

## UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME AS A MORAL ALTERNATIVE TO THE CHALLENGE OF MIGRATION

**Charles Nkem Okolie, PhD**

Department of Philosophy

Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike Ikwo (AE-FUNAI), Nigeria

[okoliecharlesnkem@gmail.com](mailto:okoliecharlesnkem@gmail.com)

### **Abstract**

*I address three basic questions: what is responsible for the rise of migration and brain drain in Africa? Is it moral and humane for leading European and North-American countries to close their borders against Africans? Is universal basic income a more plausible option to close borders? I employ the method of critical analysis and evaluation to address these three questions. I argue that the ultimate factor for the current tide of brain drain and migration from Africa is socioeconomic in nature. My response to the second question is negative. I maintain that anti-immigration policies are inherently immoral because they restrict the free movement of human beings based on social categorization such as their race, nationality, and socioeconomic value. In relation to the third question, I submit that the wellbeing of all humans in the contemporary world is in a sense interconnected because what affects humans in a given part of the world also affect the wellbeing of humans in another part of the world to a certain degree. Therefore, the quest for human wellbeing in any part of the world is a mutual responsibility of all countries. I argue that this is fundamental in the case of Africa and the champions of close borders because of their past and present contributions to the socioeconomic condition in many African countries. My contention is that the adoption of anti-immigration policies and closed-borders by leading European and North-American countries as a political tool for curtailing the rise of migration from African countries is morally problematic. I argue for a universal basic income that will be mutually funded by all countries as a humane and moral option for dealing with economic induced migration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*

### **Introduction**

It is generally assumed that the more global the world becomes there should be an ever-increasing borderless world, wherein individuals irrespective of nationality, language, tongue, race, colour, religion, and socio-economic status can freely migrate from one nation to another. This appears to be far from the case, as there are visible anti-immigration policies and laws being enacted by more economically viable European and North American nations against less economically viable nations. Some of these policies are directly geared towards forestalling the immigration of people of some particular race, religion or socio-

economic status. For instance, the United States of American anti-immigration policy is mainly directed against immigrants with Islamic background, Africans and Mexicans. The closing of borders against Muslims is on religious ground; while that against Africans is on two grounds – race and socio-economic reason and; that against Mexicans and other neighbouring North American countries is based on solely socio-economic factor.

The fact is that these anti-immigration policies and laws enacted today are meant to forestall the immigration of individuals from the socio-economically disadvantaged countries to emigrate from their home countries to become immigrants in other countries that are more socio-economically advantaged. This act of closing of borders by these socio-economically viable nations constitutes a global challenge, hence the need to propose a way forward to this problem. The questions are: should there be a universal call for the abolition of these anti-immigration policies? Or should there really be a need for an alternative way round this challenge? In this paper, I am not in support of the first option of the abolition of the anti-immigration of laws or policies meant to bar Africans and other individuals of socio-economically disadvantaged nations from immigrating into more socio-economically viable countries. My take is that if the laws or policies are abolished it will lead to and encourage brain-drain from these socio-economically disadvantaged nations hence, those who could have helped to improve the socio-economic status of these nations through their ingenuity and innovative insights are but given the leeway out of their countries. These people will immigrate into those economically viable nations who could easily pay for their innovative ideas and services with higher currency.

The position that I pursue is that there is the need for this anti-immigration laws or policies to be maintained and, that there is the need to propose another option to resolving the problem that socio-economically disadvantaged nations are facing. I shall argue here that Universal Basic Income (UBI) can function as a viable alternative to this challenge of anti-immigration laws and policies enacted by some nations in Europe and North America. I shall go about this task by first looking at the rationale behind the anti-immigration policies that are continually being enacted in some European and North American countries. Thereafter, I shall also consider the meaning of Universal Basic Income and its characteristic features. And in the final note I shall delve into the core issue, which is to discuss Universal Basic Income as a moral alternative to the challenge of migration. I shall kick start this paper with considering the reason behind the instituting of

anti-immigration policies by some of these European and North American countries that are seen as socio-economically advantaged or viable.

### **The Question of Anti-migration Policies (in Some European and North American Countries)**

This section does two things: first, it seeks to answer the question why migration from Africa? And the second concerns explaining the basis for the enacting of anti-immigration laws or policies in some these European and North American nations. The fact is that migration which is the movement of people, goods and services from one geographical location or region to another, is an age-old phenomenon, which has been influenced or motivated by one reason or the other, is today having a telling effect on a global scale. This is because there is a rapid large scale movement of people from less socio-economic regions to regions of high socio-economic power. This is as a result of lack, or increase loss, of job by individuals within the emigrating nations or regions. It is germane to note that emigration is usually from nations or regions that are mainly underdeveloped and still developing. And in such nations, like in other nations of the world, the leading cause of joblessness is increase in automation. According to Yannick Fischer, “the decisive variable is the effect of labour automation, which increases economic insecurities globally, leaving some nation states in a position to cope with this and others not” (2018: ii).

