

**RACISM**

**IS A THREAT  
TO OUR  
COMMUNITY,  
NOT  
MIGRANTS.**

**Migrants'  
Rights  
Network**

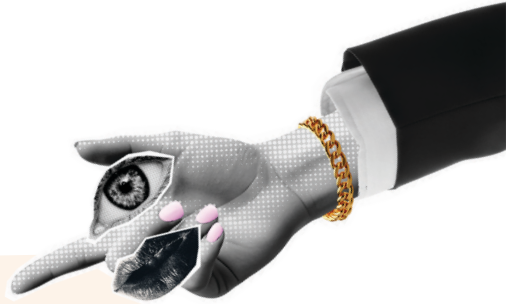
**MAKE YOUR WORDS MATTER.**

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**MIGRANTS**

**ARE BLAMED TO  
DISTRACT YOU**

**DON'T FALL FOR IT**



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# MIGRANTS' RIGHTS NETWORK

The Migrants' Rights Network (MRN) is a UK campaigning charity that stands in solidarity with migrants in their fights for rights and justice. We co-curate campaigns using anti-oppression practices to create transformational change, extending beyond the individual impact on migrants' lives, to tackle oppression at its source.

**We want to create a world where everyone is free to move and no one is forced to move.**

We build relationships with grassroots, migrant-led organisations to understand the issues that are important to them and how we can work together to achieve transformational change.

We believe it is not enough to reform structures and systems which are foundationally discriminatory. We are calling for a complete overhaul, and for people with lived experience to lead that change.



# TERMINOLOGY

For a long time, we used the term 'migrants and refugees'.

Through reflection, we have shifted our language to 'migrants, including refugees'. This is because the term migrant is a general umbrella term, which encompasses refugees, people seeking asylum, and many other migrant groups. Placing an 'and' in between 'migrants' and 'refugees' incorrectly implies that refugees are not a subgroup of migrants.

Migrants' and 'refugees' are characterised by politicians and the media as separate unrelated groups. This is deliberate. Generally, some migrants are seen as 'deserving' and 'genuine', with a 'legitimate' claim to protection, in contrast to those who are 'simply migrants', who are generally viewed to be 'undeserving', 'ungenuine', and with an 'illegitimate' claim to protection.

We also use the language of 'migratised'. This refers to how some people are assumed to be migrants, subjected to border controls and may face cultural or institutional barriers even if they haven't actually migrated themselves. 'Migratised' highlights how belonging is conditional for some groups especially those who are racialised as non-white.

# RACISM SHAPES MIGRATION NARRATIVES

Racism is a threat to our communities, not migrants.  
Make your Words Matter.

Blaming migrants for society's problems is the oldest trick in the book. It's a deliberate misinformation tactic to distract us from decades of Government cuts, corporate greed and corrupt institutions.

The truth is, there are people that benefit from NHS privatisation, the cost-of-living crisis or rising housing prices: the politicians creating policies, multi-millionaires and billionaires who run the media and corporations profiting off from public services. The *blame game* benefits them.

Divisive anti-migrant narratives which are weaponised for political gain are underpinned by racist scapegoating. Once confined to the fringes of the internet, far-right rhetoric has clawed its way into the mainstream - willingly parroted by politicians and shaping policies from the Nationality and Borders Act, to the Border Security Act, Immigration White Paper and Keir Starmer's infamous Enoch Powell-inspired 'Island of Strangers' speech.

Billionnaires make you poorer.  
Politicians underfund the NHS.  
Social media creates divisions.  
Landlords raise your rent.



**But it doesn't have to be this way.**

While migrants (and other marginalised groups like trans+ people and Muslims) continue to be blamed, the real culprits will just avoid accountability. That's why we want to tackle misinformation head on and say enough is enough: racism is a threat to our communities, not migrants.

**History shows us time and time again that if they come for one of us, they come for all of us.** If we come together, all our lives could change for the better. The elite know there is power in our unity, community and solidarity. It's time we prove them right.

That begins with the everyday language we use to talk about migrants, including refugees and people seeking asylum. We've put together a compilation of common words and stereotypes to break them down and show how racism and other forms of oppression like classism or ableism form the foundation of these everyday terms - and begin to move towards more affirming and anti-racist language on migration.

