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Reading the Crisis: Migration with Leah Cowan

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K Biswas

Hi, everyone. Thanks for joining us. I'm K Biswas. I'm a critic, editor of Representology: the Journal of Media and Diversity, and chair of London-based community radio station Resonance FM. I'm delighted to welcome you to the third conversation of our third series of Reading the Crisis, which is part of the Stuart Hall Foundation's programme In Search of Common Ground. Inspired by the life and work of British-Jamaican intellectual Professor Stuart Hall, this series asks what kinds of tools and strategies are needed to confront this conjuncture and where are the intersections where current solidarities can be built. This year's expanded format for Reading the Crisis has me and Aasiya Lodhi present six in-depth online conversations with significant writers and thinkers, covering what we consider to be the most pressing issues of our time.

Today, we discuss migration, while elsewhere in the series we talk about the economy, technology, democracy, culture and the climate. You can watch the conversations on economy with Laleh Khalili and technology with Wendy Liu on the Stuart Hall Foundation website and YouTube. Running until November, each one-on-one conversation will hopefully help to demonstrate how engaging in conjunctural analysis, as Hall envisaged, can enrich creative or political practice and deepen academic and organising work. Hall's approach to making sense of the current political moment encourages us to ask ourselves what roles can we play in the pursuit of a more just world. So, in today's conversation, we consider migration with Leah Cowan. We'll cover key themes from Border Nation, their book from 2021, and also discuss Stuart Hall's essay from 20 years ago, Cosmopolitan Promises, Multicultural Futures, and that can be found in the Duke University Press collection On Race and Difference, published in 2021. Do have your questions ready for the second half of this conversation, when there'll be 45 minutes or so for a Q&A. Please submit comments using the chat box at any time during the event, and remember, live captions are available by clicking the CC button in the Zoom bar.

So I'd now like to welcome our guest Leah Cowan. Leah is a writer, editor, researcher and advocate. They write on state violence, gender and the border regime in the UK as part of an extended colonial legacy. Leah is the former politics editor at gal-dem, an award-winning UK-based online and print magazine dedicated to centring people of colour from

marginalised genders. Leah also works at Project 17, an advice centre for migrant families who cannot access welfare support from the state and are facing homelessness and destitution. They are co-editor of *Lasta*, a new feminist abolitionist print magazine of insurgent feminisms. So, welcome, Leah. I'm really, really excited to speak to you. I've been following your work over many years, though this is the first time we get to speak about your wonderful book, *Border Nation*. It's such a clear and insightful text. It's published by Pluto Press, and part of the Outspoken series. Now, to begin with, could you tell the audience why people might choose to migrate and what challenges they may face upon arrival to a new country?

Leah Cowan

Thank you, and thank you so much to the Stuart Hall Foundation for having me in this conversation today. I'm really looking forward to our chat. Well, I think it's obviously a really broad question that we can approach from so many angles, but given that we're here at the kind invitation of the Stuart Hall Foundation, perhaps it makes sense to kind of think about the present conjuncture, this particular moment we find ourselves in, and the different power relations and political and social contexts that produce a range of interconnected but, of course, very various migration experiences, both in terms of why people cross borders and what the experience is along the way and on arrival, and I think we can question whether that arrival is ever actually a completed process. I would argue that, in fact, states do all they can to ensure that migrant communities are made to feel like they're in this constant state of arriving, never quite belonging, never quite settling. And as a caveat, I'll be speaking today quite specifically about Britain and about the border regime here in the place that I live, because it's the place that I therefore know the most about, the place that has imprints on me and is imprinted by my own family's migration history, which I will share a little bit more about as we talk today.

But to get back to thinking about migration, we're living at a time when crossing borders is not a single, one-time-only activity, I think. We live in this time of everyday borders, which I write about in the book. It's one of the key productions of the hostile environment, which the then-Home Secretary Theresa May announces in 2012 as this web of laws and policies that would seek to make life in the UK untenable for many communities, and she said the government would, and this is a quote, "create here in Britain a really hostile environment for illegal immigrants". And, of course, we know that one of the functions of the hostile environment is that its viewfinder is much wider than what we might more humanely call undocumented people, in terms of who it harasses, who it surveils, brutalises, targets in various ways, and whose life it makes it difficult. And I would say that this widening of the net is not an accident or an afterthought or a system glitch. It's really the intended purpose of, somehow, these both at once vague but also exacting policies that are embedded within this structurally racist system, overseen by a racist government.

