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# “We Are The Gap: Understanding the Inclusion of Immigrants in Moroccan Left-Wing Politics”

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“We Are The Gap: Understanding the Inclusion of Immigrants in Moroccan Left-Wing Politics”

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Abstract:

This project seeks to understand to what extent immigrants are included in left-wing politics in Morocco. In 2011, King Mohammed VI named Morocco an executive constitutional monarchy. One can argue that this means Morocco is moving in the direction of democracy, but is democracy what left-wing political parties are truly advocating for? And if they are, does the left include marginalized people it advocates for? Particularly, how are immigrants fighting for their own rights in Morocco, and to what extent are Moroccan left-wing political parties centering and uplifting the voices of immigrants, if at all?

Methodology:

Three informants were interviewed in Rabat, Morocco. All informants are referred to by pseudonym. The ethnographer attended multiple organizations in Rabat, including Non-governmental Organizations: L'Association Marocaine de Droits Humains (ANMDH), and Organization Afrique Culture Maroc, Governmental Organizations: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Foundation Orient-Occident, the Union: Organisation Démocratique du Travail, and the Subset of that Union: The Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco. The ethnographer lived in Rabat's L'Medina L'Kdima for fifteen weeks in 2018.

## Introduction:

Sitting on the back of a tour bus, half asleep during my first week in Morocco, our guide, a staff member at the Center for Cross Cultural Learning (where I completed my studies while living in Rabat) quipped: “And here is where the old Marxist-Leninist center used to be. Now it is a McDonald’s.” Naturally, the American students on the bus hooted and hollered in laughter, proving to one another that they each saw the irony in a Marxist Center being bought out by a place as capitalist as the franchise of McDonald’s. I say “naturally,” because this is a common theme among American college students, particularly ones who are white and educated. In my experience, American students love the performance of communism. At first, I thought that Moroccan college students may share this fascination, but quickly, the direction of my paper strayed from this thought. My ethnographic paper is seeking to understand how left-wing political spaces in Morocco include immigrants in their political activism, if at all, and in what ways immigrants carve their own political presence in Morocco’s constitutional monarchy.

When I first began this project, I was hoping to analyze what it meant it to be a Marxist in Rabat in 2018. I was hoping that I could create cross cultural distinctions between the performance and irony of bourgeois youth wearing communism as the latest fashion, in the way I see it through my American friends, through my American lens. The issue, I soon found out, was that practically nobody still identified as a Marxist in Morocco--particularly in Rabat or Casablanca, where Marxist movements were popular in the 1960s and 1970s. A newer left-wing movement arose in recent years, after a conservative, religious pushback to leftist thought occurred in the 1990s. These flips and switches in public popularity between leftism and conservatism reminded me of my home in the United States. One of my informants, a soon-to-be retired political science professor, also drew this comparison in one of our interviews. According

to Ayoub--who lived in the United States in his youth--Moroccans and Americans alike found communism and Marxism to be cool and hip in the 1960s, when Moroccan students were protesting the regime of King Hassan II and American students were protesting the U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. The next generation flipped this narrative, and Moroccan students had, according to my informant, abandoned Marxism for more conservative, religious views. Once a professor, he found this shocking, and remembered feeling daunted when his students asked to leave the room to pray. Although he never considered it wrong for students to leave for prayer, it was quite different from his days as a student, when students would spew Marxists texts verbatim to challenge their professors and their values placed in their religion and the monarchy. In America, he recalled, political activism was hip. People sang along to Bob Dylan and called for anarchy, while students in Morocco showed their belief to Marxism by reading theory precisely and recalling the texts perfectly. Still, he joked, both Moroccans and Americans wore their hair long and did drugs. They had these things in common.