The fact is that labour automation which is the leading cause of lack of job (joblessness) has led to internal domination in underdeveloped and developing nations, especially African nations, such that there is increasing pressure for individuals to relocate to nations or regions that guarantee economic security. This is to say that joblessness and labour automation are the leading causes of migration from socio-economically disadvantaged nations or regions to socio-economically advantaged ones.

This kind of migration that is rooted in labour automation and lack of job can also be influenced by the fact that the socio-economically disadvantaged nations have failed to provide economic security for her citizens, by introducing Universal Basic Income (UBI) or other welfare packages. This has made their citizenry to fair bad economically and therefore made individuals to look for greener pasture elsewhere. And they do so by moving to other nations that have introduced economic securities such as Universal Basic Income, health insurance, etc. Today, this is having a telling effect on the socio-economically advantaged nations. It is pertinent to note that socio-economically advantaged and viable

nations such as the USA, Britain, Germany, etc. Have long introduced this practice, and it is very functional. And these places are where most individuals from the socio-economically disadvantaged nations majorly African nations moves to for economic security. This is resulting to migratory pressure on these developed nations that have been providing economic security for their citizens.

The migration of individuals from the socio-economically disadvantaged or underdeveloped and developing nations does not only lead to migratory pressure on the developed or socio-economically viable nations, it also brings about the challenge of sustaining the introduced and working Universal Basic Income as well as the challenge of managing and maintaining the economic viability of their nations. It is on this note that the socio-economically advantaged and viable nations with functional Universal Basic Income have to seek a way forward to the migratory pressure that comes with immigration into their territories. Writing on this, Fischer notes that “the imposition of borders in order to keep a basic income (UBI) sustainable as well as labour automation itself, establish a form of domination over less developed and thus demand international regulation” (2018: ii). This entails that the introduction of migration policies and in particular anti-immigratory policies by these socio-economically viable nations is for two basic reasons. The first is that it enables them to sustain the introduced Universal Basic Income which is meant to serve their citizenry and those taking resident within their nations. And the second is to perpetuate domination of the-not-yet-developed nations by the developed nations hence, the continual widening socio-economic gap between the developed and the yet-to-be-developed nations of the world. In this is dehumanizing and immoral since it places restriction on the free movement of humans from nations and regions to any nation or region of their choice, due to the fact that their home nation or region is socio-economically not viable.

What I am saying is that anti-migration laws and policies are engineered and instituted to checkmate migratory pressure as well as sustain the socio-economic domination of the developed nations. This anti-migration policy is also known as border restriction law or policy against immigrants. This is a way of enforcing border closure against those from socio-economically backward and disadvantaged countries. This practice is in a way having telling negative effects on individuals within and from the economically disadvantaged individuals. The worst is that it keeps African nations economically and politically subjected and subordinated by those socio-economically viable nations of Europe and North

America. This, for more me, is immoral and dehumanizing and needs to be redeemed.

### **What is Universal Basic Income?**

The concept 'Universal Basic Income' is an ideology that is speedily gaining grounds among committee of nations most especially with rapidly increasing poverty and unemployment rate. According to Basic Income Earth Network (BIEN), Universal Basic Income is "a periodic cash payment unconditionally delivered to all on an individual basis, without means-test or work requirement" (2017). What this entails is that Universal Basic Income, which is also known as Global Basic Income or Global guaranteed income (Murray 2), is an unconditional cash payment made available to all citizens. This regular fixed payment is sometimes and in some cases made available by the Government or any other public organization in the public sphere. This is the idea that Zheng, Guerriero, Lopez and Haverman have in mind when they aver that

A Universal Basic Income (UBI) is a regular fixed cash transfer payment provided by the government – or any other in situation in the public sphere – to every citizen or resident, regardless of whether he or she is rich or poor and/or wishing to be engaged in paid employment. (2016: 9)

Universal Basic Income has some defining distinguishing characteristics or features. These characteristics are that it is: periodic, paid in cash, paid to individuals, universal and unconditional (De Wispelaere and Stirton 2004; Van Parijs 2004). In what follows, I am going to discuss each of these characteristics or features of Universal Basic Income.