And to give some more specifics of what this looks like, so we had successive Immigration Acts in 2014 and 2016, and they brought in this slew of laws and policies that, as Theresa May said, aimed to make life difficult for people, life untenable, and these were policies around the right to rent, the right to work, the ability to open bank accounts, the collection of nationality data in schools and universities, which was then used for immigration

enforcement purposes, the raising of NHS charging to 150% of the cost of the treatment, so a kind of profit-making purpose there, and the implementation of overseas visitor teams to manage the administration of all of that additional charging and chasing people up, including people who would struggle to provide their documentation, to evidence their availability for these essential services and infrastructure, as well as people who were profiled as being a migrant and/or as potentially not being eligible to access these things.

So this is that widening of the net that I'm talking about. And the impact of that vague web of policies, that wide net, is quite severe. And so, for example, there was a report by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants that found out that after the Right to Rent legislation came in, 42% of landlords were unlikely to rent to people without British passports, and 25% would be less likely to rent to somebody with – and again, this is their language – a foreign name or foreign accent. So this was never about the legality or illegality of a person's status, it's always about reinforcing who gets to belong and who gets to feel at home along racialised lines. And so we live in this time when the welfare state is in this process of being hollowed out and privatised, wages are stagnating whilst the cost of living rises, jobs feel more insecure than ever, renting feels more insecure and more untenable than ever, but yet we're told that the chronic problems in this crucial infrastructure is the problem of migrant demographics, who are statistically less likely to use this infrastructure, which is, of course, also a huge problem. And the swing towards this kind of all-out fascism has manifested as physical arson attacks on hotels where people are seeking asylum, and the government publishing these kind of cohesion strategies, saying that migration has surged too quickly, too fast, too quickly, and then two months later, we see people being burned out of their houses in Belfast, with rioters shouting "foreigners out". So I think that is some of the terrain that people are surviving in and arriving into when people migrate to this country.

K Biswas

Thanks. That's a perfect place to start. Stuart migrated to England from Jamaica in 1951, and believed by the late '50s, with disorders in Notting Hill and in Nottingham, that there was large-scale kind of white outrage at the black presence in Britain, but the histories of British hostility to migrants stretches back centuries to this era of empires, and I just wanted to ask, how important do you think understanding nation's colonial past is to understanding the present border system?

Leah Cowan

Yeah, I mean, I think a lot of the writing and the research that I do is about looking back and trying to understand how we got here. I think I'm really curious about the past because it really tells us a lot about where we are. This also helps to understand why certain developments feel new, even though they are quite old or part of a long, long trajectory, and this is an idea I've been thinking about more and more, particularly since reading a brilliant new book called *Transitions: On Culture, Crisis, and the Human*, by Sita Balani and Jay Bernard, and there's a section where Jay is talking about the emergence of what they refer to as multicultural fascism, so people of colour attending far-right demonstrations, right-wing anti-immigrant Conservative politicians, etc. – not that we

have anything to celebrate about Labour on that front. And Jay wrote that this is something that Paul Gilroy covers in his essay on black fascism, reflecting on the disorientating diagonalism of the moment, which suggests that just because something appears to be new now doesn't mean it didn't appear with the same newness in the past. So Jay reflects on how this is underpinned by a very seductive desire for a very simple enemy. And I think understanding the past helps us to understand what feels like these new and emerging crises. I think because borders are pitched as the guardrails of an empire with no colonies, it helps to understand that back story, and it also tells us something, I think, about how the figure of the citizen is confected.

