African Immigrants’ Experiences at the Ukraine Border Points During Russian Invasion: Meta-analysis of Racism during Global Crisis

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Abstract

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has sparked the world order that has been socially constructed since World War II and brought racism’s realities back to light in modern society. Coming right after the Covid-19 pandemic, the war has challenged western diplomacy as an avenue for resolving border disputes in the contemporary world. The sovereignty of nations has been tested by the war, with the EU security threatened. The war has led to the forced migration of Ukrainians and Ukraine residents. African immigrants who fled Ukraine at the start of the war faced inhumane challenges and violations of their human rights in their attempt to cross Ukraine’s border points to safety, unlike their white counterparts. This paper analyses four Africans’ experiences in their attempt to cross the Ukraine border to safety using biographical method. Additionally, the paper reviews ten media footages of first-hand experiences by African immigrants at the Ukraine border points as people fled to safety between 24th February 2022 and 30th April 2022. The paper uses qualitative method to analyze the experiences and narratives of African immigrants from international media and deconstructs their experiences using the theory of race and ethnicity. The Africans’ experiences are analyzed into typologies and deconstructed to illuminate the African immigrants’ experiences of historic, structural and systemic racism during global crisis. The objective of the interviews is to gather experiences and gather empirical evidence of racism experiences that took place at the Ukrainian border points. This paper highlights the conversation of human rights violations and social injustices against Africans in times of crisis and raises the questions of inequality and injusticetreatment towards African immigrants during crisis in Europe.

Keywords: African Immigrants, Biographical Method, Racism, Russia-Ukraine War, Theory of Race and Ethnicity

INTRODUCTION

Racism continues to be fought the world over and, in many fields, and disciplines, from labour market, academia, sports, and global crisis, and to other fields. Recent events on racial attacks have attracted global reaction and activism for social justice against people of colour, especially people of African descent and black people in general. The anti-racism chants of Black Lives Matter following the murder of George Floyd, the unequal distribution of the Covid-19 vaccine during the Corona pandemic, and media reports of racism and discrimination faced by Africans trying to cross the Ukraine borders following the Russia invasion of Ukraine are recent events that have triggered both a global outcry and a silent grumble of social injustices caused by racism and prejudice-inspired discrimination actions. This article uses the Cornell Law School definition of racism, that racism is the incitement of discrimination, hatred, or violence towards a person or a group of persons because of their origin or their belonging, or not belonging, to a specific ethnic group or race¹. While other groups also face racial discrimination and prejudices, the Africans and people of African descent face racial discrimination the most. Recent events have sparked outrage over obvious racial discrimination against the people of colour especially during the crisis. The emancipation proclamation birthed an epoch that amplified voices for ending the racial discrimination and social injustice discourse by the marginalized and minority groups, especially the black community. The Russian invasion of Ukraine raises concerns over historical, institutional, systemic and structural racism and discrimination against the black people. In the first week of the outbreak of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, several people living in Ukraine fled from Ukraine to neighbouring countries in search of safety. The observations at the border points where the Ukrainians and other Ukraine residents chose to flee from the war revealed a common pattern of racism or discrimination against people of colour. The situation did not consider women and children as both faced similar treatment of racism and discrimination, with their attempts to flee towards safety met with orders to stay in Ukraine regardless of the crisis situation until all Ukrainian men, women and children had been secured. This also follows the global discrimination of Africa and Asia during the Covid-19 crisis that followed a similar pattern where the Covid-19 vaccines were ordered by the American, European and other wealthy nations leaving poor countries on their

