



Amy Pope in Somalia where she was on a visit to boost relief efforts in response to drought.

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AMY POPE '96: Tackling the Global Migration Crisis

It's a mid-February day and after a brief stop in Panama to change planes, Amy Pope '96 has finally landed in Honduras. She has 90 minutes for a phone interview about her career before preparing to meet with President Xiomara Castro, the country's first woman head of state.

As a Deputy Director General for the UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM), Pope works to provide support to vulnerable people on the move, whether displaced in their own country or crossing international borders. Recently nominated by the State Department to run for the post of Director General, before May's election, she'll visit leaders from dozens of the 175 member nations to share her vision for leading the organization and dealing with the

global migration crisis. Last week she was in North Africa and following this stop, she'll visit Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina.

"We're seeing more displaced people than ever in recorded history," says Pope, who started at IOM last September. "There are more than 100 million people currently displaced from their homes. In the initial months of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, we saw the fastest displacement of people since World War II." (Nearly 8 million Ukrainians have left Ukraine and nearly 6 million are displaced internally, according to IOM).

Pope has extensive experience in crisis management and migration. From 2013 to 2015, she was a special assistant to President Barack Obama and director of transborder security, focused on migration, human trafficking, Zika and Ebola out-

breaks, and the ongoing climate crisis. She then spent two years as Obama's Deputy Homeland Security Advisor.

A political science major who earned a JD from Duke University, Pope's early career was as a civil rights prosecutor in the Justice Department. She has returned to Haverford several times to speak about her work and co-taught a course on migration with her senior thesis advisor, Professor Anita Isaacs. Pope, her husband, and their two daughters live in Geneva, Switzerland.

Ten years from now, what will be the world's biggest migration challenge? I think it will be climate. Over 300 million people live in extremely vulnerable areas of climate change. We see it already, with drought increasingly displacing people. It will impact migration in the U.S. and globally in ways that will fuel conflict that will be destabilizing. There's a huge incentive globally for states to think not just about how we decrease carbon, but come to terms with what's happening and start to identify ways to mitigate that. We can use our data to invest in new jobs and find new channels for migration, so we have solutions ahead of time, rather than react to crises.

Compare working for the U.S. government and working for the UN.

In the U.S., the issue of migration can be quite partisan and politicized. Here, it's from a broader perspective and you have more tools and partners available. There are opportunities to really advance extremely positive initiatives and outcomes, which is deeply satisfying. At the same time, we aren't a government. We're an international organization; we can advise and share strategies and implement things with teams on the ground, but we aren't the ones to make the decisions.

You've said that the goals of protecting the United States and

admitting refugees and migrants aren't mutually exclusive.

The U.S. has a responsibility to manage its borders, but the strength of our country—our economy, our diversity of ideas—is pretty empirically linked to migration at every level and every stage. Migrants have played a tremendous role in revitalizing our aging cities. I'm from Pittsburgh and these old rust belt cities have had to reinvent themselves. Many have done this through migration, whether it's with high-skilled or low-skilled workers, who are critical to driving American innovation and the economy. On top of that, there is the idea of the United States being a safe haven for people fleeing persecution, and that builds a lot of goodwill and connection with so many countries.

From my point of view and the evidence, migration is really a positive. The more managed it is the more positive it is. It's not good for anyone to have millions flooding across the border without any process, but the more legal channels we have for migration the better it is.

What experiences encouraged your interest in migration?

I started my career as a civil rights prosecutor in the Justice Department and one of the most pernicious and least addressed issues is the potential to exploit migrants—if you're an undocumented immigrant, you're exploited. Some of my cases also involved human trafficking.

I loved being a lawyer, but I stopped prosecuting cases because every week I was in a different city or small town. One of my mentors suggested I should go work on the Hill to see how D.C. worked and to make change. I took that advice to heart and went to work for Senator Diane Feinstein on the Judiciary Committee. I was writing laws on protecting unaccompanied children, on protecting jobs for agricultural workers, on human trafficking. I was using my legal skills in the context of legislation, not in a courtroom.

When did you meet Barack Obama and what was it like working with him in the White House?

I met him in 2007 when he was the junior senator from Illinois and we were trying to pass a comprehensive immigration reform bill in the Senate. We'd have these small group meetings and he'd come in and offer his two cents and sometimes ruffle the feathers of the older senators.

I worked directly for him from 2012-17, starting when I was assigned to the National Security Council. We worked closely on the Ebola response, on refugee resettlement, and on responding to migration at the US southern border. I became his Deputy Homeland Security Advisor and dealt with disaster response and climate change issues. As a leader he's unparalleled—the closer I got to him the more impressed I was with him. He's extremely smart and thoughtful. You'd go into a meeting well prepared and he'd ask the one question you weren't prepared for. He's excellent at taking a decision and being really clear about what he expected of us: to execute it in a focused way, to push through bureaucracy. You worked really hard but I felt like we were part of a team that was committed to making the world better for Americans and everyone—it was an extraordinary experience.

How did Haverford influence your career?

Haverford was a really formative experience, especially my relationship with Professor Anita Isaacs, who continues to be a great friend. She pushed me to work hard and think broadly and ask tough questions. Having her as a mentor was key. I came from a big public high school and a very conservative, evangelical family. At Haverford, the commitment to social justice and inclusion, to intellectual honesty and curiosity, opened up a world and ways of thinking that stick with me today.

—Anne Stein

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