We can look at immigration rules to understand a little bit about that, the kind of good character requirements that you have in a lot of immigration rules, and understand that being folded into the British state is about toeing the line, adhering to this kind of tea and biscuits fantasy of respectability, and this is a very colonial idea that was, of course, exported around the world through the ideas and the literature that was taught in colonial school systems. But what we also find, if we look back, is that those systems were also the breeding grounds for dissident thinkers, writers and actors who would return to the hub of the Empire, if not already with an analysis, then to very quickly acquire a very sharp understanding of the British state and its violent contours – people like CLR James, Darcus Howe, Altheia Jones-LeCointe, who set up the British Black Panthers, and of course, indeed, Stuart Hall. And once, speaking to an Observer journalist, Hall said, "I was brought up to understand you. I read your literature. I knew Daffodils off by heart before I knew the name of a Jamaican flower." And I think some of that points to the relevance of that colonial history to not only the violence we're experiencing in the present day but the way in which we confront that violence.

K Biswas

And, of course, in Stuart's family, his wife Catherine has worked on the Legacies of British Slavery project with UCL for many years. It's produced this ground-breaking research on colonial slavery and its ongoing impact to Britain. So there's some wonderful work to read around. And Jay Bernard is such a wonderful thinker as well. Many people would have heard about the Windrush scandal. I feel that that's a kind of entry point for a lot of people in terms of thinking about migration. So the Windrush scandal, where a lack of citizenship documentation led to a number of post-war migrants to Britain being deported. Why do you as a writer feel it's important to document people's migration stories?

Leah Cowan

Yeah, I mean, I think... I'll think through your question about the importance of documenting our stories by way of sharing, actually, some of the story of how my family came to the UK, in some way hopefully answering your question by showing as well as telling, and I may ramble, so I'll keep a little eye on the time here. So my grandparents came to England from Jamaica, like Stuart Hall, in the 1950s, and my grandfather came to seek better economic opportunities. However, unlike Stuart Hall, he didn't have a Rhodes scholarship at the University of Oxford. He actually came to the UK planning to be a doctor, and he told everybody on the boat, "I'm going to England. I'm going to be a doctor,"

and he did such a kind of hard sell of this on the boat that he became this kind of pseudo-doctor figure on the boat, and if anybody had any maladies, they would go to him. If they had a headache, a stomach-ache, and apparently he would give them kind of very unqualified advice! But he arrived here and realised that, of course, he wasn't going to be just automatically accepted into a university, and ended up working in a factory, as did my grandma. And partway into his new job in this factory, he was asked if he knew how to operate a particular drill machine, which he'd never used before, but of course, he was like, "Yeah, sure, I can do it." And he'd used a similar machine back in Jamaica, which he now, in retrospect, he thinks it was an American version of the machine, so the parts were the reverse way round, and as he was using this drill machine, a part of it slipped down, and he put out his arm to catch the drill so that it wouldn't ruin the part that he was drilling, and the drill went into his arm, so he sustained this quite horrific injury, and whenever he would tell this story, at this point in the story, he would always lift up his sleeve to show you the scar. It was a very key part of the storytelling. Luckily, the manager in the factory was quite kind, and they said he could work in the office whilst he was recovering from this injury, and this was actually a really great opportunity for him. He was able to get work experience in an area of the factory he wouldn't have usually been allowed to work in. He made himself indispensable, and he thinks that really helped him progress in his career, and he later went on to become an engineer. So my grandad came first.

He was working in the factory, and he said to my grandma, "If I get a job, if I can establish myself, then you can follow me." And so he sent for her. She got her ticket, and she comes with a nutmeg in her pocket to ward off the seasickness, and arrives in a cold, cold winter, sees all the trees with no leaves on them, and says, you know, "Why are all the trees dead?" Really kind of confused at this lack of verdant foliage that you would get in Jamaica. And she was very isolated. She was 21 years old. She spent a lot of time in the house until she eventually got a job in a factory, and she faced a lot of racism and discrimination, and in my book *Border Nation*, I write a little bit about their experiences on arrival in these very material terms. My grandfather spoke about walking door-to-door trying to find accommodation, and he got very emotional speaking to me about these experiences. The experience of having such a basic human need for safe and comfortable shelter being denied to him and to my grandma, and that was a really painful experience that so many people who migrate to Britain go through in various ways. And I share some of this history, some of it sentimental, humorous, adventurous, painful, because migration stories are not monolithic. They have multiple dimensions. And there are also patterns that echo throughout a lot of these stories, not in the exact way... that exact same way in every time, but in different formations about why people migrate, how sometimes that story or that reasoning shifts and takes different shapes, and what happens along the way.