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own. Africa and Africans face the threat of racial discrimination during crisis situations as has been witnessed between 2020 during the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and how the distribution of the Covid-19 vaccine was handled, and 2021 Russia-Ukraine war outbreak, with two serious crises putting the welfare and interest of Africans and people of African descent last. These recent events put a sharp focus on historical, institutional, structural and systemic racism in the limelight. While some sectors of the Ukrainian authorities have defended their actions as being disconnected to racism and discrimination, there has been a very clear pattern and trends in the racial profiling through implied action and racial microaggressions witnessed at the Ukrainian border points. Individual African students, women and children have faced traumatic situations and stress because of the handling and treatment by the Ukrainian authorities at the Ukrainian border points. A comparative analysis of the treatment of the Ukrainian nationals, especially women and children versus the treatment of people of colour reveals rampant racial discrimination and prejudices against people of colour, especially the black people. Previous studies conducted in Europe have shown that various types of racism are practised in Europe. The new racism, neo-racism, old racism, crisis racism, ethnoracism, xenoracism, neoliberal racism, state racism, elite racism, gendered racism, rural racism, macro racism, micro racism, intercultural racism and environmental racism have all been observed in different situations across Europe. These existing forms of racism prompted the researchers to analyse the experiences of the African students that attempted to cross the Ukrainian border points and classify the types of racism observed based on the lived experiences of African students crossing the border. This article is critical and important following the two recent global-scale crisis, first during the Corona virus outbreak and second, during the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. The study reveals underlying systemic and institutionalized racism that rears its head during crisis of global scale, and when it comes to situations that are a matter of life and death. This study awakens the need to address racism and the calls for equality, equity and human rights. The rights-based approach is critically evaluated and basis of non-compliance to the principles of justice and equality deconstructed. The theory of race and ethnicity is used to illuminate the hidden but prominent everyday racism that is amplified during crisis. The data is gathered using biographical method in order to get to the bottom of the nuances of racialized profiling and experiences of discrimination on the basis of skin colour.

This article answers the following research questions;
What forms of racism were faced by Africans at the Ukraine border points during the start of the Russia-Ukraine war?
How did the African minorities respond to the border-point discrimination?

The article is a need to address institutionalised, structural and systemic racism witnessed in the recent global events through the treatment of black people during crisis, especially by the global north. Black individuals play a key role and owe allegiance to their host countries. This is not reflected in the handling and treatment of black people during crisis. The human rights of all individuals including black individuals need to be subjected to equal and equitable treatment, and African women and children need to get a similar treatment as the other disadvantaged individuals like women, children and the elderly persons during the time of crisis. The structural flow in this article begins by describing the situation in Ukraine during the invasion by Russia, and then articulates the existing literature that have studied racism in the global north, Europe and narrows down to the experiences of racism in Russia and Ukraine in past research. The article describes the methodological approach and theoretical framework. Thematic analysis drawn from the data gathered using biographical method is used to arrive at the conclusions about the forms of racism experiences at the Ukraine border points as African students attempted to flee to safety in the early days of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

LITERATURE REVIEW

People of diverse appearances are perceived to have varied abilities and inherent dispositions, which have historically divided the human community. This form of thinking has brought about inequalities in the treatment of people across diverse racial categories. This can be seen during the Nazi’s and the apartheid crisis that existed in Israel, Australia, the United States and South Africa. Additionally, slavery and colonization activities that happened in Africa, the Southern pacific and Asia are also examples of past activities in the world that are associated with the inequality treatment of racial discrimination.

Racial discrimination is the behavioural manifestation of a negative attitude, judgment, or unfair treatment toward members of a group. It is a kind of discrimination based on race through decisions, laws, and behaviours intended at subordinating and controlling a specific race group. Racism is founded on the mistaken belief that one's race is superior to the other(s) due to the accident of colour. Although Africans were not and are not
parties to the ongoing war of Russia against Ukraine, the experience of racism they encountered during their 
Flee from Ukraine was unfortunate. Such as Non-verbal exchanges and actions like Africans fleeing Ukraine 
and being denied freely distributed food in trains, and the foods only given to white people due to skin colour 
that shows the prejudices against the black people. The same issue of discrimination based on a person’s decent 
especially those of black origin can be seen when political global leaders made comments on social media during 
the Covid-19 pandemic that encouraged racial discrimination. For example former Italian Deputy Prime 
Minister Matteo Salvini incorrectly connected COVID-19 to African refugee seekers, therefore asking for 
border restrictions. Border restrictions were tightened for Africans due to the linkage of Africans with 
transmission of COVID_19 to Italy. There is a similarity in the treatment of African refugees with the 
experiences of Africans at the Ukrainian border points during the Russia-Ukraine war. Recent event on 
February 24th 2022 (Russia invasion in Ukraine) have sparked outrage over obvious racial discrimination against 
people of colour. People of African descent were treated unjustly by being denied services that were offered 
freely to their white counterparts. Euronews reported that some Africans were removed from the bus if they 
made it on time and the officials needed to create space for a white individual. This invasion also shed light a 
lot of light on racism experienced by Africans, for example, comments made by journalists and commentators 
sinuated that Ukrainians (largely white people) deserved to be treated better than Africans. Furthermore, 
presumptuous sentiments and utterances that the war was not in the Middle East or Africa, and therefore the 
Ukrainian refugees should be treated with respect; through such expression, we can see how racial 
discrimination is portrayed by the view that European (white) refugees are superior than African refugees. And 
kilings in other nations and against Africans is completely dismissed by Westerners this can be classified as a 
macro insult and micro assaults based on race and in this case Africans.

