



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



Uyless Black

Globalization and Pandemics

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Mass permanent migrations and as well as mass temporary relocations have been part of humans' life patterns for many decades. As an example of the former, witness the large influx of English, Scottish and Irish immigrations to early America in the 17th and 18th centuries. As an example of the latter, consider the temporary residences of Indians in South Africa during the 18th century.

Globalization has encouraged even more immigration, both temporary and permanent. People from less affluent countries have been able to transport themselves more easily to prosperous nations who eagerly seek their labor. Not only "seek." Their labor is vitally needed for the well-being of the economies of prosperous countries.

It is likely you have come across the name Jose Andres in the media. An extraordinary man, he is a greatly respected chef, as well as a world-wide humanitarian, and named as one of Time magazine's 100 of the most influential people on Earth. Mr. Andres states many countries could not exist, much less prosper, if they did not have imported labor.

Who is going to make up Marriott Hotel's beds? Who is going to pick Texas's cotton? Who is going to flip the McDonald's patties? Mr. Andres, who has made millions on his high-end restaurants, claims he cannot operate without foreign workers. In



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GUEST OPINION

The coronavirus has dramatically altered this mutually beneficial arrangement between the haves and have-nots. The sudden loss of jobs to millions of migrant laborers, while certainly devastating to private enterprise, is catastrophic to those who do not belong to, and are not citizens of the places where they have become isolated.

Are they not free to return to their homes? That depends on the policies of their country of residence. It depends on how that nation opens or closes its borders, and in which direction these borders remain opened or closed.

As one notable and egregious example, India's prime minister, Narendra Modi (a man increasingly oriented toward autocracy) — with almost no warning — ordered a 21-day lockdown of road, rail and air transport services. With the closure of hundreds of businesses, it is estimated well over one-half million unemployed foreign workers were left stranded.

Many believed they had no choice but to attempt to return to their homeland. With no means of transport but their legs and feet,

so many words, his experience shows that (of course, generally) Americans shy away from jobs like peeling potatoes, mopping floors and washing dishes.



they began walking. Many of these helpless people faced a hike of hundreds of miles to reach their homes; a trek fraught with possible starvation and diseases...beyond the coronavirus.

Due to India's social distancing dictates, India's roads were nearly empty, but not for long. The mass flight created concentrated masses of people, as shown in the accompanying figure. (Courtesy of The Economist, April 4, 2020.) Glad to be in America?

Social distancing rapidly became unsocial distancing. The government realized its lockdown was creating additional dangers of spreading the coronavirus. Local governments are trying to limit the damage by hastily establishing temporary lodging for thousands upon thousands of frightened, penniless, exhausted, pathetic people. Mr. Modi "apologized" for any "inconvenience" his order may have caused.

Inconvenience? Take another look at the figure. These folks have been more than "inconvenienced." Truth is, unless some sort of miracle occurs, and with Modi's attitude toward segments of India's citizens, that is highly

unlikely. The displaced migrants are destined to live a hazardous day-to-day existence for a very long time. That is, those who manage to live.

While in the U.S. Navy, Uyless Black spent almost three years in and around southeast Asia. He personally witnessed the misery that accompanies poverty in the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam and other countries. While he was living in the Philippines, a flu struck Manila. Because of the city's lack of resources and the inability of its citizens to achieve "social distance," an inordinate number of people died. During the current coronavirus, Uyless rarely ventures outside his home. He asks The Press to convey, "For certain, America must 'get back to work.' But in order to do so, we must, first, stay alive. We must rely on the judgment and wisdom of our leaders. Let's hope they make the right choices. Whatever they are, we as a nation must stand behind them. And as this article states, be thankful we are living in America."

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Uyless Black, of Coeur d'Alene, is a prolific author and frequent contributor to The Press.