This interview made me wonder what makes leftism--particularly communism and socialism--popular, or fashionable, and what happens to the groups that political systems were originally theorized to defend, protect, or represent. Students, who spearheaded leftist political activism with student unions in the 1960s, were not completely reflective of the proletariat, defined by Engels as “the class of modern wage labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live.”<sup>1</sup> Many students in private universities, in the 1960s and the 2010s, in Morocco and The United States, are members of the bourgeoisie that Marx seeks to overthrow. To narrow my project past what is and isn't fashionable, a term to me that felt too subjective to tackle in only one month, I narrowed my

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Engels: Note to the 1888 English Edition of: Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels: *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, in: 'Selected Works', Volume 1, ( London; 1943), p. 204



question to ask what the goals are of left-wing political parties in Morocco, and to what extent immigrants from places outside of Morocco are included in left-wing politics. In 2011, King Mohammed VI named his government an executive constitutional monarchy, a move many political scientists call a move in the direction of modernity.<sup>2</sup> My paper seeks to understand where leftist politics fits in this notion of modernity, when democracy (which can enter a dialectic relationship with leftism as a political system that advocates for communist or socialist systems) is seen as the avenue to modernity. How are unions integrated into democratic spaces? Are they seen as modern, and desirable, and, most importantly, is their role in politics taken seriously by political parties functioning in democratic spaces?

Immigrants in Morocco make up much of the Moroccan proletariat by Engels' definition. When researching Moroccan left-wing politics, I found very little information on how immigrants were creating their political presence. Many political science professors in Rabat discouraged me from researching the political presence of immigrants in Morocco, because, to them, the presence did not exist. After talking to one of the leaders of the Democratic Organization of Immigrants in Morocco, it is very clear to me that immigrants do participate in Moroccan politics (and these politics are considerably "left-wing"), and that democracy can be a desirable political system for immigrants to participate within, if the democracies center and uplift the voices of immigrants and their political affiliations. This paper seeks to highlight the many ways immigrants advocate for their rights in Moroccan politics.

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<sup>2</sup> Marina Ottaway and Meredith Riley, "Morocco: Top-Down Reform Without Any Democratic Transition," *Beyond the Facade: Political Reform in the Arab World* (United Book Press, 2008).

## Literature Review

We can summarize the history of left-wing politics in Morocco since the removal of french colonialism as a series of divides and recreation. The Istiqlal Party (or, at the time, The National Movement) allied with the Moroccan monarchy to fight against French colonialism until Morocco won independence in 1956.<sup>3</sup> Once France had pulled out its “protectorate,” the monarchy utilized the pluralism of political parties as an actor to control a polarized political landscape. Both King Mohammed V and King Hassan II encouraged splits from within parties and the recreation of new political organizations to create weaknesses in opposition-- all while dressing the divide as mobilization for democracy.<sup>4</sup> Even with the participation of opposing forces, the king still held ultimate power. Mohammed V named himself his own Prime Minister.<sup>5</sup> Morocco owned Western Sahara, and held the ability to criminalize Western Sahara national movements.<sup>6</sup> The King had ultimate power not only over his “legal” political opposition, represented by the USFP (Socialist Union of Popular Forces) but also the parties deemed “illegal,” in their opposition. These parties were considered too radical, including parties “too left wing.”<sup>7</sup> King Mohammed V dismissed the National Union of Popular Forces (UNFP) from Parliament--after it split from the Istiqlal--but did not dismiss the Istiqlal or the USFP.<sup>8</sup>

The Istiqlal Party was nationalist by nature and built its following in the cities by drawing the merchant class and more traditionally educated.<sup>9</sup> The UNFP split off from the Istiqlal Party in 1959, because the UNFP sought to represent working-class populations. Their base was

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<sup>3</sup> Mounia Bennani-Chraïbi and Sarah-Louise Raillard, *The Moroccan political partisan landscape: A polarized microcosm?* (Science Po University Press, 2014), 86.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 87.

<sup>5</sup> Marina Ottaway and Meredith Riley, “Morocco: Top-Down Reform Without Any Democratic Transition,” *Beyond the Facade: Political Reform in the Arab World* (United Book Press, 2008), 163

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Marina Ottaway and Meredith Riley, “Morocco: Top-Down Reform Without Any Democratic Transition,” *Beyond the Facade: Political Reform in the Arab World* (United Book Press, 2008), 163

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

younger, particularly urban, and more “progressive,” and “modern.”<sup>10</sup> The organization was headed by Mehdi Ben Barka and his network, because they found the Istiqlal Party “not radical enough.”<sup>11</sup> Mehdi Ben Barka was forced to disappear and assassinated in 1965 during the reign of King Hassan II.<sup>12</sup>