It is also important to outline in the context of this paper theory of racial contract suggested by Charles Mills. 
As Mills (1997) argues in TRC, “the fish does not see the water, and whites do not see the racial nature of a 
white polity because it is natural to them, the element in which they move” (p. 76). Ukrainian nationals 
constitute in their vast majority white people where traditional set of values (family-bonding, close circles 
surrounding, certain customs domination) is a very common notion for the country of the region of Eastern 
Europe. Therefore, given reality, unfolding in the conditions of emergency, has caused racial contract 
developments when Ukrainian border guards and authorities responsible for evacuations of the population 
towards the border have exercised racist distinctions, primarily, towards the people of colour. Mills claims that 
dominant racial group (Ukrainians in our case) is able to maintain racial privileges within any life circumstances. 
And Ukrainian case demonstrated the disinterest of border guards or authorities towards resolving racial 
incidents. It is necessary to acknowledge the existence of the racial contract and make a concerted effort to 
undermine the prejudices and systems it supports to end it. Racial justice and equity movements in the twenty-
first century, like Black Lives Matter, have sought to expose institutional racism and push for reform in order 
to undermine the idea of the racial compact. Nationality and belonging are still contentious notions. Racism 
encountered by refugees of colour amid Russia’s continuing invasion of Ukraine undermines African 
conceptions of belonging to Western society. Coloured refugees, especially Africans who have crossed borders 
found it more difficult to acquire temporary lodging and support in European nations. Racial conflicts at 
European borders have once again revealed the inequity of many Western ideologies and actions. If the West 
can come together in the face of violence and unite against Russia, why isn't the same compassion afforded to 
African refugees?

METHODOLOGY

This is an ethnographic study using the biographical method. The researchers are minorities in their respective 
contexts with two immigrants of African descent in Finland and one immigrant of Ukrainian descent in 
Lithuania as researchers. Their positionality is informed by their lived experiences and migration status in their 
countries of residence. The biographical method was chosen because of its ability to create a safe space and 
build trust between the researcher and the respondent. The researchers in this study, draw and make inferences 
from their lived experiences and observations of racism and discrimination in their countries of residence during 
the global pandemic in 2020 and relate with the experiences narrated by the respondents and interviewees in 
the articles. The research analyses qualitative data gathered from the biographical interviews and themes 
generated are used to draw conclusions about the racism experiences at the border points in Ukraine.

The article is based on the qualitative review of semi-structured interviews of four Africans that fled Ukraine 
due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Questions regarding exiting Ukraine, treatment by Ukrainian
authorities, amount of money spent for the journey have been singled out as fundamental in the questionnaire. The study additionally reviews activities and articles related to activities that occurred between 24 February 2022 and 30 April 2022. All the interviews took place in an online setting via zoom applying CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interview) method since respondents are currently located in different countries across the EU notably, in Poland, Netherlands and Finland. There were 15 questions in the list that informants had to respond to. The questions were aiming to comprehend as much as possible the experiences at the border point by the respondents while they were fleeing the Ukraine war crisis. Legal and marital status of the person in Ukraine and in the country of current residence, age, type of citizenship, reasons for choosing one or another country as a final destination, money spent on the journey to the destination, aspect of potential smuggling cases, border experience and encountering of discrimination/racism cases - aspects that have been raised in the designed questionnaire. Informants for the interviews have been found through the personal networks of the researchers. Eventually, it turned out that respondents represent two countries - Nigeria and Cameroon. Additionally, a snowball method was applied to reach out to fellows of already interviewed respondents.