#### **i. Periodic:**

By this, one is saying that Universal Basic Income is a payment that is made over a period of time; it is not a onetime grant or payment. It is germane to note that this regular payment varies from one version to another (Eidem 2017: 8). For some proponents, the payment should be given solely to adults and particularly to those have reached the age of 21 (Paine 2004). That is to say that Universal Basic Income has two dimensions to its periodicity or periodicness. First, it is periodic in that the payment is made to citizens at interval and not once and for all and; second is that it is to be given to adults only.

ii. Paid in Cash:

The proponents and supporters of Universal Basic Income were of the view that the payment be made for a particular purpose such as for food, shelter, or for specific goods or services. But today the argument and case have taken a different dimension – it is that the payment should be made in cash to the individual. This cash payment grants individuals the freedom to make choices over how best to use the money paid to them and for what purpose that best satisfies their respective need. Stressing this point, Stian Eidem posits that “It is paid in cash, so that the people themselves can decide how to best use it” (2017: 3). It also helps local businesses instead of to impose foreign goods and services on the people (Van Parijs and Vanderborght 2017).

iii. Individuality:

In the case of individuality, the payment is made only to individuals and not to couples or households. The reason is that it is the individual’s right which he/she deserves. Hence, it is “a basic income (that) should be designed to cater (for) individuals, not households, since it is considered truly individual right” (Zheng, Guerriero, Lopez and Haverman 2017: 9). This payment is made to individuals in the household for two reasons: it is more efficient means of payment since it might be easy to determine and control the number of people (in particular adults) in the household and; it makes the system more efficient as well as enhance cohabitation and empower women in the household as they come to see themselves as those who have say in the family and household (Eidem 2017: 5-6). In all, it fosters cooperation and equality among citizens and gender.

iv. Universality:

Universal Basic Income is said to be universal. It is universal in that there is “no means-test” (Eidem 2017: 6). It is not restricted to some individuals or a particular gender for any reason. Rather, it is available to all citizens irrespective of gender or social status or contributions. It is made to all the people population. But it could start from a particular domain and then be gradually universalized with time.

v. Unconditionality:

This payment is unconditional. Writing on this, Zheng, Guerriero, Lopez and Haverman quip that by unconditionality “a basic income should be

unconditional (or it should employ conditions that do not violate inclusiveness)” (2017: 9). It does not place limit or restriction based on gender, religion, ethnicity or any other factor. It is an all inclusive economic scheme. One does not need to be a worker or would be worker before he/she can be given such cash. It is meant for all who have the basic requirements of being an adult, a citizen and residing in the country or region.

### **Universal Basic Income as a Plausible Option to Closed Border**

As stated earlier on, there is the practice of border closing by some European and North American countries that are socio-economic advantaged. This is apparent in their anti-immigration policies. The essence of these policies is to keep immigrants away from their countries, whose presence could upset their national economy. Hence, what I am saying is that closure of borders by these socio-economically advantaged countries is to help have a smooth running economy that is not over stretched by external influence or intruders. This act and practice of border closure against immigrants is mainly targeted against Africans and Latin American countries that are economically disadvantaged, whose citizens always have the desire to seek greener pasture in Europe and North America. This is an immoral and dehumanizing practice against Africans. Therefore, there is the need to look for an alternative way of addressing the challenge of meeting up their economic need of their teeming citizens. It is here that this section becomes pertinent. This section argues that Universal Basic Income could act as an option for closed border against individuals from African nations.

Also, as noted in the previous section, Universal Basic Income which is a minimum amount paid to every individual in a nation-state, is distributed to all the citizens of the country without any form of restriction or limiting criteria/on or condition. All the citizens through this act are treated equally since none is regarded as superior or inferior; all are equal as they are given and receive the same amount irrespective of socio-political status. This cash gives all equal leverage to participate in the society with no form of marginalization or subjugation.

The reason why African nations should go for Universal Basic Income is because there is a raising use of automation and unemployment (Autor and Dorn 2013: 1558-1559; World Bank 2016: 22; Frey and Osborne 2017: 268). This is a sign of technological progress that is leading to a great loss of job by many citizens who are not educated and skilled to handle this complex technology that is taking over the place of humans (Smicek and Williams 2015). Not only is there the

challenge of unemployment, there is also a rapid and widespread economic recession that has left citizens in a state of socio-economic devastation. This in turn “increases the insecurity that individuals feel towards work as a social protection” (Fischer 2018: 5). It is in this context that it could be argued that Universal Basic Income is a possible remedy to harsh conditions such as unemployment, high level of poverty and increasing inequality in African societies and the world in entirety (Raventos 2007; boffey 2015; Chapman 2017). It does this by creating economic security as well as gives everyone the capacity to participate in political discussion on any issue burdening the society. It also challenges the people’s conception of work or occupation – it gives individuals the idea that work is not a basic necessity for subsistence. On the contrary, via Universal Basic Income, work becomes understood as one’s contribution towards human well-being.

