

This Land is Our Land An Immigrant's Manifesto

By Suketu Mehta

Part 1 – The Migrants are Coming

A Planet on the Move

- What are some of the reasons for this global migration? Anything strike you as unusual or something you hadn't thought of before?
- Mehta wrote this book out of "sorrow and rage" – what are some of the things that has caused him such anger? How do you feel about these things? Were you aware of these issues and are you also angry about them?
- Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights state, "Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each State. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country." Is this what happens for most people?
- Article 14, gives everyone the right to political asylum in another country." Is this what happens for most people?
- Article 15 gives everyone the right to a nationality and the right to change that nationality." Is this what happens for most people?

The Fence: Amargo y Dulce (Bitter and Sweet)

- Were increased security and restrictions for people visiting each other at the wall, warranted?
- How are you emotionally effected by the stories of the families at the wall as they try to reach out to each other?
- Imagine the juxtaposition of the new private airport in Tijuana – flying cheaply to anywhere in Mexico and Latin America – welcomed home by US customs and those walking a thousand miles or more to reach the fence.
- Do you think Rodney Scott, the San Diego Sector chief of the Border Patrol, is acting on his own authority when he says there will be no hugging at the border? Scott, a devote Christian, justifies his work with the story of Adam and Eve and their "deportation" from the Garden of Eden. How do you feel about using scripture to reconcile our actions on the border?

- Saira is a young mother seeking asylum for herself and her young son. Her husband is already living in Texas with her 5 year old son. She is escaping possible murder by gangs who have threatened her. She will risk everything to save her child. Would you?

Ordinary Heroes

- Mehta states: The United States has not acted lawfully with other nations, including the Native American nations on its soil, through most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Discuss!
- Migrants want to share their experiences in their new country with family members left behind. They sometimes lie about how great it is so that others don't think they made a mistake in migrating. Discuss!

Two Sides of a Strait

- Migrants reach Morocco and then attempt the Med crossing to Spain. Morocco and Spain have a treaty where the migrants will be returned to Morocco if they make it to Spain. Why do they still make the dangerous crossing? Is it worth it?
- What is life- like for the immigrant in Spain or even elsewhere in Europe?
- Western corporations have devastated many of the countries in Africa through their exploitation of the enormous mineral wealth – with contracts drawn up so that the countries corrupt leadership gains the lion share of the profits, while their people starve. Can we hold corporations accountable for the actions? Remember Mehta's grandfather telling someone that he was the "creditor" and was going to collect what was due?

Part 2 Why They're Coming

Colonialism

- "They move because of the accumulated burdens of history have rendered their homelands less and less habitable. They are here because you were there." Does this surprise you?
- England ruled India for over two hundred years. What were some of the effects of colonialism in subcontinent?
- Discuss the English and French rule over other countries – Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Africa

- The rise of Britain is linked to slavery and the Industrial Revolution would not have been possible with profits from the slave trade.
- Britain abolished slavery in 1833, but continue to reap the benefits of slavery from the colonies (the American South), Cuba and Brazil.

The New Colonialism

- Union Carbide disaster in Bhopal, 1984 – killed 20,000 people, injured half a million more and caused genetic defects in the children of the survivors.
- Colonial countries continue to enrich themselves at the expense of the subject nations long after those countries are independent.
- British tax haven for foreign financiers. Discuss.
- Discuss Net Resource Transfers (NRTs)
- British Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn said, in a speech given at the UN’s Geneva headquarters in 2017, the four biggest threat facing humanity: concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a tiny corporate elite; climate change; “the unprecedented numbers of people fleeing conflict, persecution, human rights abuses, social breakdown and climate disasters”; and the use of military power over diplomacy to resolve disputes. Truth?