Furthermore, researchers have applied a methodology of analysis on the transcription of the video-materials that have been outlined by the global media outlets in light of the situation concerning African migrants discrimination at Ukraine-EU borders in the first weeks of full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The videos were analysed objectively to capture the narrative of the interviewees of African descent, especially on their experiences while crossing the border to safety. The videos met the date range outlined for this research and the criteria included the mainstream media and other media including social media videos describing the experience while at the border or about crossing the border. The researchers transcribed interviews conducted in English only and developed themes that have been used to reinforce or counter the arguments gathered in the interviews. The transcription process involved listening to the video and writing down the sentiments of the African interviewee. The videos were counterchecked by a second researcher that verified that the text was accurate and consistent with the video. The data was then analysed and themes derived from the data gathered. The themes are used to present the arguments in the article about the Africans experiences as they crossed the border in search of safety in the neighbouring countries. A critical analysis method of secondary literature analysis has been applied in order to single out the cases of racism that have sparked with regard to the African nationals during the Covid-19 pandemic and consequent Russian-Ukrainian war to raise awareness about the given issue. Racism and microaggressions notions allow the authors to shed more light on the situation of how African nationals have been treated in the first weeks and months of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by bringing up a scientific perspective.

**Border Points in Ukraine Used for Escape**

This article focuses on the Ukraine-Poland border point that was used as an escape route by the people escaping the war from Ukraine during the early days of Russian attack. The article reviews the experiences of African students at the border crossing into Poland. Ukraine borders seven countries but most of the interviewees and secondary data gathered refers to the Poland border point.

**Findings Analysis**

The age category of all informants ranged between 26 and 33 years old. One male holds the nationality of Nigeria while three females are citizens of Nigeria (one person) and Cameroon (two persons), respectively. The first common thing that unites all respondents is Ukraine's student status. They were living and pursuing studies in different universities of various cities (Kyiv, Kharkiv, Dnipro) and that was the main reason why they had arrived in Ukraine - to obtain higher education. All of the respondents on the date of the interview have been identified as holders of the Temporary Protection permit in their countries of present stay. Majority of the informants were single and did not have any close family (partner and kids) whether in Ukraine, or back to Africa. This paints a picture of young vulnerable youth with no older person to turn to in the event of a crisis. Their marital status did not change as at the time of interview conducting, i.e. after more than a year when they left Ukraine. Yet, the Cameroonian respondent has informed that her kids currently live in Cameroon while she is working in Finland after fleeing Ukraine. A Nigerian female who used to live in Kyiv has mentioned that she was pregnant at the time of the beginning of the full-scale invasion. And she gave birth to the child after the arrival to Poland. All of the informants left Ukraine during the first week of the full-scale invasion. The reasons for choosing the destination of safety varied among the interviewees. One of the respondents mentioned the distance mattered to her due to the pregnancy factor and long trips could be putting some additional burden on her in that regard. Male respondent specified that Finland was his preferred destination as he knew there were a lot of Ukrainians in Poland and he from his knowledge, Poland did not historically
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treat ‘people of colour’ equitably and that the foreign policy of Poland was not favourable for foreigners from the global south. The respondent in the Netherlands chose the Netherlands as her sister is a resident of Netherlands. She felt that this was an easy way to get to safety and immediately feel accepted and a sense of belonging. A Cameroonian woman with kids outlined that she received a working contract in Finland for remote work, an offer that turned out eventually to be a scam. The respondent outlined that she chose Finland on the basis of this job offer. Heading further towards personal experiences, every respondent named Russian invasion of Ukraine as a main reason for leaving the country. And every informant had a different experience on the modes of fleeing from the country.