And this makes me think about that distinction between an economic migrant and other types of migration, which I think is quite a false distinction. A lot of the reasons why people migrate are multifaceted, shifting, complex, and I think the locomotive of neoliberal economic systems are ultimately what is used by states, elites, multinational corporates to justify and perpetuate wars, natural disasters and instability, so migration is almost always a question of economics, played out in different guises. And I think there's

something else here in my grandad's story about working conditions, about the labour market, the lack of care for migrant workers, the onus on an individual to strategise and make opportunities, and that painful reality that however hard you work, it might have no relation to what money you earn or what your working conditions are or what your career progression looks like, and the fact of poor housing is a theme, I think, that ripples across migration stories, the reality that poor housing and low incomes have these ripple effects on health, mental health, they have lifelong impacts on children who grow up in poverty, and I think part of that is what's driven me to the work that I do with the organisation you mentioned, Project 17, where we're supporting families who have no recourse to public funds, who are facing homelessness, and trying to get people accommodation from social services. And I think it's really important to understand these formulas, almost, of how Britain brings people in to fill labour shortages and then ensures that they won't settle or live tenable lives here, and among these stories are where webs of solidarity grow. It's where we can get ideas about fighting back, we can learn from past mistakes, we can gather strength in the idea of survival, and I think all of that is part of what makes me think that it's so important to document, record and share these multiplicitous migration stories.

K Biswas

I mean, for the audience, Leah's such a clear-sighted, insightful writer, and Border Nation does capture the stories of Leah's grandparents, but also people experiencing the border system right now, and it's done in such a well-structured way, and, Leah, you spent many years writing for independent media outlet gal-dem, which has sadly now closed, and you mention in your book a kind of monocultural newsroom culture that plays a role in stoking anti-migrant sentiment. Are there any effective ways from your career that you found in encouraging popular, more positive alternative narratives around migration in the 21st century?

Leah Cowan

Yeah, I think I have a few thoughts on this, and it's interesting. I was writing Border Nation... I started writing it in 2018, 2019, and the way that I think about this particular issue has really shifted. When I was reading the book back, or reading sections of it yesterday, there's a real kind of youthful, bright-eyed optimism, I think, in some of the way that I write and some of the way that I think, and certainly, when I was working at gal-dem, this real sense that... I think we've moved beyond the kind of diversity framework, but this idea that, you know, we just need to get more of us in the newsrooms and that's what's going to shift the narrative. And I think... my political analysis is quite different now. I think the idea of positive narratives around migration feels like a bit of a trap, and there's a danger that reinforcing... We could end up reinforcing a negative narrative by feeling pressed to directly counter it, and what I mean by this is, for example, we see it happening a lot in conversations around police abolition, right? So as an abolitionist, I might be asked, if you want to abolish the police, then what do you want to replace them with? And the question itself is a wrong one.

Instead, we should be asking what is it that we've been told – in some cases, convinced quite well – that we don't all deserve that has led to a crisis of harm in society for which police and the carceral system are presented as a salve or a cover-up. And obviously, that's a much less snappy question, but the answer then becomes very clear – safe and comfortable housing, healthcare for all, universal basic income, access to nutritious food, green spaces, leisure, places to congregate, etc. And so I think the questions, actually, that we might need to ask are not around building positive narratives around migration, and I think we're talking about in the media here specifically, but instead, what is needed politically, materially, narratively, to denature, defund and disarm the very seductive circulation of racist narratives, which are never just narratives. We obviously care about narratives because they're mandates for action – laws, policies, street violence, etc. And I think the second question is that, given that we are already existing in a country where these narratives are dominant and they are spread relentlessly in a top-down way – we're talking about media, political commentators, politicians, legislation, all kind of talking in concert – given that that's the context, how do we support and strengthen and scale mutual aid and community self-defence so that we can counter the physical manifestations of these narratives when they occur and where they occur? It feels like our backs are slightly against the wall, and potentially the time for positive narratives is a little bit beyond us, but I'm interested to know what you think on that.