**BRITISH**

**VALUES**

What actually are British values?

'Democracy', 'the rule of law', 'respect and tolerance', and 'individual liberty'. Why are they assumed to be 'British' in nature?

'British values' is often rolled out by politicians or the media to falsely say certain groups don't 'respect' certain values. But the truth is it's a tactic to further racist, exclusionary political narratives against racialised people and justify surveillance policies.

How do these harsh policies uphold democracy, rule of law, respect and tolerance, and individual liberty, so how is the UK practising its own values? They're not.

'British values' have been weaponised to demonise and surveil Muslim communities in particular. Islamophobic rhetoric in the media and politics is invoked to incorrectly suggest that British Muslims are a 'threat' to these values and, by extension, way of life in the UK.

This framing is used to implement harmful surveillance policies like the Prevent duty. Prevent is a form of state surveillance that disproportionately impacts racialised, especially Muslim, communities.

It leads to thousands of people (mainly Muslims) being treated with suspicion on the basis they are assumed to be more likely to commit or support an act of terrorism.

Using 'British values' to scapegoat migrants and other communities is hypocritical. Especially when the Government increases clampdowns on civil liberties like the right to protest, or using cruel immigration policies like detention and deportation - none of these demonstrate these values.

**CONTRIBUTION**

**AND ECONOMIC EFFECTS**

**OF MIGRATION**

The economic impact of migration often forms the foundation of pro and anti migration arguments. For example, we've probably all heard: 'Migrants contribute to the economy' vs. 'Migrants come here to claim benefits'.

The right and/or those in positions of power will frequently use the 'economic scarcity' myth in order to pit working class communities against each other (or even turn migrant groups against each other) to try and deflect from the real issue of wealth concentration at the top.

While there's the issue of what is true (migration has a net positive impact on the economic) vs. what is plain disinformation (migrants don't come here to claim benefits

because of something called No Recourse to Public Funds\*), basing our arguments in economics can be really unhelpful and outright harmful. That's because migrants are often only seen as 'beneficial' if they're economically productive - it's a very reductive way of treating other people.

### **The model minority myth:**

Narratives that center the economic productivity and career achievements of migrants often play into respectability politics\* and deservingness. The myth implies that 'model minorities' are more deserving because they have worked 'harder' than other communities, and therefore have 'rightfully' earned their place in our society.

**What is a contribution?** When has someone contributed enough? Should we live in a society that views people who cannot 'contribute' as less deserving?

Ultimately, 'contribution' is a made-up idea that's used to vilify migrants and other communities like disabled people in our capitalist society. Being respected or having rights shouldn't be conditional on whether someone is economically productive.

### **We need to rethink the way we are in community with each other.**

We have responsibilities to those who will not be able to work but, who require support, simply because of their humanity.

\* No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPf) is a condition on some immigration statuses which means a migrant cannot claim most benefits, tax credits or housing assistance that are paid by the State

**EXPENSIVE**

**AND UNWORKABLE**

We often hear the main criticism from those opposed to harmful immigration policies is that they are 'too expensive'. This was mentioned often when the Rwanda plan (deporting people to another country other than their country of origin) was being put into action.

When we hear of policies and systems like this, the argument should be that it is inhumane not because it is 'expensive' or 'unworkable'. If these plans were cheaper or 'efficient', would that make them less harmful? We don't think so.

The outsourcing of asylum accommodation or border policing to private companies, or forced offshoring of racialised people for a fee, clearly demonstrates how racialised people from the Global South are still dehumanised as merchandise.

By focusing the argument on cost, liberals merely continue to reinforce this colonial, racist argument that reduces People of Colour from the Global South as a 'problem' to be managed or as 'goods' to be exchanged. We have to reframe our arguments.

**Cost is not the issue. Efficiency is not the issue. Inhumanity is.**

*Co-authored with People's Economy*

# FAIRNESS

The word 'fair' has lost its meaning. The Government weaponises the language of 'fairness' in an attempt to justify or push through harmful policies.