When establishing that there are parties “too left-wing,” for King Mohammed V, he also established that there are left-wing parties that are just left-wing enough. These parties are the ones that were accepted into democracy, and we can see through the deradicalization and unification of current left-wing political parties that leftism, as an opposing view to the King’s monarchy, was never truly accepted. But, according to the public, who saw King Mohammed V as welcoming to left-wing politics when he welcomed the Istiqlal and USFP, a myth is beginning that the Moroccan monarch is welcoming opposing political viewpoints and pluralism. Myth as an articulated language utilized by power was first employed as a theory by French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss. Lévi-Strauss suggests that myth can be analyzed as a tool by claiming, “Myth is language, functioning on an especially high level where meaning succeeds practically at ‘taking off’ from the linguistic ground on which it keeps rolling.”<sup>13</sup> There is a facade that leftism is welcomed, accepted, and utilized within the King’s political system, but behind this myth, I argue that neither leftism, nor democracy is accepted by any King, despite growing pro-democratic rhetoric, as long as the King’s power remains unchecked.

King Mohammed V, unlike his grandson, did not make any explicit statements that democracy was welcomed or desirable within his political system. As a monarch, he has no duty to act democratically. But his creation of Parliament, albeit Parliament with no power over his

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Gilles Perrault, *Our Friend the King*, (Gallimard, 1999), Page Unknown.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (Basic Books, 1963), p. 210.

rule, begins to implicitly open a conversation for democracy within the government of Morocco. This conversation will inevitably affect the way immigrants participate in politics a few decades later. Undocumented immigrants, as it stands, cannot be elected to a seat of Parliament, join a political party, or vote. Parliament consists of two chambers. The House of Representatives holds three hundred and twenty-five members who are each elected for terms of five-years in a general election.<sup>14</sup> The House of Counsellors holds two hundred and seventy members, who are each elected for terms of nine years.<sup>15</sup> They are elected by one hundred and sixty-two seats of local councils, ninety-one professional chambers and twenty-seen seats of wage-earners.<sup>16</sup> The Parliament holds two sessions every year; the first session is occupied by the King.<sup>17</sup> Without a seat in parliament, one can argue that immigrants do not participate in politics in any way. But if Parliament has no true power against the King, does it matter if immigrants hold a seat in Parliament? I argue that immigrants are able to participate in politics without holding a seat in Parliamnt, in ways many Morrocan-born people I encountered in my research failed to take into consideration. To measure the political participation of immigrants based on their participation in Parliament plays along with the myth that Parliament is able to act democratically under the rule of the monarch.

Under the original Constitution, the King of Morocco was (and still is) allowed to dissolve Parliament, assume unlimited power, and appoint cabinet members without election.<sup>18</sup> But even with revisions to the Constitution in 1970, 1980, 1992, and 1996, these privileges of the

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<sup>14</sup> Parliament, *Kingdom of Morocco Ministry of Culture and Communication*, maroc.ma.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Marina Ottaway and Meredith Riley, "Morocco: Top-Down Reform Without Any Democratic Transition," *Beyond the Facade: Political Reform in the Arab World* (United Book Press, 2008), 163.

king remained unchecked.<sup>19</sup> After King Mohammed V's death, his son, King Hassan II, continued the same governmental structure employed by his father. Hassan II, who took the throne in 1961, continued the cycle of complete monarchical control, weak parliamentary involvement, and weak involvement of popular force and political parties for thirty more years.<sup>20</sup> After his death, his son, King Mohammed VI, tried to incorporate democracy--and by doing so, claim modernity--into his monarchy by defining his monarchy as an executive constitutional monarchy.<sup>21</sup> But claiming democracy to be modernity also claims the monarchy, by result, is the political system of the past, which is simply untrue in the context of Morocco. "Modernity" was popularized by theorist Walter Benjamin, particularly in his critique of French poet Charles Baudelaire, *The Modern Writer*. Through his work, the reader understands modernity to be a destination point that exists dialectically to memory and tradition. Mohammed VI's move to modernize Moroccan politics democratically fails to reach a state of pure modernity, as the tradition of monarchy still exists within the modern; it does not become memory. The monarchy works beyond the way memory works itself into our state of modern, in which modernity can be a culmination of memories that are brought into the present through the ways tradition is part of modern life. The monarchy is still overpowering a democratic system in the present, and so the monarchy as it lives and breathes in Morocco is modernity, and its relationship to democracy is not so much dialectical as it is simply coexisting.