In the world today, diverse forms of inequalities exist that somehow place limitations on individual’s freedom. This scenario needs also to be redeemed. Individuals need to regain their freedom, which socio-economic and political inequality has created. This can be made possible through Universal Basic Income (Van Parijs 1997: 1; Raventos 2007: 74; White 2011: 73). Phillippe Van Parijs makes this point clearer as he posits that real freedom is possible for each individual if each of these individuals enjoys the privilege or right “to do whatever what one might want to do” (1997: 23). This is to say that Universal Basic Income reduces economic insecurities as well as enhances the distribution of freedom within a society in order to create equality (Van Parijs 1997: 24; Fischer 2018: 6). Freedom and equality, therefore, are what the society can offer the individual via the instrumentality of Universal Basic Income.

There can be no freedom unless it is freedom from domination and inequality as well as arbitrary interference in exercise of their power (Honohan and Havdal-Moan 2014: 2; Ronzoni 2017: 189-190). The fact is that there can be no actual freedom where there is domination and regulations which bring about interference in the right of individuals. However, there could also be laws and regulations which could bring about interference but does not lead to a kind of domination that limits individual freedom; it guarantees that individuals can live together within a political community (Pettit 1999; 2007: 4; Casassas And De Wispelaere 2012: 172; Dagger 2005: 185; Laborde and Ranzoni 2016: 281).

The kind of domination that Universal Basic Income ought is to liberate individuals from is one in which the rich are made richer and the poor poorer.



This leads to loss of self-dignity and self-respect. This kind of domination is due to economic insecurity. Writing on this, Fischer quips that

Domination is highly likely to occur when there is high socio-economic inequality amongst a political community, making it easy for the rich to be in control of the poor. Furthermore, these inequalities create feelings of humiliation and, more specifically, a loss of self-respect as one is vulnerable to abuses of power by the dominators... Given the high level of economic insecurity that are induced by labour automation, as well as the restrictions imposed by contemporary welfare systems, such as means-testing, individuals are very vulnerable to domination by either their employer or the state's social service agencies. (2018: 7)

What this implies is that socio-economic insecurity, domination and inequality can be overcome and, its unconditionality and universality (could) help provide an egalitarian socio-economic order wherein there is independent, material existence as well as an autonomous base (Ronzoni 2017: 191; Raventos 2017: 69) for every individual in the society. This is what Universal Basic Income can bring about as it can alleviate poverty level and guarantees a "substantial economic floor" (Casassas and Widerquist 2016: 288). In this way, Universal Basic Income decreases the economic insecurity that exists between individuals and dominating structures or systems between earners and non-earners or employers and employees, or employed and unemployed.

Consequently, Universal Basic Income instigates individuals to reflect on and interrogate systematic domination that exists within the political and social structure in a country, region or globe. This is based on the fact that Universal Basic Income gives each individual the basic minimum with which to take care of their fundamental needs like anyone else in the same society. This influences the individual's relationship with each other within the society as well as enhances human freedom. This is substantiated by Fischer thus:

Freedom as non-domination thus provides a moral justification for why one should support BI (Universal Basic Income). Additionally, it should be used as an analytic tool to reflect on structures and relationships in

order to detect and minimize domination, occurring either within a state or on the global level. (2018: 8)

What this entails is that Universal Basic Income could bring about an equitable society that humanity longs for. With such a society of equity, fairness and socio-economic equality, non-domination and freedom of every individual, there would be no need for individuals from socio-economically disadvantaged countries in Africa who desires to migrate to socio-economically advantaged nations in Europe and North America. The reason is that every individual via Universal Basic Income is provided with the basic income required to take care of the fundamental needs.