But 'fairness' is subjective. It's reformist, falls short of systemic change and allows oppressive systems to persist because it aims for small changes within a fundamentally flawed and anti-migrant system. **A system designed to be violent can never be 'fair'.**

Fairness is also underpinned by the idea of equal treatment. It does not consider the fact that some people have a different starting point and more hurdles than others based on aspects like their ethnic or racial background, or class. Fairness assumes that everyone receives the same boost, even though some people are more disadvantaged than others.

We should be striving for **liberation**, and for tackling oppression (like racism) at its root.

# GENUINE

We've all heard the term 'genuine asylum seeker' or 'genuine refugee,' right?

Once a term used exclusively by the right-wing media, it's become a lot more widespread.

## Why is it problematic?

Because it presents people seeking safety as one dishonest group and prevents them from being seen as individuals with their own experiences. Making baseless claims over a person's legitimacy in seeking safety or a new life passes judgement and encourages hostile trials by the media. It does not consider the suffering, trauma and danger people are put through when making treacherous journeys to other countries in a world where safe routes are decreasing.

It's also important we pay attention to **who** is labelled as 'genuine' or 'not genuine'. Usually, it's young single men of Colour who are labelled as not being 'genuine', and that raises the question of who is seen to be 'deserving' of protection.

It also ignores the extremely **high threshold the UK Government sets for someone to prove they are deserving of protection** and refugee status. We call this the **burden of proof**. This leaves many people in detention, abandoned by the State or deported to a place where they're not safe purely because the Government has dismissed their claims as not 'genuine.'

## HARD-WORKING

What does hard-working even mean?

So often, we hear politicians and the media talk about workers needing more 'graft'. This is a long-standing view that some do not 'work hard' and that's why they remain poor or struggling. This includes migrants and racialised communities. Some migrant communities now also emphasise they are 'hard-working', wanting to distinguish themselves from others. But all this does is pit one group as more worthy against others.

**All migrants are and have to be 'hard-working'. Particularly when the systems are, by design, rigged against them.** The 'hard work' for many migrants is to stay out of destitution and extreme poverty. With No Recourse To Public Funds policies (NRPF), migrants can only rely on their wages to keep them afloat.

Stereotypes around race and class are used heavily in both immigration debates and conversations on disability and welfare: the idea that migrants are 'lazy', 'scroungers' or a drain on the State.

**By calling ourselves 'hard-working', we are just repeating these narratives, not challenging them.** It's time to stop falling for narratives that divide people into 'deserving' or 'undeserving'.

# 'ILLEGAL' IMMIGRATION

In recent years, the term 'illegal' has been increasingly used to describe mainly racialised undocumented migrants or migrants that have no permission to work or rent, now we see it being used against those arriving here to claim asylum. This label is dehumanising, and ends up demonising migrants, helps governments justify cruel immigration policies and suggests they are undeserving of rights.

The normalisation of this term has led to its use in immigration laws like the 'Illegal Migration' Act 2023. Instead of using language that scapegoats migrants who are forced into unsafe routes or precarious situations, the **focus should be directed towards the Government's failures** to consistently provide routes to safety or how people end up working without permission, such as exploitation or the complexity of immigration systems.

**For example, to apply for asylum, an individual must be physically present in the UK.** However, the ability to come to the UK in order to do so is restricted. At present, the routes available to people seeking asylum are limited to family reunification schemes, refugee resettlement schemes or nationality-specific routes. For many people seeking protection, irregular journeys including crossing the Channel in a so-called 'small boat' or dinghy, or in a vehicle are often the only way to enter the UK to claim asylum. Instead of creating safe routes for all nationalities, the UK Government has been focusing on deterring people seeking safety by threatening them with prosecution.

### **What should we say instead? It's complicated.**

The language of 'undocumented', 'irregular' or 'without permission' sheds light on the struggle that migrants face as they navigate the violence of border regimes. This language allows for **a focus on the structures that force migrants into unsafe routes.**

However, we are currently reflecting on these terms particularly as the Home Office have started to adopt them whilst enforcing increasingly cruel immigration policies. We are increasingly mindful that not everyone views these terms positively and in some cases, meanings have changed.

Together, we must collectively advocate for language that puts the **emphasis on the structural violence** of borders and immigration systems, and not attach dehumanising labels to people. **No one is 'illegal'.**

## **INDIFFERENCE**

Indifference plays a role in normalising anti-migrant racism.