King Mohammed VI brands himself as "The King of the Poor," and is affectionately referred to as "M6."<sup>22</sup> The permanent ban imposed on three upstart publications and the government's harsh crackdown on human rights demonstrators argue otherwise. Even with a new

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 161.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, 163.

<sup>22</sup> Catherine Sweet, *Democratization Without Democracy: Political Openings and Closures in Modern Morocco*, (Middle East Report, 2001), 22.

brand of “democratic modernity,” the laws enacted by the king do not necessarily change from monarch to monarch.<sup>23</sup> Although the end of King Hassan II and the beginning of King Mohammed VI enacted a reform in civil liberties in the past several years, the expansion of political liberties lacks the same progression.<sup>24</sup>

There is also the added complication that a democracy will truly bring modernity to Morocco in the way the King is currently advertising, which I argue simply will not happen. King Mohammed VI continues to utilize the power of myth by advocating that democracy is modernity, and that democracy and modernity are desirable systems of government. Democracies do not guarantee that human rights will occur, or that the people of the democracy will have their needs fulfilled. I am not trying to advocate that Morocco undergoes a communist revolution. As a foreigner, an American, and a student, I do not have the authority, nor the experience to advocate an end goal for Morocco’s government system. As an ethnographer, I am interested in the dialectical relationship between monarchy and democracy, in tradition and modernity, and how the power of myth affects these seemingly opposing dialectics. If we erase the rhetoric surrounding these systems, can we still find these forces opposing?

But the question I am most interested in pursuing is: Where do immigrants fit into the dialectic of democracy versus monarchy? My visit to ODT, or *Organisation Démocratique du Travail*, and its subset The Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco, a union built by and for immigrants living in Morocco, was a wake up call in the pursuit of analyzing Morocco’s left-wing politics. One of my informants, a professor of Cultural Studies I will call Samir, described Moroccan politics as “on the ground.” He did not believe that European countries contributed to shaping any tendencies Moroccans had to building labor unions, or in

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

unifying the proletariat. Samir suggested that I talk to someone at ODT, and from there I started to build my project questioning the inclusion of immigrants from other nations in left-wing politics. Morocco is moving in the direction of a democracy but is democracy what the left-wing parties still advocate for? Is democracy a system in which unions can thrive? Does Morocco's left-wing political parties support and uplift the union of immigrants in Morocco?

Nabila Mounib, current party head of the UNFP, was a member of the National Union of Moroccan Students (UNEM) in the 1980s--a period when student organizations considered themselves leftist and opposed to the regime.<sup>25</sup> Fanack.com, a popular MENA-centered political news site describes Mounib as "a fervent advocate for equality, freedom, emancipation and democracy." Two of my informants who participated in the The National Union of Moroccan Students' movements in the 1970s, a decade or less earlier than Mounib, described these movements to be centered around Marxism, which positions itself in contradiction to democracy. Nabila Mounib is an extremely popular politician in Morocco. After her undergraduate career, she was active in the Democratic Youth Organization, the Organization for Freedom of Information and Expression (OLIE) and the Organization for the People's Democratic Action (OADP).<sup>26</sup> Eventually these organizations merged with other leftist organizations to become the United Socialist Party.<sup>27</sup> In 2005, the Fidelity to Democracy Association (affiliated with the Socialist Union of Popular Forces) joined the United Socialist Party.<sup>28</sup> The Unified Socialist Party became the center-force of the Federation of the Democratic Left, which attracted many other left-wing organizations to join the federation.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Author Unknown, "Nabila Mounib: The First Moroccan Woman to Lead A Political Party," Fanack, 8/21/2017.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

Nabila Mounib's role in politics was crucial in the unification of left-wing organizations, a bond-building that deconstructed the power tactic employed by the monarchs of Morocco-- destruction and co-option. The left in Morocco is more popular now than ever, but its impacts as leftist organizations tend to fall flat by its dedication to democracy. In its unification to check and balance the monarchy, the left becomes liberal, and the term leftism itself becomes myth. To answer my question proposed not long ago--"Is democracy truly what the left advocating for?-- yes, democracy and unity of different left-leaning politics is what the left of Morocco is advocating for. And although democracy may not be the political model in which unions were built to succeed in, within the context of Morocco, and its dialectical relationship between democracy and monarchy, the way unions are successful in gaining human rights is to assert themselves into modern politics is by playing the democracy game.