Current research has been divided into the four sections for building up the racism experiences arguments that have been revealed during the interviews. 10 additional secondary data was used from the media interviews available publicly in the internet from major media outlets. The interviews mainly focused on the interviewees, mainly African students feeling Ukraine through the Ukraine-Poland border point, describing their experiences from the moment that they began leaving their homes to the border point experience. The African students shared their experiences with the border security officers, transport coordination during boarding, the nature of assistance available to the students, observations and treatment of women and children, and the conditions in which they were living since their departures from their homes. The secondary data from the media interviews were used to complement the findings from the primary data, and to give credence to the statements made by the four Ukrainians that has escaped from Ukraine and had now settled elsewhere in Europe.

Inequality

All the four informants went through the unequal access to the public transportation that has been evacuating them from the war-torn areas or territories where hostilities were actively taking place.

As proof, a Nigerian female has mentioned:

‘Policemen at the railway station in Kyiv did not allow us to catch a train though they were screaming its for women and children. I kept shouting that ‘Please, I’m pregnant’. Policemen were allowing to Ukrainians only to embark on the train. If you’re not Ukrainian, not US/UK citizen - they were not allowing you to go on board the train. People were pushing, standing on each other. Next train came after 4 hours: people were pushing each other very much. I was able to secure a space to sit in the train’.

Similar situation happened to the Nigerian male student who has been commuting from Dnipro to Lviv by train. Direct reflection:

‘Ukrainian authorities were allowing only Ukrainian nationals to embark on the train at the railway station of Dnipro. And all the Blacks were not allowed to get to the train. I saw seventeen trains have departed in front of my eyes towards Lviv and we were still waiting at the station to secure a spot on the train. We started to shout and rebel against the actions of racism. Finally, they started to allow 5 Africans to embark for one train’.

Inequality has been revealed also during the border crossing by informants when ‘people of colour’ had to wait while a solid share of Ukrainians will cross the border. Cameroonian informant has mentioned that she faced cases of racism while crossing the border, yet did not details given argument. It took her up to six hours to cross the border and to exit Ukraine. Meantime, a Nigeria pregnant informant mentioned about 46 hours of being stuck during the month of February in order to cross the border. Similar incidents of inequality were reported in five out of seven articles by major media channels. The Euronews reported the inequality treatment experienced at the border during the border officers’ declaration of ‘Ukrainians first’ policy. It was also reported by Euronews articles that the Africans that made it into the trains were in some cases removed to create space for others.

Attitudes and Perceptions

During the interviewing processes informants have mentioned that Ukrainian authorities (whether at the railway stations, or at the borders) have been discriminating against them while prioritising Ukrainian citizens regardless of whether there was a turn of the ‘person of colour to cross the border’, for example. That has been also shown by the constant screaming and lack of adequate language communication from the side of Ukrainian officials. During the journey to Warsaw a Nigerian informant faced an aggressive attitude at the railway station of Lviv (largest city of the Western Ukraine) when she asked a police officer a question and the response was ‘Go back to Nigeria, there is no war there’. A Nigerian male informant, while waiting for the time to cross the border, reported about Ukrainian border guards’ aggressive communication and unwillingness to talk to the
people of colour. Informant that for the moment of interview was finding herself in the Netherlands has mentioned that it has been a challenge for her to catch a cab in Kharkiv (city of the eastern Ukraine) in order to reach the railway station. Interviewee had to pay around 80 dollars for a ride that took up to three kilometers. She has questioned whether such a price has been set up by the driver due to her origin/colour of the skin or if it was universal for everyone. The media reiterated the negative attitudes and perceptions with subtle and in some cases, open calls for white individuals first, and others afterwards if there was any space left. Four out of the seven articles mentioned the negative attitudes that played out towards the Africans and other migrants during the scape at the border points. Border guards were the most notorious in exerting their powers and using inhumane sentiments towards the Africans and other migrants. The reaction of the border guards is closely connected to the negative attitude and perceptions of Africans as lesser beings.