Indifference can be defined as apathy, neutrality, or otherwise as a lack of interest or concern. It then leads to ignorance and disinformation and is exemplified by privilege. Plainly, it is a refusal to get uncomfortable or 'rock the boat'. to call out disinformation and harmful ideas, or address root causes and oppressive systems.

This can look like:

- **The refusal to identify racism and Islamophobia as the primary driving forces behind anti-migrant narratives**
- The refusal to identify colonialism, neocolonialism, and its legacies as drivers behind displacement
- The regurgitation of racist, classist and ableist binaries
- Indifference gives a green light to more racist immigration policies

Let's examine the refusal to acknowledge racism (including Islamophobia) as the primary driving forces behind anti-migrant narratives. Indifference can be characterised by an unwillingness to understand or because someone is pandering to white fragility as in motivated by a fear that 'they will upset someone' if they mention racism.

Denial of racism is a key part of indifference. Doing so grants permission to those spouting racist beliefs to continue with impunity, whilst pacifying other people's desire to even challenge racist structures in the first place.

**Indifference doesn't create meaningful change.**

**Neutrality doesn't achieve migrant justice.**

Instead, indifference creates a vacuum that allows the far-right to thrive.

# INTEGRATION AND ASSIMILATION

We are actively pushing back against the language of 'integration', 'assimilation' and 'community cohesion'. This is because it is underpinned by racial and religious undertones, and feeds into 'respectability politics.' It also justifies the increased profiling and surveillance of the migratised communities that are not conforming.

It's also important we ask the question: what does 'integration' actually look like? And who has to 'integrate'?

Migrants are often told to 'integrate' and 'assimilate'. The subtext of integration narratives is that migration is some sort of threat to communities or culture in the UK. But community is only threatened when different groups of marginalised people are pitted against each other by the Government and the media. For example, migrants are blamed for poverty and unemployment, when in reality, this is a result of Government policies and capitalism.

Whilst the use of this language is sometimes well-intentioned, we are concerned that its use feeds into the idea that migratised groups have to give up important and personal elements of their identity in order to be accepted.

**Solidarity with migrant communities requires unconditional acceptance. Migrants will not integrate into a system designed to oppress us.**

**INTERMEDIARIES**

**NOT SMUGGLING GANGS**

The language of 'smuggling gangs' has been used by Governments to create a 'national security crisis' around migration. This is to not only reinforce the manufactured idea that migration (specifically crossing the Channel) is a threat but also to divert focus away from the Government's role in causing anti-migrant harm, and to justify passing harsher legislation under the guise of 'safeguarding'.

**'Smuggling gangs' is also racialised:** Black and Brown people seeking sanctuary are labelled as 'smugglers' and criminalised, such as in the case of Ibrahima Bah\*.

We should be using the language of intermediaries instead. This puts emphasis on the policy decisions that force migrants to turn to intermediaries in the first place: the criminalisation of safer routes. Even if some intermediaries may be immoral or money-driven, many migrants who are fleeing for their lives view them as life savers. They value intermediaries for helping them to flee danger and reach safety when 'safe routes' no longer or do not exist.

\*Bah, a survivor of a collapsing dinghy, was convicted of manslaughter for the deaths of fellow passengers, despite his heroic efforts in steering the dinghy and saving lives.

**INVASION, SWARM,**

**INFLUX, THREAT**

The language of invasion, swarm and influx is strongly linked to the dangerous idea of migrants as a 'threat'.

It subconsciously makes us think of a battle or war, creating the idea of a common enemy, and conjuring imagery of insects, animals and sometimes monsters.

**Dehumanising migrants, by referring to them as a 'swarm' or 'invasion', is a tactic to forget a person's humanity and a means to seek support for harmful policies or measures, such as deportation and detention.** By placing the blame on people seeking safety and minimising their trauma or suffering, it also gives the false impression that the destination country would be 'overwhelmed' by the presence of migrants.

We cannot ignore the fact that the idea of a 'swarm' or 'invasion' is often used in conjunction with images of racialised people. In contrast in 2022, the racist UK coverage of the horrific ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine exemplified how in the national imagination, Ukrainian migrants, including refugees, are seen as being more worthy than others. That's because the coverage framed Ukrainians as 'civilised' and 'just like us' i.e. because they are European and characterised as white. What this implies is that racialised refugees (usually from formerly colonised parts of the world) are deemed to be 'uncivilised', a 'threat' and not worthy of protection.