After interviewing Mr. Jacque, a leader of the Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco, my understanding of what it means to be part of a union in Morocco has changed. As an American, I see unions in tune with communism and socialism and as dialectically opposed to democracy. But existing opposed to democracy is not currently the strongest avenue for immigrants to assert themselves within Moroccan politics, even within left-wing politics. Morocco's first and only union for immigrant workers claims that using the political model of democracy is the strongest way for immigrant workers to assert their rights in Morocco's political system.



## Findings and Analysis

The Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco is the first and only union of immigrants in Morocco. It was created in the year 2012. The Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco's staff is entirely volunteer based. Their national office is made up of 25 members who are all immigrants. There is one secretary general who is of Moroccan descent. The organization has fifteen hundred members in eight cities: Rabat, Marrakech, Casablanca, Tanger, El Jadida, Fès, Agadir, and Laayoune. To reach the organization in Rabat, my academic advisor called the office of a non-profit, *Organization Afrique Culture Maroc*, who partners with the union. Their office in the neighborhood of Agdal in Rabat sat in an apartment building off of a large avenue in the area. When my colleague and I rang the doorbell, we were greeted by a kind staff member, a man who migrated to Morocco from the Democratic Republic of Congo. Musedi wore a button-down shirt, slacks, and dress-shoes. He seemed to be in his thirties, or younger. The three of us spoke briefly in a mix of Spanish, French, and Arabic with the help Google Translate. He called his colleague, A PhD student at University Mohammed V, who spoke both French and English. When Youness<sup>30</sup> arrived, he introduced himself, and the four of us sat in the conference room of *Afrique Culture Maroc*. Youness troubleshooted our projects with us, and gave me suggestions on how to tailor my interview questions to meet Mr. Jacques. Although the office was dimly-lit, the energy of the room was bright. Before my colleague and I left, Musedi and Youness apologized to us that they were not able to provide us with tea and coffee.

Youness called Mr. Jacques on the phone, and together we made an appointment for an interview that afternoon. Youness offered to translate my questions that day, and translate and transcribe the interview on his own time. We travelled together to meet Mr. Jacques at the

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<sup>30</sup> Not a pseudonym, for Youness' full-name is mentioned in my acknowledgments as a colleague

headquarters of the organization, not far from the Old Medina of Rabat. The constitution of Morocco does not allow immigrants to create their own union, but it does allow immigrants to join a pre-existing Moroccan union. In 2012, Mr. Jacques created a sector of the *Organisation Démocratique du Travail* (ODT) that defends and protects the rights of immigrants in Morocco. The union of immigrants became a very important sector in the ODT, because ODT is made of different sectors that focus on different issues. Mr. Jacques named sectors for health, transportation, finance, and public administration. He proudly said, “And we are now a sector of immigrants in Morocco, within the central ODT.”

Like many buildings in and around the Old Medina, ODT sits in between staircases and terraces, where natural light easily pours in from the windows. Mr. Jacques introduced himself; he was poised, calm, and stoic, but friendly. Although he did not feel comfortable being interviewed in English, he spoke fluently enough that we could have a conversation before beginning the interview. The staff members of the ODT weaved in and out of the office, saying hello in a mix of French, Arabic, and English. I had come into this day completely planning on being on my own. I was expecting to feel like an intruder into someone else’s life, but instead, the staff of both ODT and *Afrique Culture Maroc* made me feel supported and my presence wanted.

Mr. Jacques informed me that Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco was created to support immigrants who migrate to Morocco from other countries who may or may not be travelling to Europe as an endpoint destination. He minded that some immigrants come to Morocco with the intention of getting to Europe, and as their time goes on in Morocco, this end goal becomes less possible. To return back to their home-country ranges from unlikely to impossible. The Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco was

created as a network of support for the inbetween space between origin-country and settling. Mr. Jacques asserted that although many immigrants that work with the Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco intended to cross Morocco into Europe, the majority of immigrants preferred to settle in Morocco. Without thinking of making the long road to Europe, people could focus on getting permanent work in Morocco. Workers, Mr. Jacques informed me, have rights, but he noticed in previous years that these rights were not respected. Immigrants were abused in their field of work. They faced and exploitation, discrimination, and marginalization.