War

- Mehta discusses the US interventions in Central American countries to replace political leaders who don’t bend to American will or serve American corporate interests. Should “we” continue to allow this?
- First United Fruit and then Chiquita Brands – supporting paramilitary and drug trafficking group, gave 1.7 million and 3,000 AK-47s to fight UNION organizers and extort farmers into selling only to Chiquita – Discuss.
- Think about Ronaldo’s story of gangs – the gangs started in the US, and the members were deported to Central America – those governments had no way to rehabilitate or control them.
- December, 2006 UN GA voted to establish a panel of experts who would study the feasibility of a small arms treaty that would staunch the flow of weapons across borders. There was one dissenter – the US!!
- We sell them guns and we buy their drugs – this renders these countries ungovernable.

- Mehta discusses the arms deals entered into by the US with Saudis – who use the weapons to wage war on Yemen. We sell them weapons and we buy their oil.

Climate Change

- In the 21st century, the number one cause of migration may be climate change. UN states 1/5 of the world's population will be affected by floods by 2050. International Organization for Migration states 200 million people will be displaced by climate change by 2050.
- Migrants move so they can work, eat, drink – climate change has caused flooding and severe droughts in many parts of the world – these areas are unable to sustain life.
- They move to the countries who are most responsible for climate change – north – to Europe and the US. “No force on earth is going to keep their desperate inhabitants from moving. And logically, they should be given a home in the countries that are most to blame for the inundation.” Do you agree?
- Climate change makes bad problems worse.

Part 3 Why They're Feared

The Populists' False Narrative

- “The West is being destroyed, not by migrants, but by the fear of migrants.”
- Governments are curtailing civil liberties out of this fear of the migrant.
- So much of what we hear in the media feeds the false narrative about the migrant. What have you heard?

A Brief History of Fear

- Raspail's book, The Camp of the Saints influenced Steve Bannon and others. The author claims the world has become too small for its inhabitants, and whites are in the minority and the white race is doomed to extinction unless “we” stay the course.

Culture: Shitholes versus Nordics

- Fear of the immigrant is definitely not something new in the United States. Discuss!

- We talk about those immigrants coming across our southern border, but not those coming across the northern border. There are one hundred thousand illegal Canadians living in the US.

The Color of Hate

- In 2044, the United States will be a country of minorities – with no one group having too many more than others. Is this a bad thing?
- Mehta spends several paragraphs dedicated to his interview with Ron Cutlip. Are Mr. Cutlip’s assertions based in fact or conspiracy theory?
- Thinking about your own family of origin – did they come legally? Did they become citizens?
- Fear of migrants sells. Discuss.

The Alliance Between the Mob and Capital

- The small town of Warren, PA is like so many other small towns across the US. Discuss.
- Income inequality continues to be a huge problem within the US. What could change that?
- Mehta claims the US is a plutocratic society, not a capitalist society. What does he mean?

The Refugee as Pariah

- How does the idea of using child separation as a deterrent for future asylum seekers sound to you?
- Denmark instituted “Ghetto” laws – parents will need to abide by a totally different set of rules than the rest of the citizens

Part 4 Why They Should be Welcomed

Jaikisan Heights

- Jackson Heights, with its cast of immigrants from all around the world would seem idyllic to some people. How about you?

Jobs, Crime, and Culture: The Threats that Aren’t

- Do immigrants take away the jobs from “native” white people?
- Does crime increase when the number of immigrants increases?
- Mayor Bloomberg called for increasing immigration, “because it’s good for the economy. He further stated, “there is only one practical solution, and it is a solution that respects the history of the nation: Offer those already here the opportunity to earn permanent status and keep their families together.” Good idea?

We Do Not Come Empty-Handed

- Immigrants are 13 percent of the US Population, they started a ¼ of all new businesses and earned over a third of all Nobel Prizes in science given to Americans.
- Governments are cracking down on immigrants all over – more nationalism throughout the world, not just the US.

Immigration As Reparations

- Rich countries and corporation have ravaged the poor countries and now there is a huge bill to pay. Reparations or Migration???
- Carbon tax for polluting industries, migration tax for polluting nations?