K Biswas

I think you make a very clear point in the book about, it's not a kind of binary divide between one, engaging in the kind of policy-making system, or two, creating your own spaces outside the sort of realities of the border system. It's both. You sort of have to do both. And I do feel that whilst our backs are against the wall, there are these mechanisms that put in place things that we as a community can push against. I've seen recently that Lewisham have made Lewisham Borough a City of Sanctuary, and I think a number of other places have done that. Now, that is a practical addressing of a difficult system with electoral and policy-making backing. Now, to involve ourselves in something like that, I think, is a very, very positive move. And whilst our backs are against the wall, we are also doing what, I think, Hilary Wainwright coined, the idea of being in and against the state, which is such an important position for one to understand. And I think that the city that we both live in, London, when the GLC in the early '80s was able to, I suppose, occupy power for five years, a sort of radical administration, it was both that in and against that created the system of multicultural London that I was born in, so you would have the doors of City Hall open to the movement outside, but the movement outside had to pre-exist before we were allowed. And I don't know... whilst everything looks bleak in terms of news headlines, I also feel that we're in this situation now where we can pressure policy-making, maybe for the first time in my adult life, successfully on this. But that's my two cents.

I wanted to get into the kind of granular detail of Border Nation, and there's an amazing section where you write about the profit motive in keeping people incarcerated. Are these private companies – we won't name them – but are these private companies that people know, security companies, are they baked in to the country's immigration system? And

kind of what is the role of the state in overseeing these private companies that keep people incarcerated?

Leah Cowan

Yeah, the border infrastructure, in a much more extreme way than even the prison system, is very privatised, and what that means is that violence is outsourced to companies who are making money off maintaining the border infrastructure, whether that is companies who run all the various bits of immigration detention centres, whether that's companies who are providing escorts on deportations and removals, and actually, there was some research done this year by a couple of universities in the UK that revealed that the government had paid £5 billion in contracts to private companies since 2015 for border security in relation to small boat crossings, and these are contracts that ultimately do not, cannot, and, I think we would argue, should not ever actually stop people from crossing borders. They're contracts where, actually, they're not effective, and nor would we want them to be. But to give some flesh to this kind of profit-making web, I think we can take the example of the immigration detention estate. There's 11 immigration detention centres in Britain, including some short-term holding facilities, and all of these are privately run by different companies, who I will name – Serco, Mitie, Tascor. And there were other processing centres, one in particular that I will give a bit of detail on.

So it's a centre called Manston in Kent, which was temporarily shut down in 2022 because of the awful conditions there. People in the centres as well as inspectors said that, you know, families with children were sleeping on dirty floors, there were outbreaks of infectious diseases, reports of overcrowding, and people who were detained there lacked access to legal advice, which is a massive problem across all detention centres here, and when the single person who managed to get immigration advice in that year – the one person who was detained who spoke to a lawyer – they spoke to a firm called Duncan Lewis, and that law firm threatened a challenge against the centre on human rights grounds, and the centre was actually shut in November. There's actually an inquiry now going on into what happened in Manston, and some of the issues coming out in that inquiry are really horrific. They include the dehumanising practice of guards referring to people detained by the number of the small boat they arrived on. That's how they are speaking to people and addressing them. Problems with accessing healthcare, hospital care, prescriptions, concerns about use of force, and the particular circumstances by which six staff members at that centre were charged with conspiracy to steal from people who were detained there. So a lot of very horrific things going on, as well as exploring the tragic death of one person who was detained there, Mr Hussein Ahmed.

So with all of this happening in the background, in May this year, a company called MTC Definitive won a £500 million contract to process people who arrive on small boats, and they're now going to be running the Manston centre. And this company, MTC Definitive, is part of a joint venture, which is majority-owned by another company called MTC, which is owned by another parent company in Utah which runs five US immigration detention centres used by ICE. And MTC, that kind of middle parent company, is also the very same company that was running Manston before it was shut down.