In 2011, Mr. Jacques became aware of two cases of immigrants being injured while working on a construction site. While working in a marble factory, one person had four fingers cut off but his boss left the site, and left him there without aid. The boss did not provide any medical or legal aid to his worker. In the second case a large piece of iron fell on an immigrant laborer, and his boss did not send him to the hospital. This man passed away in his home a few days later. These cases called Mr. Jacques and his colleagues to create the Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco in 2012, especially since Morocco is a leader of several international conventions for the protection of the rights of immigrant workers. If Moroccan politicians can advocate for the rights of immigrants workers as part of a global presentation, there needed to be some kind of local organization that fought for immigrant workers to acquire the rights that Moroccan politicians paraded already existed. Mr. Jacques and his felt like it was difficult to act from within non-governmental associations because the organizations were not known or connected. Mr. Jacques and his colleagues felt it was strongest to refer to the global trade union model, and create their own union in Rabat, to be able to fight for immigrant rights within a pre-existing structure that would be recognized by the Moroccan

government. Mr. Jacques asserted these rights are not respected by the employers who employ immigrants. Something had to be done to make immigrants recognized and respected.

Mr. Jacques asserted that the first objective of The Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers of Morocco is the defense and protection of the rights of immigrants in Morocco, and the member of their family. The second is the accompaniment, monitoring, supervision of migrants in Morocco in general, but especially the migrant workers in Morocco. One of the goals of the Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco was to help immigrants gain legal status in Morocco, because Moroccan citizens have more rights and protection under Moroccan law than undocumented people. Mr. Jacques recalled participating for the first time in a march on the streets of Rabat, as a moment of clarity and unity for his colleagues and himself, for this was the first time that immigrants could go out on the street and walk with the Moroccans, and this participation opened the door to other partnerships. The National Council for Human Rights has called them for meetings, and during these meetings Mr. Jacques and his colleagues were able to push for the regularization of all undocumented people in Morocco. In 2013 The National Council for Human Rights sent the monarchy a request to regularize all undocumented people. “And you will see that the Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco is included as a contributor to this report,” Mr. Jacques said.

Another goal of the Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco is to end abusive exploitation of immigrant workers and the marginalization workers face. The Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco wants undocumented immigrants to be respected as if they were documented. Another goal of Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco is to provide resources to workers when they need it. If there are sick workers who are asking for help, it is the job of the Democratic Organization of Immigrant

Workers in Morocco to guide them to medical care. Mr. Jacques reported that the Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco collaborates with other associations to provide resources, but people usually come to Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco first because they know that Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco can point guide them organizations that need to turn to. The policy King Mohammed VI has on schooling allows children of immigrants to attend Moroccan public schools, and The Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco tries to help students and their parents find schools in Morocco. Many doctors are members of the ODT and collaborate with the organization, and when there are cases of patients who need medical care, there are people Mr. Jacques and his colleagues can rely on to support members of the union.

For Mr. Jacques, it's about guiding immigrants in all aspects of social life in Morocco, in whatever way people needed to be guided. Mr. Jacques discussed with us immigrants he encountered who came to The Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco because they, wanted to return home, and he felt that it was the duty of the organization to help them too. The Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco collaborates with the International Organization for Migration to aid people in their journeys back home. Perhaps the most important goal of The Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco is to treat immigrants in a human way, because, according to Mr. Jacques, immigrants in Morocco are rarely treated humanely.

According to Mr. Jacques, Parliament welcomes The Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco because they are recognized by their association to the ODT. The Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco made the first ODT Immigrants Congress on International Migrants Day and, as a group, they developed recommendations for

Parliament. Their first recommendation was the regularization of immigrants without papers. The Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco is also a part of many alliances with other organizations in Morocco, so they are often invited to meetings with other organizations sometimes at the level of the ministry. The Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco is also a part of the Wilaya (an administrative board) of Rabat and they represent with the issues of the immigrants there. Other institutions know of the Democratic Organization of Migrant Workers because they are the only immigrant union on the continent of Africa.

