforces and communities. Developing state-level work programs that would provide opportunities for migrants to legally work.
- **Championing investments** in infrastructure, housing, green jobs training that are accessible, healthcare, and education that recognize that growing numbers of people will be on the move due to climate change—and that local communities are on the front lines in ensuring their successful integration.
- **Partnering with peer governments** in climate-vulnerable Latin American and Caribbean nations to boost their long-term resilience. Maintaining forests, natural coastal protections, and small-scale agriculture could mitigate the effects of climate change. (ex. Making investments in local response systems in Latin America)
- **Working with Black, Latinx, and other minority-led community efforts** addressing climate and environmental inequality to ensure policies and programs are reflective and responsive to the changing needs of international and internally displaced populations.

Check out our Series on Contextualizing the Migrant Narrative

Our Webinar Series "Contextualizing the Migrant Narrative," [explored the historical, economic, and political factors driving migration](#) from Latin America and the Caribbean to the U.S. We looked at the [significant challenges faced by cities like Chicago](#) in addressing the needs of new arrivals, highlighting serious flaws in public policy. This series also addressed the [tensions between historically marginalized communities](#) and aimed to develop a deeper understanding and collaborative solutions.

Alianza Americas mission

Alianza Americas is a transnational organization that aims to create a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable way of life for migrant communities in the Americas. Our work focuses on the U.S.-Mexico-Central America migration corridor and is rooted in Latino immigrant communities and organizations in the United States.

Climate Justice at Alianza Americas

Our advocacy and work focuses on:

- The adoption of climate-friendly policies on the local, state, and national levels that contribute to:
 - The reduction of CO2 output and overall energy consumption.
 - Increasing the well-being of communities.
 - Centering equity and sustainability as key policy functions.
- Mitigate the impact of climate change and assist communities in their adaptation efforts so that international migration or internal displacement are not their only options.
- Immigrant communities in the US and countries of origin increase the equity of post-disaster preparedness and post-disaster responsiveness and relief.
- Migration pathways for individuals and communities impacted by climate change and environmental degradation that forced them to leave their countries.

CARE: How we get there (Capacity Building, Advocacy, Research and reports, and Education)