

Migration: consequence, not crisis

“A genuine threat to public order.”

“They’re bringing drugs, they’re bringing crime, they’re rapists.”

This is the language that dominates Western political conversations about migration. Immigrants, asylum seekers, and “illegal aliens” are framed as risks, seen as threats, judged for their culture, and blamed for economic insecurity. Immigration is presented as a sudden emergency, stripped of history by fear.

This framing is not accidental. By constructing migration as a crisis rather than a consequence, governments legitimise harsher border policies while avoiding uncomfortable questions about how and why people move in the first place. How can people be called illegal on land shaped by conquest and empire?

Modern migration does not exist in a vacuum. It follows the political and economic routes carved out by empires. Colonialism reshaped borders, destabilised regions, and extracted resources, embedding global inequality, from India to Ireland. These structures did not disappear when independence was declared. Former colonial powers continue to benefit from this unequal global order, while treating the movement of people from once-governed territories as an unexpected burden. In international politics, this selective amnesia allows responsibility to be denied even as the consequences of empires arrive at the border.

Migration is not new. People have always moved, from towns to empires, from safety to survival. What is new is the hostility directed at those who are considered foreign, racialised, and disposable. Movement only becomes a “crisis” when racialised. Racism functions politically by reducing empathy and transforming migrants into threats, allowing punitive policies to gain public consent.

Fear is not inevitable. It is cultivated.

I am a 17-year-old girl of Pakistani heritage, born and raised in England. The racism I have experienced has rarely been enough to be dismissed as isolated, but frequent enough to feel structural: being called a “paki” or a terrorist, the hostile passing comments, the lingering looks, even being spat near. My family history makes it impossible to separate this from politics.

In the 1990s, my parents had burning bricks pushed through their letterboxes as kids. My grandparents learned to tell people they were Indian rather than Pakistani, because it was safer after Enoch Powell’s ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech. Silence became the survival strategy. Decades later, during 2024 race riots, my parents were too afraid to let me leave the house.

This is how political rhetoric travels: from parliament to headlines, and then into neighbourhoods. What does democracy mean when some citizens are treated as conditional?

What unsettles me most is not racism itself, but that it feels louder and more threatening now than when I was younger. I grew up believing that diversity was part of what made Britain work, what made the United Kingdom united. Most people didn't see race or religion first — they saw neighbours. Today, that ease is fractured. Public space feels hostile, especially as a brown girl, as though belonging must constantly be proved.

Modern migration is not a failure of borders. It is a reckoning with history. Colonial legacies, global inequalities, and the routes carved by empires cannot be wished away. Migration did not arrive uninvited.

In this climate, political ignorance becomes a privilege. To claim neutrality on migration requires the assurance that your identity will not be scrutinised or questioned. For others, politics is unavoidable. When your presence is politicised, disengagement is not an option. The ability to treat migration as an abstract policy issue rather than a lived reality depends on race, history, and proximity to power. Neutrality, in this context, is not absence; it is insulation from the consequences others are forced to live with.

Racism makes this evasion possible, recasting consequence as crisis and people as problems. The refusal to acknowledge that is not ignorance but a political choice. Migration followed routes already drawn.

I think about my family sometimes, about how we navigate streets, spaces, and systems that were never built for us. This is what unsettles me: to live in a country where my presence is questioned, while the histories that shaped our borders are ignored.

What truly unites this kingdom: shared diversity, or the preservation of racial comfort?

<https://news.sky.com/story/women-and-children-will-be-detained-under-farage-deportation-plans-13418609>

<https://abcnews.com/Politics/donald-trump-mexico-vice-versa/story?id=41767704>