The target population of the Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco serves are migrants, but not only “Sub-Saharanans.” Within the Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco there are several ethnicities of migrants being served, among them are people from Philippines, Venezuela, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Madagascar, and a variety of countries in Africa. Mr. Jacques also mentioned a French man and English man who are also members of the the Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco, stating that “the door is widely open, forever,” for all the migrants who want to join the organization.

The Democratic Organization of Migrant Workers in Morocco works with immigrants who work in construction, baking, the arts, call centers, and domestic work. It is mostly immigrants who work in homes and construction sites who come to the The Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco with cases of mistreatment. Mr. Jacques said is it especially hard for the women who have come to Morocco to work. It’s very common for migrant women to be denied their rights, to have their passports confiscated, and their wages not paid. There is a network in Morocco that recruits women from other countries, particularly, Cameroon and Philippines, and they are brought here. These networks we tell them that when

they arrive there in Morocco, they will receive 400 euro or 500 euro per month, but when they arrive here, it is the opposite: the passport is confiscated, the salary is three times less than promised. All of this is a problem, Mr. Jacques asserted, and The Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco is here to defend their rights and solve their problems. Mr. Jacques proudly said that his organization has helped at least twenty-seven women recover confiscated passports.

The term “Sub-Saharan” is extremely commonplace; most Moroccan academics continue to use the term although it is vague and generalizing. There is a large assumption that all immigrants in Morocco come from “black” Africa. When utilizing the term Sub-Saharan, most people are referring to a Black person from other countries in Africa. Although racism looks different in Morocco than it does in many countries of the western world, the use of the term “Sub-Saharan,” implicitly asserts that many people in Morocco see black Africans as one, generalized group of people, not as different people from many different nations on a continent that Morocco shares. Not everyone born on Moroccan soil is a citizen. To be a Moroccan citizen, one must be born from at least one parent who is a Moroccan citizen. Someone not born of Moroccan parents can marry a Moroccan citizen or live in Morocco for five years continually, as an adult, and achieve approval of the Moroccan government once the five years is complete. There is a distinct divide between Moroccans and immigrants. One man I spoke to believed every black person in Morocco was an undocumented immigrant, and failed to consider all of the ways in which a black person in Morocco could possibly be a citizen. Despite being in Morocco, no one I spoke to would call a black person in Morocco a Moroccan. When Mr. Jacques talked about working for immigrant rights, he talked about getting immigrants the same rights as Moroccans. The term “Moroccan” is colloquially synonymous with Moroccan citizen. The term

Moroccan, when used in juxtaposition to immigrants, implicitly excludes anyone who is not Arabic or Amazigh. Two out of the four social science professors who assisted in this project in some way, who are all Morocco-born, Moroccan citizens, felt that there were little to no “Sub-Saharan” immigrants participating in Moroccan politics. My informant, Ayoub, asserted that because “Sub-Saharan” migrants could not vote, they would have no interest in becoming active in Moroccan politics. But even people who can vote simply vote for members of Parliament, and despite King Mohammed VI’s advances towards democracy, Parliament cannot override the rule of the King. A vote for a member of Parliament does little besides influence Moroccan political conversations, and electing powerful people to speak to a wider platform. I argue that by organizing a union attached to an already-established union, The Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco are participating in politics in similar way to people who can vote, without physically voting.

The Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco was also created because wage inequalities continue until now. Mr. Jacques asserted that the Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco models its structure and goals from organizations of workers he saw in other democracies. Unions play a role in protecting and defending the rights of immigrant workers in their integration in the host country. Mr. Jacques and his colleagues saw the way unions flourished in democracies and that was how they decided to create a union. This further complicates my original assertion, that the Moroccan left-wing political parties’ goal to have a democratic government is not what’s best for unions of marginalized people. But what I believe Moroccan left-wing political parties are missing are politics that center and raise the voices and concerns of marginalized people at the heart of their democracy. In most democracies of the western world, it is hardly the undocumented



immigrants, or the financially working-class who are at the center of politics, who are able to make decisions as representatives in their democratic government. But the creation of a union, even in a democratic government, does ensure that workers are paid proper wages and working in safe conditions.