This can be seen also by the lack of offers of 'safe routes' for people from Gaza and Sudan who are facing genocide and ethnic cleansing. No matter where someone is from - whether that's Ukraine or Sudan, everyone should be able to access safety.

Over the last century, dehumanising, racist, anti-migrant language in the UK has remained consistent, dating from the arrival of Jewish refugees in the late 19th and early 20th century, with migrants being labelled as an **'alien invasion,'** **'swarm'** and **'locusts'**. Clearly, history shows us the incredibly dangerous consequences that this kind of language can have, and we can see the same patterns appearing now.

## LEGITIMATE CONCERNS

'Legitimate concerns' about migration are just thinly veiled racism.

Justifying anti-immigration narratives as being 'legitimate' or 'genuine' happens across the political spectrum. It seems to be the ultimate caveat to a lot of political debates on migration and often is used interchangeably with the narrative of 'it's okay to be worried about migration'. But in reality, this is just a distraction technique.

**Anti-migrant violence and Islamophobia have been separated from racism.** When these forms of oppression are not seen as racist, it allows them to become normalised.

Migrants are being blamed for the Government's austerity policies, amongst other claims that migrants are 'stealing your job' or 'invading your country'.

Politicians and powerful people are responsible for originally espousing this racist rhetoric, and normalising it on a national scale. This language of 'legitimate concerns' of the 'average Brit', using an imagined 'white working class' figure, allows politicians to distance themselves from the racist violence, despite the mobs using rhetoric and slogans of the current and former governments. Those in power position racist violence as coming from the fringes of society rather than originating or being enabled from the top.

## **LIVED** **EXPERIENCE**

The term 'lived experience' is used a lot, particularly in policy research or amongst social justice organisations. It has become part of the everyday jargon in the charity sector. However, have we reached a point where the term has lost its importance and meaning?

In our work, we often have conversations where migrants have internalised problematic media or Government narratives against other migrants or marginalised groups.

For example, we've spoken to many migrants who will regurgitate harmful narratives against people who have made the dangerous journey across the Channel in so-called 'small boats,' rather than recognise how the UK's immigration system and borders oppress them all.

Or we've also seen Home Secretaries cite their lived experience of racism, whilst pushing through racist immigration policies.

Overlooking or uncritically accepting someone's prejudices or problematic views (particularly towards another marginalised group) because of their lived experience is not right. **'Lived experience' does not exempt someone from criticism, particularly if they're reinforcing harmful norms.**

At Migrants' Rights Network, we describe ourselves as 'lived experience and values-led', since liberation goes beyond representation. **We believe that those with 'lived experience', whose values of compassion are directly informed by their personal lives, are best placed to transform our society for the better.**

**MIGRANTS ARE**

**NOT A BURDEN**

Calling migrants a burden or 'drain' is a scapegoating tactic. Migrants bear the brunt of this label, but so do unhoused, low income people, and non-migrant people who rely on benefits of any kind. Migrants and non-migrant unhoused people are often pitted against each other, to garner sympathy for one group at the expense of another.

People often say, 'let's take care of our own first', as if migrants are the reason we have so many people in poverty or experiencing homelessness. The Government often uses the narrative of scarcity: that there is not enough money or resources to go around.

**No one is a 'burden'. There is more than enough to go around.** The reason migrants are poor is the same reason that non-migrants are poor: capitalism, billionaire greed and the Government austerity policies.

## REFUGEE CRISIS

There is no 'refugee crisis.' It's all made up.

This kind of language blames those who migrate across borders in order to flee, instead of questioning why they are having to make those dangerous journeys in the first place.

**There are many reasons why people migrate, which can include: seeking a better life, reuniting with family, or fleeing conflict, ecological disaster, war, famine, poverty, persecution or violence.**

The term 'crisis' is also deliberate - designed to instill a sense of panic and make us support extreme measures to tackle the so-called 'crisis'. But ask yourself, who is this term aimed at? It's often used to describe movement from areas like the Middle East or sub-Saharan African countries i.e. Black and

Brown people rather than from majority white countries like Ukraine.