So there is this web of money and profit-making that is deeply tangled into anti-migrant government agendas on an international scale, that are operating in direct contravention of basic international human rights agreements and treating people incredibly badly. So all of this to say, really, private companies are, yeah, absolutely baked into the running of the border, and through these competitive tendering processes, they offer the worst possible conditions for the lowest possible price, so that as much profit as possible can be poured into the pockets of their shareholders. And as in the Manston case, the state does have a role in overseeing and inspecting the operations of these companies, such as those that run detention centres, and actually, very often, the inspectorate reports are quite honest and quite damning, but not much really seems to change, because there is this private profit motive for detention and for bordering, which doesn't reconcile very easily with the fact that there's actually a very clear business case for ending detention. It's much more expensive than supporting somebody in their community. This is probably quite an outdated figure, but maybe about ten years ago, it was something like £120 a day to support someone in a detention centre and about a tenth of that to support someone in the community. And all of this really undermines that neoliberal idea that bordering is necessary to prevent a drain on public funds. That logic is completely unpicked when you realise the profit motive behind all of it.

K Biswas

I think that this mention of the international system is probably a good time to mention Stuart Hall's brilliant piece from 2006, *Cosmopolitan Promises, Multicultural Realities*. So this was initially delivered as an Amnesty International lecture, discussing both economic flux globally and cultural reality in 21st-century urban Britain, and I'm going to read a very brief extract from the middle of the piece. "Migration is increasingly the joker in the globalisation pack, the subterranean circuit connecting the crisis of one part of the global system "with the growth rates and living standards of the other. The logic of globalisation says that every element of growth must be free to move fluidly across every regulative boundary, including that of the nation state – capital, investment, commodities, technologies, currencies, profits, cultural messages and images all flow. Ideologically, barriers must be thrown over, the circuits kept open. In fact, the reality is something different. All the major proponents of free trade and open investment borders manage in practice to impose their own selective preferential regimes where it is in their national interest to do so. However, when the model is working perfectly, only one commodity, labour, is required to stay still or be strictly controlled in its movement. Otherwise, how can transnational corporations take competitive advantage of the cheap labour, low-wage conditions, tax breaks and favourable investment regimes offered by developing societies? Suppose thousands of workers in Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Republic of the Congo or Guatemala were free to desert their \$1-a-day jobs and turn up as high-wage labour in the high-tech economies of the cities of the American west coast. The fact that, in the UK, small numbers of highly-trained and scarce workers "such as computer technicians and nurses, and untrained, unemployed seasonal labourers willing to work in shocking conditions at below minimum wage levels, such as fruit pickers, kitchen porters and building labourers, are encouraged to migrate in selective and controlled numbers in keeping with the uncertain rhythms of the labour market does not undermine the general model."

Now, looking at this picture 20 years on, in what could be seen as a new era of economic nationalism, do you think that the major western economies can in any way wean themselves off their historic reliance on free flows of cheap foreign labour?

Leah Cowan

I think... I think I would slightly disagree with Hall on a semantic point here. I don't think the state necessarily wants labour to, as you say in the extract, stay still or to be strictly controlled in its movement. Or at least, perhaps it wants the labour to stay still and the worker to absolutely not stay still, to not be able to settle here, build a life here, have a sense of belonging, for relatives to join, children be raised, etc. And I think Hall is kind of teasing out that point too, because following on from the passage you shared, he takes this meandering, slightly sensationalising, quite colourful wander through the reality that many undocumented workers who are essential to the economic system here in Britain are experiencing, and to kind of share another section, he writes of people who cross borders who, quote, "move along uncharted routes, secrete themselves in the most inhospitable instances, mortgage their worldly goods to the human traffickers, seal life-threatening contracts with gangmasters and pimps and exploit their lateral family connections in order to subvert the physical barriers, legal constraints and immigration regimes that metropolitan powers are vigorously putting in place. These are the overspill of the global system, the world's surplus populations, the sans-papiers of the modern metropolis, who slip across borders at the dead of night or stow away in the backs of lorries or under trains and silently disappear into the hidden depths of the city."

