



## WOMEN WITH MIGRATION BACKGROUNDS: PIONEERS IN POLITICAL ACTIVISM

Women have always been at the forefront of political activism, challenging societal norms, fighting for equality, and advocating for deep systemic change. For women with migration backgrounds, the intersection of gender, race, and migration adds a unique and complex dimension to their activism, making their contributions unique and essential. Their voices not only reshape the political landscape but also highlight often-overlooked issues, creating pathways for a more inclusive, just, and diverse society.

### The unique role of women with migration backgrounds in activism

Women from migrant communities bring invaluable perspectives to political movements, enriching and strengthening public discourse. Their life experiences, which navigate identity, integration, and recognition in societies that often marginalize them, are at the heart of their activism. The key issues they address include:

1. **Intersectional Inequality:** Tackling the overlapping systems of discrimination, they face as women and migrants (see: UN Women, "Intersectional Approach to Women's Rights")
2. **Social Justice:** Advocating for policies that protect the rights of migrants, combat racism, and promote gender equality. (see: European Institute for Gender Equality, "Advancing Gender Equality")
3. **Community Empowerment:** Building solidarity networks that uplift marginalized voices and foster resilience. (see: Migration Policy Institute, "Community Building Through Activism")

### Overcoming barriers to participation

Despite their significant contributions, women with migration backgrounds encounter systemic barriers that can hinder their political engagement. These include:

- **Legal and Institutional Constraints:** Limited access to voting rights or eligibility for political office in their host countries. These institutional constraints not only limit their participation but also prevent their experiences and needs from being represented in the decision-making process. (see: European Network of Migrant Women, "Access to Political Participation")
- **Cultural Stereotypes:** Persistent biases that underestimate their leadership capabilities and reduce their visibility in public discourse. (see: International Organization for Migration, "Breaking Cultural Barriers")
- **Economic Challenges:** Balancing activism with financial stability, particularly for those supporting families. (see: OECD, "Economic Barriers to Women's Participation")

Programs like the Voices of Change (VOC) project play a vital role in dismantling these barriers by providing platforms for participation, leadership training, and mentorship opportunities.

### Inspiring stories of activism

Across Europe and beyond, women with migration backgrounds are driving impactful change:

- **Policy Advocacy:** Migrant women are often key players in shaping immigration and integration policies, ensuring that legislative processes listen to their voices. (see: Migration Observatory, "Policy Advocacy by Migrant Women")



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- **Grassroots Movements:** Women-led initiatives address issues such as access to education, gender-based violence, and workplace equity. (see: Women's Refugee Commission, "Grassroots Leadership")
- **Cultural Advocacy:** These women challenge xenophobic narratives and foster cross-cultural understanding by embracing and promoting their heritage. (see: UNESCO, "Cultural Advocacy and Inclusion")

### The road ahead

For societies to benefit fully from the contributions of women with migration backgrounds, intentional efforts must be made to remove systemic barriers and amplify their voices. In particular, efforts must be focused on three key areas:

- **Ensuring Representation:** Encouraging more women from migrant communities to participate in politics and decision-making processes. (see: European Parliament Research Service, "Political Representation of Migrant Women")
- **Providing Resources:** Supporting initiatives that empower women through education, mentorship, and advocacy training. (see: UNHCR, "Empowerment Programs for Migrant Women")
- **Fostering Inclusion:** Promoting a culture that values diversity and challenges discriminatory practices. (see: Council of Europe, "Fostering Inclusive Societies")

### A call to action

Women with migration backgrounds are not just participants in political activism; they are leaders shaping the future. Their resilience and determination to create equitable societies inspire us all. We can build a more inclusive and just world by recognizing and supporting their contributions. Let's continue to share their stories, celebrate their achievements, and work collectively to ensure their voices are heard.

*Ilaria Boiano, Lawyer and Gender Expert Differenza Donna NGO and Sofia Biondani, Gender Expert Differenza Donna NGO*

### Sources

1. UN Women: "Intersectional Approach to Women's Rights" (<https://www.unwomen.org/en>)
2. European Institute for Gender Equality: "Advancing Gender Equality" (<https://eige.europa.eu/>)
3. Migration Policy Institute: "Community Building Through Activism" (<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/>)
4. European Network of Migrant Women: "Access to Political Participation" (<https://www.migrantwomennetwork.org/>)
5. International Organization for Migration: "Breaking Cultural Barriers" (<https://www.iom.int/>)
6. OECD: "Economic Barriers to Women's Participation" (<https://www.oecd.org/>)
7. Migration Observatory: "Policy Advocacy by Migrant Women" (<https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/>)
8. Women's Refugee Commission: "Grassroots Leadership" (<https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/>)



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9. UNESCO: "Cultural Advocacy and Inclusion" (<https://www.unesco.org/>)
10. European Parliament Research Service: "Political Representation of Migrant Women" (<https://epthinktank.eu/>)
11. UNHCR: "Empowerment Programs for Migrant Women" (<https://www.unhcr.org/>)
12. Council of Europe: "Fostering Inclusive Societies" (<https://www.coe.int/>)



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