These parts of the world have suffered from the violent effects of colonialism, imperialism and foreign intervention, which creates conditions of ecological instability, economic insecurity and political collapse in Global majority countries. A lot of migration today occurs from these countries to the Global North, by people fleeing dangerous conflict or climate emergencies. Migrants travelling to the Global North often face added violence, hostility and suspicion, both at and inside of Europe's borders.

**Migration is a fundamental part of the human experience.**

Framing it as an issue to be solved or a 'crisis' normalises hostility towards migrants. Instead of blaming migrants, let's focus on how we can create safe routes for all and address factors that force people to flee.

**SAFE ROUTES,**

**SAFE COUNTRY**

**Safe routes**

The term 'safe and legal routes' is used a lot by those advocating for safe passage to the UK. The availability, or even existence, of these routes for migrants, including people seeking asylum to come to the UK is incredibly limited, and for particular nationalities non-existent.

At the Migrants' Rights Network, we advocate for the term 'safe route' because adding the word 'legal' reinforces the idea that any other route to the UK is automatically 'illegal' by default. The idea of 'legal routes' reinforces the idea that some people are committing so-called 'illegal' acts.

See our 'Illegal Immigration' explainer for more information on this language.

### **Safe country**

What is a 'safe country' and who is it safe for?

The idea of a 'safe country' is used to turn down people seeking asylum and prevent them from making the UK their refuge. **The idea that people seeking asylum must remain in the first 'safe country' they enter is just untrue under international law.** It overlooks the reason why many would choose to make the UK their home: familial connections, language ties or legacies of colonialism.

For example, over the last few years, Albania has been used as an example of a 'safe country'. But there are well-documented human rights issues in the country including for LGBTQ+ people, journalists and women and girls, along with violations of the right to privacy and freedom of expression.

**Nowhere is truly safe: it's all relative.** In fact, for some marginalised groups, the UK isn't safe. As governments pass more and more restrictive immigration policies and as anti-migrant racism ramps up, labelling the UK as a 'safe country' is increasingly questionable. A genuine safe country means working towards a place where all migrants, regardless of their nationality, are free from harm or discrimination.

## VOICELESS

*"There's really no such thing as the 'voiceless'. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard."*

Arundhati Roy

The idea that migrants are 'voiceless' is reductive and denies migrant communities of their agency. It detracts from the systems that force migrant voices to be silenced and deny them a platform.

This language is also symptomatic of white saviourism, and the expectation white people have of being applauded for 'giving' migrants a voice. Society's racist power structures, leave racialised migrants spoken on behalf of by white members of civil society. White saviours do not allow racialised migrants the resources or space especially when they 'speak truth to power' but will gaslight them by describing them as 'voiceless'.

**Migrants are not 'voiceless'. Their voices are just not being listened to, especially if they are racialised. We need to give them platforms, and amplify their voices to work around the systems that try to 'silence' them.**

Achieving meaningful migrant justice means helping migrant-led movements and campaigns as well as building up power and capacity within those communities.

# VULNERABILITY

**Migrants are not inherently vulnerable.  
They are made vulnerable by oppressive systems.**

Migrants, including refugees, are often given the blanket label of 'vulnerable'. While it's sometimes important to 'prove' vulnerability to access support services, such as mental health services or gender-affirming care for trans+ migrants, the term 'vulnerability' has become something of a buzzword outside of legal or support services.

The passiveness that 'vulnerability' tends to denote when it is applied to migrants lends it a distinctly gendered quality. Often, 'vulnerable' racialised women and girls on the move are constructed in contrast to 'fighting age' men of Colour in similar situations. Both of these categories are harmful; denying people's agency and playing on discriminatory tropes to justify inhumane migration policies.

**Vulnerability is complex, and looks different for everyone.**

Instead of labelling entire groups as 'vulnerable', we should look at the issues that create and exacerbate vulnerability so that we can collectively tackle what exposes people to risk or harm.

*Co-authored with the National Survivor User Network (NSUN)*

# WHATABOUTISM

“But what about X?”