Members of ODT belong to several parties, but most are members of the Party of Authenticity and Modernity, and the Party of Progress and Socialism. But the Democratic Organization of Immigrants in Morocco, and the immigrants in the organization, must be apolitical--meaning that they cannot affiliate their union with particular parties, and that they cannot vote for members of Parliament. Mr. Jacques said “We are the gap in all that is Moroccan politics, because we are not there.” Even without being able to take a physical seat in Parliament the Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco is still able to make political change. Even though the union can associate itself with political parties independently from ODT, the group can try to influence migration policy from within the union. Since the parties on the left tend to defend human rights, Mr. Jacques asserted that his group is “following the same logic,” and defending all in human rights and the rights of the immigrants.

Mr. Jacques felt that his organization had a good rapport with Parliament. He was invited by Ministry of Migration in Morocco to a conference in Skirhat. In 2013 King Mohammed VI announced an immigration policy that includes avenues for regularization of unauthorized African and European immigrants.<sup>31</sup> The announcement signified the first acknowledgment by the Moroccan government that Morocco is a country of immigrants.<sup>32</sup> This new migration strategy put in place by the government will hopefully, one day, allow immigrants a successive integration into Morocco. Mr. Jacques asserted that because Morocco is not a rich country, the

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<sup>31</sup> Hein de Haas, “Morocco: Setting the Stage for Becoming a Migration Transition Country?” Migration Policy Institute, 3/19/2014.

<sup>32</sup>ibid.

country is still working out the application of this law. For him, it was about slow progress. The problem, he asserted, is the application, because there are still immigrants who are being trafficked into Morocco who need government assistance, and still employers who abuse migrant-workers unchecked. But with the new situation of immigrants in Morocco, Mr. Jacques is optimistic. And he felt that things are going well and that more and more immigrants feel at home in Morocco, and are living with the equality of people with Moroccan citizenship. Mr. Jacques said “We know that it is not easy. We must be optimistic and little by little we will arrive at a satisfying situation for all the immigrants here in Morocco.”

Mr. Jacques never brought up left-wing party politics, or how left wing politics affect immigrants, if at all. When he spoke of democracy, he spoke of his union being modeled from a democratic political system that allows unions to thrive. I was not able to clarify any of my questions further during our interview. Even the name Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco endorses democracy within its title. He did not mention communism or socialism at all within the interview, nor did he mention unhappiness from his governmental system as it stood. His issues with corruption did not stem from the king, or Parliament, they stood with fellow civilians who abuse immigrants within the system. According to Mr. Jacques, The Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco has been successful in uniting immigrants and securing justice from within a democracy.

## Conclusion

I found very little connection between left-wing political parties and immigrant activism in Rabat. It appears that because immigrants cannot vote or join political parties, left-wing political parties do not include immigrant voices in their campaigns or in their publicity. Still, the Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco has been successful in inserting itself into Moroccan politics (if not necessarily left-wing politics) by writing reports and holding meetings with governmental organizations and Parliament. For now, attaching their union to a larger, recognized union (ODT) is enough to start creating change to better the situations of immigrants in Morocco. I found very little research to answer my question as to whether or not unions were seen as modern or desirable by left-wing politics. But the members of the Democratic Organization of Immigrants Workers in Morocco find their own union a desirable model for making change. From talking to Mr. Jacques, it seemed clear that his organization was taken seriously by Parliament and other governmental organizations.

Only one of my informants did not take immigrants (or “Sub-Saharan migrants,” as he called them) as serious political actors. In further research, I think it would be interesting in pursuing how the public in Morocco views immigrant participation in politics. My research was limited to two social scientists and one leader of an immigrant lead-union.

Unlike the days of Karl Marx and student communists, democracy is the face of modern left-wing politics in Morocco. Although I originally believed that the monarchy would be left behind as democracy becomes the new state of modernity, leftism is slowly disappearing from modern political platforms. The monarchy still remains much the same; although King Mohammed VI calls his government an executive constitutional monarchy, much of this rhetoric is myth as the monarchy still holds ultimate power over Parliament. The UNFP, once advocating

for radical leftism, sets its goals in uniting left-wing political parties that were once separated by waves of radicalization. Left-wing heroes like Nabila Mounib campaign for less radical, more united liberal standpoints, that promote democratic processes rather than socialist welfare. However, unions, particularly the Democratic Organization of Immigrant Workers in Morocco, have a chance at thriving from within this system. It is from within this system that King Mohammed VI created an immigration policy that includes avenues for regularization for undocumented immigrants. It is from within this system that immigrants can continue to make change, on their terms.

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