And I think those two pieces come together quite well. He's acknowledging here that the movement will happen either way. Whatever barriers or restrictions are put in place, whatever horrors or violences that people face along the way, the border doesn't stop the movement. It creates a site for violence, abuse and exploitation, which, of course, is rife across different industries. And to come back to your question around this kind of historic reliance on a low-paid and exploitable workforce, this really is the bedrock of the racial capitalist system, and Cedric Robinson, of course, in the US, in Black Marxism, paints this very comprehensive picture that this creation of a subordinate class along racialised lines predates the colonial projects and the transatlantic slavery and is in fact a characteristic of European history. Robinson writes of "barbarians" being a kind of general term for people excluded from the category of European beyond the boundary of the old Roman imperial social order, who quickly primarily became a slave labour force in that area. So it feels like capitalism has predating and baked into it this necessarily racialised, exploited, low paid or unpaid workforce as a key component. It feels hard, really, to move away from that, and I feel like Hall is understanding the duality of that in this piece.

K Biswas

And I suppose, later in this wonderful lecture, Hall points the finger at New Labour for burying the concept of multiculturalism, which he believes that they previously championed. Do you feel that over a quarter of a century since the government-backed Parekh Report on the future of multiethnic Britain, which Stuart famously contributed to

and which called for the country to declare itself multicultural, this idea in 2026 is out of our grasp?

Leah Cowan

Yeah, I mean, I think... Unfortunately, I don't think "hope" is a word that I would associate with a Labour government, not now, not for many years, not for the foreseeable future. I also don't have a strong resonance with the idea of multiculturalism. I understand what it means as a term and as a project for those who were organising and fighting anti-racist struggles in the early decades of my life, but when I was coming into my political consciousness, as a term, it felt very vague and liberal, and I remember, actually, my first job in London, I was working at a music migration charity, and we had this catalogue of instruments that you could order from a company, and there were pages of violins and flutes and pianos, and then I remember there was one page advertising a "multicultural basket", which was, like, a random selection of instruments outside of the canon of western classical instruments.

And for me, this story kind of illuminates something that Harsha Walia writes about in a much more sophisticated way, that liberal multiculturalists and racist nationals share an assumption that racialised communities are the bearers of difference, and she also writes that multiculturalism works to effectively mask the reality of this commodified inclusion. She says that it cements white settler coloniality – obviously, she's talking about a specific Canadian context there – and racial capitalist political economies by managing racialised communities and capturing migrant labour. And I think this is what feels useless for me about multiculturalism as a frame or as a horizon. Obviously, in terms of considering what the project of multiculturalism actually was and whether that has resonance today, there was a speech which Stuart Hall gave in 2008, and he describes how, in the face of difference, which is what multiculturalism was originally trying to broker, there are two approaches that we can take, and the first is through a return to our roots – R-O-O-T-S – to some kind of mythical golden age of cohesion, or to examine our routes – R-O-U-T-E-S – the different pathways which different cultures, peoples, traditions, languages and religions, have taken to the present via this uneven character of globalisation, and he says this work, this "routes", discovering these pathways, is slow, mutual, dialogic, an unfolding of reciprocal understanding.

And I think this is a view of multiculturalism that, as Sivanandan also writes in a similar era, was created out of decades of struggle, anti-racist struggles by black communities, struggles for equal pay, against discrimination, struggles to make the police protect communities, or at least defend communities from the police, struggles for children not to be bussed out of schools, to include other histories in the curriculum, etc. And framed in this way, of course, it feels very meaningful and very important, that idea of coalition-building across struggles to protect and fight for everyone's material needs. But for me, that struggle is not located in a Labour government or in any government, or even directed towards making demands on the state as an end goal. It's necessarily going to be about confrontations with the state at the same time as building and experimenting with ways to support each other whilst living in this current capitalist reality.

K Biswas

I mean, yeah, that's a brilliant point to make, and maybe our audience will have questions around multiculturalism as well, and before we go to audience questions, I'd like to ask one final thing about your book. I mean, it concludes with these myriad examples of people rejecting the border nation. Which are the acts of resistance to borders that continue to inspire you?