When we talk about rights and justice for migrants, something that often comes up is the idea that migrants' rights come at the expense of other marginalised groups in society. It suggests that we can only care about one group. But 'whataboutism' basically just deflects from helping **either** group.

At its core, it's an attempt to divide us by pitting marginalised groups against each other. It treats decisions as a trade off between groups e.g. pushing the false claim that housing people seeking asylum comes at the expense of low-income or unhoused people.

**We need to recognise that it is not migrants who are oppressing unhoused people, low income people and veterans.** It is the Government that oppresses all these groups, including migrants, and then uses migrants as a scapegoat to distract from the fact that its own austerity policies are responsible for UK-wide poverty.

# WHERE ARE YOU REALLY FROM?

“Where are you from?” Intention is key in weighing up why this question is so problematic. Following this initial question by asking them **“where are you actually from”** insinuates that their first answer wasn’t good enough. Interrogations of this nature stem from socially ingrained ideas of what it is to be British, usually equating to being white. It doesn’t acknowledge the fact that migration is an integral part of this island’s history. It singles someone out as the Other, regardless of where they were born.

If this conversation takes place between two racialised people (as long as these power dynamics are recognised sensitively) arguably asking someone where they are from can be a beautiful show of solidarity.

However, **power dynamics can become unbalanced** if the person asking the question holds more privilege than the other person. This can apply where one person is white, and the other is a Person of Colour.

Defensive reactions can be incredibly frustrating and upsetting for a migrant or migratised person. Becoming defensive when someone expresses hurt or doesn’t give the answer you wanted is a form of gaslighting.

Think about the intention behind asking this question? Is it to genuinely build connection and learn or do you want to use it to ‘other’ someone?

# HELP US MAKE OUR WORDS MATTER

Divisive rhetoric has become the norm, simple narrative change isn't enough anymore. Disinformation is rampant and the far-right are mobilised.

## **We need to shift our approach.**

For a long time, we've failed to acknowledge how indifference, fragility and a lack of an anti-oppression approach have been weaponised by the far-right to attack not just migrants, but disabled, queer and working class people. **History has shown us time and time again that if they come for one of us, they come for all of us.**

That's why we need to work together and recognise that our struggles are linked.

We're keen to learn from best practice while updating and sharing our resources to create meaningful movements for change across the UK.

**Share your feedback  
and get involved by  
filling out this form**



# GLOSSARY

## AUSTERITY

Austerity refers to government policies that cut public spending and welfare with the aim of reducing national debt. This was a core policy by the Coalition and Conservative governments from 2010, and led to increased poverty and inequality.

## COLONIALISM

Colonialism refers to European nations' (and later USA) histories of invading, settling in and exploiting vast areas of the Global South via the occupation of land, extracting resources, and destruction of indigenous cultures. Many Western nations, including the UK, still have colonies today while other now-independent countries continue to grapple with the impact of colonial underdevelopment and conflicts originating from colonialism.

## REFORMISM

Reforms or reformism are harmful because it often focuses on making tweaks to a system that is cruel or discriminatory by design, rather than overhauling it and collectively working towards new systems.

## RESPECTABILITY

Respectability politics refers to the process where marginalised people are expected to perform or adopt certain social norms that are acceptable to the majority of society. Examples of this include conservative or white middle-class values.

## VIOLENCE

Violence is not just physical but can refer to border regimes and immigration systems.

**Symbolic violence** refers to how concepts become normalised or taken for granted. We can see this with how society demonises migrants, and sees the violence committed against them as being justified.

**Systemic violence** refers to violence that is foundational to a system and the institutions that make up that system. For instance, the immigration system is violent, since it uses racist and colonial-era tactics of control.

**Epistemic violence** is the celebration of white ways of knowing (philosophy, politics, culture) as being 'civilised' and scientifically true, and the dismissal of Black, Brown and Indigenous ways of knowing as 'uncivilised' and irrational.

All these types of violence are normalised against People of Colour or racialised people non-white, queer, disabled and working-class people.

The logo consists of a black hexagon with the text 'Migrants' Rights Network' in white, bold, sans-serif font.

## **Migrants' Rights Network**

**If you like our work and would like to support us,  
please consider donating £5 by texting 'MIGRANTSRIGHTS'  
to 70450 (This costs £5 plus your standard message rate)**

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