Risk and Insecurity

All of the informants have stated they have been afraid for their lives in the beginning of the hostilities. Moreover, leaving the country that turned out to be in a war condition was a new experience for every interviewee. Russian invasion of Ukraine has been outlined as a main reason for fleeing Ukraine. Nigerian respondent who has been pregnant back to February 2022 mentioned she spent 24 hours in the bombing shelter once hostilities have commenced and that was extremely difficult since there were no conditions for a proper sleep and rest. Nevertheless, the informants have also faced the notion of insecurity when they felt a threat from the side of Ukrainian governmental authorities during the crossing of the border or embarking on the train. It is important that every informant emphasised the role of volunteers who were operating on the border and they took care of every human being who has been in need of anything. Additionally, a Cameroonian informant has been at risk of not being able to finance her journey from Ukraine to Poland. Therefore, she asked for the funds from family members in Cameroon and, luckily, everything turned out positively for the informant. There was no physical violence/ any other type of harm that the four informants have encountered while fleeing Ukraine. In contrast, the media reports highlighted some form of subtle psychological and verbal violence against the immigrants at the border points. In Euronews, it was reported that some Africans were removed from the bus if they made it on time and the officials needed to create space for a white individual. Black women were asked to walk as buses only took in Ukrainians. The trauma and psychological torture caused by the sentiments and actions of the Ukrainian officials tortured the immigrants including Africans psychologically.

Human Rights Violations

As a violation, one should admit deprivation of the ‘people of colour’ to embark the same train and to commute together with the citizens of Ukraine that were aiming to leave the country. Violation of the right of the person for a safe space and secure conditions for life are at place here. Another aspect is an intentional idling of the process for border crossing that could have been observed from the Ukrainian Border Guard Service according to the informant’s evidence. An informant that has been finding her in the Netherlands at the time of interview has added that she did not face any cases of discrimination during the border crossing experience. Nevertheless, ‘one should pay attention to the waiting for a long period of time since Ukrainian nationals were prioritised by Ukrainian Border Guards’.

Interview questionnaire also contained the last question on the differences of attitude towards our respondents in Ukraine and in the countries of their current stay. Some of the respondents mentioned they would definitely prefer life in Ukraine, with all its challenges, since they were completely legalised there with programmes set out for the further studies/work. Someone has mentioned that Ukrainian people might be divided into racists and non-racists in light of their attitude towards Black people. Another respondent has mentioned language barriers when it comes to communication with Ukrainians. And it was turning out into a big challenge. Last informant has emphasised that she doesn't feel any difference whether one talks about staying in Ukraine, or in the EU. She finds conditions very similar to each other. The media reported incidents of human rights violations especially during crisis. Women including pregnant women were not given priority unless they were white. This unequal and discriminating action violated the rights of the disadvantaged black women in moving to safety. Ukrainian women were able to get space in the buses and trains, but the people of colour regardless of gender were denied access to safety. The situation as it was, was already hard for everyone to get a spot on the train, it was exacerbated by racial discrimination as gender or age doesn’t influence consideration and boarding decision.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK
Theory of race and ethnicity anchors on the division of people on the basis of physical attributes and characteristics, and involves profiling and assigning the social meaning to the groups. It further asserts that microaggressions are the subtle or sometimes nuanced insults directed towards people of colour. Other scholars have asserted that the critical race theory was motivated by the minority scholars to point out their jurisprudential perspective where the emphasis was laid on the fundamental changes in the ways in which the race was constructed. This article examines the issues of race and ethnicity emerging through the following sociological perspectives:

**Functionalism**

This perspective holds it that racism has historically existed to serve a particular function or goal. Nash (1964) argued that racism served the interest of the dominant group and racism morally justified inequality. The other perspective as argued by Nash outlined that racism was given a positive justification in the society and thus accepted as a normal and acceptable everyday occurrence. The border guards and other authorities acted with full confidence on the prioritizing of the Ukrainians and other white races to get to safety before the other minorities including Africans. The border guards did this with a perception that it was the right thing do, and we have read reports where the ministry of foreign affairs refuted such claims at the border which creates the impression that the authorities were defending and moralizing the actions at the border point.