The problem with Universal Basic Income is; what kind of Universal Basic Income will be useful and relevant among African nations? There are basically four possible levels of Universal Basic Income, namely, global, regional, subnational and national. Each of these levels has their respective witnesses. For instance, global level of Universal Basic Income, which is financed by global dividends, global imposed taxes (Jordan and Duvell 2003: 140) and redistributed to each individual on a global scale, has the challenge of how can the fund or income generated be redistributed from the global purse to every individuals without misappropriation and mismanagement? This makes it difficult to accept Universal Basic Income at the global level. Also, Universal Basic Income at the global level is impossibility because of the heterogeneity of the identities, population and plurality of public opinion as well as a weaker set of political institutions when placed side by side with nation-states (Van Parijs and Vanderborght 2017: 241; Fischer 2018: 9). It is because of these factors that regional Universal Basic Income has not worked in Europe. Another factor that hinders regional Universal Basic Income in Europe includes euro-crisis of creditor and debtor, which influences political integration and Universal Basic Income (Laffan 2016: 915-917; Fischer 2018: 9). It is this solidarity problems among EU member nations that makes Universal Basic Income political unacceptable and not workable in Europe (Mencinger 2015: 915-917; Fischer 2018: 9). These factors could also hinder the practice of Universal Basic Income in Africa (African Union – AU).

Furthermore, Universal Basic Income at the subnational level has some challenges such as internal migration within a nation, most especially when Universal Basic Income is introduced and implemented in some region of and not in other regions of the nation. This internal migration could lead to economic and political crisis and instability, which is not healthy for the sub-region of the

nation and the nation as a whole. The kind of Universal Basic Income that is recommended here for African nations is National Universal Basic Income (NUBI). This kind of Universal Basic Income makes for the introduction and implementation of Universal Basic Income in every part of the country such that no individual or subnational region is left out for either social, ethnic, religious reasons, etc. This practice of Universal Basic Income at the national level provides for efficiency and makes all citizens economically efficient, independent and viable since all benefit from the income. But the question that begs for an answer is: how can the funds for Universal Basic Income be generated for poor African nations are incapable to provide for their citizens? This is really a difficult challenge that many African nations will face if there are to implement Universal Basic Income. Countries like USA, Germany, Britain, Israel, China, India, etc. that have implemented it have a very strong, stable and viable economy that can take care of their citizens basic needs and they are still working to maintain this viable economy. But most of the African countries and especially those countries south of the Saharan do not have such viable economy. What this implies is that Universal Basic Income is bound to fail here.

Other challenges apart from financial pressure that could act as disadvantage to the practice of Universal Basic Income include: administrative challenges such as lack of functioning tax system, imperfect information and ineffective implementation; act as negative incentive as it could lead to people doing nothing; it could lead to people who do not need this fund – the non-poor or rich in the society gaining from this fund; it could lower wages of workers in the labour market and; it could attract influx of migrants that might jeopardize the sustenance of the scheme (Malul, Gal and Greenstein 2009: 1-8; Zheng, Gerroriero, Lopez and Haverman 2017: 14-16). With these challenges and disadvantages, one could argue that there is absolutely no need for African nations to get involved in the practice of Universal Basic Income. This is not true. Some of these challenges and disadvantages do not have hold water. For the challenge of negative incentive, it could be argued that Universal Basic Income does not provide negative incentive in its entirety but can motivate citizens to put in their best in working for the development of their countries and seeing to it that their economy become stronger and more viable. This also addresses the issue of economic pressure on the nation. With respect to the challenge of this income getting to the hands of the rich who may not need it, the respond is that it is right for all citizens to gain equal access to this fund since they are all members of the society and bound to contribute to the efficient and effective running of the socio-political and socio-economic life of the society.

However, there are other advantages that make Universal Basic Income a viable option for anti-migration policy. These include: it could lead to freedom and justice for all citizens, poverty reduction, promotes gender equality, reduces income inequality. In all, I am saying that Universal Basic Income is the an economically efficient welfare solution that can help Africans cope with the challenge anti-migration laws and policies enacted by some European and North American countries since it will make each individual adult within African economically independent and viable.

At this point, it is germane to return the question of; how can the fund for Universal Basic Income by raised? This fund can be raised through global funding a well as free-will donation from socio-economically advantaged nations. My argument is that the wellbeing of all humans in the contemporary world is in a sense interconnected because what affects humans in a given part of the world also affect the wellbeing of humans in another part of the world to a certain degree. Therefore, the search for human wellbeing in any part of the world is a mutual responsibility of all countries.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, I have noted that there is the reality of some European and North American countries closing their borders against Africans, who are moving over to these countries for greener pasture. This is apparent in their anti-migratory policies. This policy is meant help them sustain their economy for their good and to help them maintain the economic needs of their citizens. This closure of border could also lead to economic strain in Africa. It is on this note that I argued that Universal Basic Income can act as a morally viable option for anti-migration that is meant to keep Africans back from migrating from Africa to some of these European and North American countries. The reason given is that it could lead to freedom and financial autonomy of each individual in the society as it given all individual in the society irrespective of financial or social status. This will make Africans and African nations economically viable like other nations of the world.

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