



# Ramblin' Man

**W**e are by nature a rambling race. The urge to roam has allowed our species to fan out around the globe and populate even the most remote and inhospitable climes. Whether people strike out in search of food, water, or sunnier shores, or to flee strife in the homeland, human history is largely one of movements of people across forest, deserts, and oceans. In modern times, this often means crossing borders, legally or illegally, in search of work, or leaving the rural life behind for a chance at a job in a city.

In fact, migration today is at an all-time high, says Brunson McKinley and his colleagues with the International Organization for Migration. Most of the countries in the world are now part of a global migration network, and multinational cooperation is needed to curb irregular migration and the exploitation of migrants.

Migration has been linked historically with the Industrial Revolution, but today's global economy and a gap in living standards have accelerated the pace of migration, as people in the poorest countries, lured by a cash economy, migrate to cities or more-developed countries in search of jobs. Globalization is also altering the character of society, as traditional communities and extended families give way to nuclear families, and as

subsistence economies are penetrated by capitalism and consumer culture, says Peter Stalker. In the short term, the volatile global economy will likely increase migration. As the standard of living in developing countries rises, however, there may be more incentives for people to stay home.

While the International Organization for Migration estimates the number of legal migrants at some 150 million, the number of illegal and undocumented migrants is impossible to estimate. As destination countries tighten border controls, irregular and clandestine immigration becomes ever-more criminalized, says Andreas Schloenhardt. Asia Pacific is perhaps the busiest region in the world in terms of illegal migration and organized crime, and the trade in migrants is surprisingly risk free, at least for traffickers and smugglers. The lives of migrants, on the other hand, are in jeopardy, as they are transported in unseaworthy vessels or in freight containers without adequate air, food, or water. Illegal migration is an international security issue and its prevention a shared responsibility of all nations. "Criminalizing the recruiting of migrant trafficking should be the primary target of law enforcement and control policies," Schloenhardt says.

In the United States, however, immigration is good business. "The economic, business, and political establishment believes that a growing economy needs a grow-

ing population," says Leon Kolankiewicz. But perpetual growth comes at the expense of the environment. Americans hypocritically preach sustainable development to poorer countries while rapidly consuming natural resources and gobbling up agricultural land at an unsustainable pace.

In sub-Saharan Africa, migration is as ancient as its history. Regular movements of pilgrims and traders were punctuated by crisis migration caused by war, the slave trade, famine, and drought. Migration in these cases was a survival tactic, as tribes fled to the bush or in search of water. With the colonial era, however, arbitrary boundaries altered the historic ebb and flow of human traffic. More recently, in what may be called the humanitarian era, nongovernmental agencies have engineered their own crises; by creating sanctuaries for displaced populations in enclosed camps, NGOs have inadvertently created a pool of recruits for guerillas, logistical platforms for combatants, and an ideal military target in the middle of conflict, says Marc-Antoine Pérouse de Montclos. "We should consider reviving ancient strategies for survival in emergency situations. Confining displaced persons in camps is not a solution."

*The Editors*