

‘Things Were Good’: How One Ivorian Hairdresser Restarted in Tunisia



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Audrey Thibert is a senior at UW-Madison pursuing degrees in journalism and anthropology with a certificate in Middle East Studies. Audrey served as the 2022-23 managing editor at The Badger Herald, a fully independent newspaper on the UW campus, where she is now on the Board of Directors. She is the recipient of the inaugural Anthony Shadid Memorial Scholarship for International Reporting and is a returning fellow at the University of Wisconsin Center for Journalism Ethics.

Previously, she interned at Isthmus, a local nonprofit newspaper in Madison, WI, and the James Foley Legacy Foundation, a group that advocates for journalist safety. She hopes to pursue a career in foreign correspondence, with a focus on people who are impacted by conflict, but often forgotten in mainstream media coverage.



Story

“Things were good,” Jal said. “I never wanted to leave my country because I had my business and things were good. I had my corner salon, I got married, and had two children. Things were good, I had no problems.”, Marie Jals life was looking promising, but one fair full day she had it ripped from her with a fire that burnt down her salon and home. Marie then developed chronic anemia that was being treated in Côte D’Ivoire but soon there was nothing the doctors could do to help, the best option for her at that point was to move to Tunisia where her sister lived to seek medical treatment. But due to the crackdown of immigrants going to Tunisia due to a statement the Tunisian President had come out with that same month, she was sent back when she arrived despite having an invitation from her doctor. She was invited again by a friend that lived in Tunisia two weeks later, being allowed in this time. Marie received major discrimination and racism upon her arrival. She then gets a job which helps her buy her medication and support her children back in Côte D’Ivoire due to the fact that the husband divorced Marie after finding out she was sick.

Issue

The biggest issue I see in the story is how common it is for politicians to use immigrants as a scapegoat while ignoring the fact it's actually benefiting them at times in order to not admit they're the ones harming their country. In this story the "Tunisian President Kais Saied gave a speech calling the influx of sub-Saharan migrants a "criminal arrangement" to "alter the demographic structure of Tunisia."", like many others before him he uses immigration as a scapegoat in order to shift responsibility off of him. This has happened to about every race in the history of America, which has caused naive residents to resent the immigrants coming in and blame them for all their troubles, which can often result in violence.

Querencia

As stated earlier, a fire causes Marie to not only lose her salon but also her home. In only a couple minutes she loses two of her querencias, her salon was her livelihood, where she felt at her best. Lost her house where her family resided and felt at peace. Due to the sickness she develops she loses her husband and has to move from her daughters, losing the last of her querencias. Forced to move to a country completely unfamiliar where she felt like she was not wanted.

Critical Question- Why are people migrating?

It's more common than it ever has been for people to leave everything they have in their home country like their spouses, children, work, everything they've built up in order to pursue the "american dream". It's often fueled by them living in dangerous environments to the point that they have nothing to lose, to the point they are willing to die if they have so much as the opportunity to not live surrounded by filth and constant violence. Because of the fact that most countries are run by corrupt people that don't care about their residents, resulting in the countries currency being practically worthless and making most of the residents live in poverty.

Critical Question- Why are people willing to leave their homes and move somewhere else?

Like I stated in the previous slide, most 3rd world countries are run by corrupt people. Which forces people to live in poverty till they can no longer stand it anymore and are forced to take the risk and immigrate to a safer country.

Critical Question- What challenges do people who are migrating face when reaching their destinations?

It's very common for people who migrate to expect to make it to their destination and instantly make enough money but it's also very common for them to experience people being prejudice against them and not be able to afford a safe living. Often having to work in harsh environments with little to no monetary compensation because it's the only work they can get due to their legal status.