**Conflict Theory**

Conflict theories posit that inequalities are based on ethnicity, race, education, social class and normalized by the majority in their best interest to maintain status quo and maintain their position in the society. Patricia Hill Collins, a feminist sociologist argued that a society cannot separate race, ethnicity, education, gender, sexual orientation and other attributes from a society. She went on to unpack how prejudice was understood from a majority context where for example, a white woman is discriminated against on the basis of her gender, but the discrimination differed when applied on another poor say African woman that was affected by the stereotypes of poverty, gender and ethnic status. This shows the intersectionality in conflict theory. The African students experienced discrimination and inequality at the border points as they attempted to cross to safety. The situation was exacerbated for female students, and even worse for pregnant African women as they still go to experience the intersecting forms of discrimination and racism at the border points. The seven media reports all highlighted the disadvantaged position of the students as they made their way to safety during the early days of the Russian invasion on Ukraine. The Ukraine border officials gave priority to the women and children of Ukraine, then men from Ukraine before the other groups were considered.

**Symbolic Interactionism**

Symbolic interactionism posits that the race and ethnicity hold a key and symbolic role in the politics of identity. Racism and racial prejudice are driven by the interaction between the members of the dominant group or majority against all others. The dominant groups need such prejudice in order to protect their place and people from situations that threaten their collective well-being. This further rides on the culture of prejudice that argues that prejudice is an inherent attribute that is embedded in the culture of every society. Images have played a key role in historically placing assumptions that have contributed to the attitudes against minorities. The border guards and other authorities are seen giving priority to Ukrainian and white people, before all others. This is in disregard to the levels of vulnerability and goes against the efforts to leave no one behind as the Africans students were treated as second-class human beings during the entire ordeal with every story have some traces of racism or racial microaggressions. The world did not equally raise enough noises on the situation of the African students as it did on the welfare and situation of the Ukrainian refugees and asylum seekers all across the global north, especially in Europe.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Following the dynamics of answers from the case studies, it is possible to conclude that people of colour have faced racism and racial microaggressions while escaping from Ukraine in the first weeks of full-scale invasion and there is empirical evidence to that. It is a fact that racism in the case of ‘people of colour’ movement situated people according to the logic that every kind should be in its proper place. That has been the logic some of the Ukrainian officials were driven by while interacting with our respondents. The biggest challenges turn out to be the train embarking to reach the Ukrainian-Polish border and queuing at the border for hours in order to
cross it. One could presume in the given context that racism classifies people in distinct kinds each bestowed with an assumed inheritance of attributes. That is how the rationale of certain actions of Ukrainian border guards could have been explained. Ukrainian authorities were neglecting from time to time assistance to the African nationals (including pregnant female) while prioritising assistance to Ukrainian nationals. Ukrainian Border Guards Service primarily was allowing to cross the border to Ukrainian nationals and only after long hours of queuing ‘people of colour’ were allowed to exit Ukraine as well. There is a certain dilemma one should be aware of: racism achieves and maintains an unequal distribution of status, privilege, opportunities and vulnerability to the diversified population. And the exodus of African origin citizens from Ukraine during the time of emergency has proved this statement. All the informants have agreed that volunteers that were operating on the border between Ukraine and Poland have assisted significantly by delivering necessary goods, food etc. And they (volunteers) were the ones who acted regardless of the colour of skin of the person in need.

Eventually it is important to single out that no situations of abusive behaviour or harassment has been detected after the conversations with informants. All the racist scenes or microaggressions occurred without physical violence applying. This does not mean that there was no incident of emotional and psychological violence as these were subtle and nuanced in the implied actions of border officials. In incidents where Africans had boarded a bus, but were taken out on the basis of their race were clear psychological violence and depicted the discrimination on the basis of skin colour. It was also clear that gender or pregnancy did not help African women to secure a space and place in the train, but their skin colour was used to decide whether to let them board the train or not, and when they had to board and how. Racism is about intolerance. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe conducted a situation analysis whose goal was to combat racism and intolerance. Its adopted texts cover a range of issues, including antipurism, ant-Semitism, xenophobia and intolerance targeting migrants. The council observed an upsurge in intolerance and the emergence of new forms of racism. Intolerance is birthed by the attitudes and perceptions that migrants are a burden on public finances and a threat to economic prosperity and social cohesion. Anyone that reproduces and exhibits intolerance towards people on the basis of skin colour is a racist.

Racism naturalizes the established order of power and guards the identities, borders and flows that the technology creates and privileges. The discrimination and unequal treatment of African women, especially the pregnant African women depicted Africans as being at the bottom of humanity and low in the power dynamics. Racism situates people according to the logic that every kind should be in its proper place and this informed the inhumane treatment that disadvantaged and vulnerable Africans received as they tried to escape the war. In crisis, it was noted that racism achieves and maintains an unequal distribution of status, privilege, opportunities and vulnerability to the diversified population. Racism produces people that organically belongs in a certain territory by excluding other kinds of people. In the case of the four respondents and the media articles reviewed, the Africans and other migrants were treated with an attitude and perception that they belonged to the bottom of the pyramid. Racism classifies people in distinct kinds each bestowed with an assumed inheritance of attributes, in this case the skin colour was the main basis of classification. “Racism is like a Cadillac, they bring out a new model every year” – Malcolm X. This statement by Malcolm X raises the fundamental question of the forms of racism that exist in the contemporary world. It further pokes holes into the transformation of racism and how it has evolved in the era of technology and globalization. If racism is a political problem, then it must be solved politically. During Covid-19 crisis, and then during the Russian invasion of Ukraine, racism has reared its head in times of crisis. Crisis has violated the rights of Africans and black people to access human rights and dignity. This article illuminates everyday racism alongside structural racism faced by African and black people, more visibly during crisis. The emergence of Anti-African narratives are observed during crisis like war where crisis form of racism is visible and openly practised. We also see state racism where some states are treated favourably as Africans and other migrants that are considered inferior are treated unfairly.

Africans had little power and influence on the situation at the border points. Their response was meek and involved pleading on the basis of their situations such as pregnancy, gender and other visible desperation situations such as state of health. Everyone including Ukrainians had a feeling of desperation, the racial profiling exacerbated the situation for the Africans and other minority groups. The state of world politics and crisis management from recent historical crisis like the old ones, has reiterated the rampant structural and systemic racism that sometimes goes unnoticed and hidden in everyday subtle racism. This article draws attention on the need to revisit the racism discussion in the global north and from a global politics perspective. The world should be advancing towards an equal and fair society and a global village that leverages diversity benefits to the world.

CONCLUSION
Racism during global crisis has been observed in the two recent global crisis of the Corona virus pandemic and the invasion against Ukraine by Russia. This research observed that the racialized minorities in Ukraine faced discrimination while attempting to cross the border to safety like their counterparts. The border points had separate and unequal treatment against the racialized minorities that sought transportation or humane assistance to make it safety. African women and children were not given priority like the Ukrainian and other white individuals. The discrimination was exacerbated when white men were given priority over racialized women and children. This demonstrates a deeply rooted structural racism in Ukraine, and by extension within the European Union as the racialized individuals are treated separately and unequally during crisis where life and death decisions have to be made. Historically, the racialized individuals have been treated as the last in terms of priority where white women, children and elderly have been protected first, followed by white men, before the racialized minorities where the darker the skin, the last the priority. The sanctity of human life and respect for the human rights has been disregarded during serious crisis. The rights-based approaches have not been taken into consideration during crisis. This article illuminates systemic, structural and institutionalized racism as experienced by the racialized individuals crossing the Ukraine borders to safety. The types of racism experienced by the African students were old racism which is historical in nature, and discriminates against the black individuals on the basis of their skin colour. The experiences of neo-racism were observed in the guards attitudes and treatment of African students, as they were not recognized as Ukrainians and thus were discriminated against on the basis of the cultural difference. Crisis racism was the most obvious as the Ukrainian authorities prioritized the Ukrainians first, including prioritizing Ukrainian men over African women and children. Ethnoracism was also meted on the African students crossing the border to safety. State racism was seen in how the ministry handled the racism at the border points, where the ministry denied and considered the racial discrimination as not existing. Gendered racism was also noted with the white men given priority over African women and children. Such discrimination amplified the injustice that racialized groups endure in crisis. This article concludes that there was anti-black treatment of the racialized groups, and Anti-African treatment of the Africa students, some of whom were verbally attacked during their attempts to flee to safety. This article shows that racial hierarchies are systemic, often institutionalized through legal framework camouflaged as policies and laws. The border point treatment of Africans and other racialized minorities went against the New York declaration.

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