Leah Cowan

I think it's this fabric of different experiments and different ways of chipping away at the hostile environment. It's groups like the Anti-Raids Network, who are trying to inform communities about what to do if you see a raid, what to do if you experience a raid, organising that we're seeing against deportations, organising around when people were being moved to Bibby Stockholm, to that horrific barge where people were being kind of warehoused when seeking asylum. Also, obviously, in other countries, activism against ICE, detention solidarity groups, work against the carceral system – obviously prisons and the border regime are very, very interconnected. The prison system is increasingly being privatised, and there is a pipeline between immigration detention to prison to deportation, so groups like Level Up, who is a feminist organising charity and campaigning organisation who are working really hard to get pregnant women out of prison. They're a really important part of that movement ecology. As well as bystander intervention work, so groups that are thinking about how we can limit and de-escalate contact with police and with border enforcement and making sure that we are skilled up within our communities to know that we have the knowledge and the ability to do that.

And lastly, but not leastly, Palestine Action continues to inspire me, alongside any activities to disarm the genocidal state of Israel, and we need to recognise, of course, Britain's complicity in that genocide, the government's role in enabling the creation of that genocide, because bordering is part of a global system of inequality. As I set out in *Border Nation*, the nation is defined by who it excludes. That tells us the story of the nation in the most clear-eyed way, and so I think all resistance to the border, all resistance to imperialism is necessarily part of this internationalist project.

K Biswas

Thanks, Leah, and I really hope that audience members will go out and get *Border Nation*. It's such a wonderful read. So the first questions from our Q&A have come in. We've got a question from Nigel. It's: "Do the circuits of British capital both support political repression and physical violence in client states and promote negative narratives of migrants and the physical resistance/ intimidation towards migration and migrants within the UK?" That's Nigel's first question.

Leah Cowan

I'm just going to take a moment to read that and get my head round that, if that's OK.

K Biswas

Yeah. Nigel Ecclesfield. Thanks for your question, Nigel.

Leah Cowan

...political repression and physical violence in client states... Hmm. I'm not sure I fully understand. In terms of client states... Do you... is there another way you could frame this question, Biz?

K Biswas

I would say... The states that Britain has had relationships with through trade that may stretch back to colonial times, that may provide the post-war migration that finds itself in Britain, in Britain's multiracial landscape. That's how I would view it.

Leah Cowan

Mmm. "...and promote negative narratives of migrants "and the physical resistance/intimidation..." I mean, I think what I am struck by in the work that I do is the very clear colonial footprint and imprint on the operations of the border and particularly the sharp edge of the border, the brutality of the border. If you look at data around who is targeted by, for example, mass charter flights, who is detained, it maps quite crisply onto countries that were formerly colonised by Britain. If you look at visa regimes, if you look at who has clearer pathways to coming to the UK – obviously, from 1971 and 1981, through those Immigration Acts, it encoded into legislation, into immigration legislation, the idea that whiteness is an inherent part of Britishness, that access to citizenship is an inherent... Has an intrinsic link to whiteness, and so I think, yeah, those circuits are incredibly present – not just in legislation and in policy, but it's deeply embedded in the racist... The institutional racism of things like the social care system, and examples of how that comes up is when I would work with families who had no recourse to public funds, who were facing homelessness and they needed help with accommodation from social services. Very commonly, social services will say, you know, "Can't you go back to where you came from?" or "Why did you come to this country "without a plan about how you're going to support yourself?" And a lot of those conversations very much coded in very racialised terms. The smaller instances where we would have clients who were not racialised were dealt with in very different ways. And so you see that emerging not just in the cultures of institutions, in the legislation, in the policy, and that joining together to create this circuit that you talk about, this web.

K Biswas

Great question. Thank you, Nigel. We have a question from Raheela, second question. "For many working class diaspora families in the UK, visiting the motherland is financially impossible, making our elders the only physical link to our roots. With their histories and archives dying with them, what urgent steps can be taken to document these narratives so future generations don't lose their heritage entirely?" Great question.

Leah Cowan

Yeah, great question. Thank you for that, Raheela. I mean, I think this question speaks to the critical importance of institutions like the Black Cultural Archives, like the Bishopsgate Institute, which is a really great archive of working class and social history in London, where really careful, considered and thoughtful efforts are being made to preserve the histories of individuals, but also key anti-racist organising groups, groups that were potentially funded by the GLC and then had to close their doors. A lot of those groups are archived in those places. So I think there's one thing around ensuring that we have institutions that can take care of those documents, those artefacts, those materials. In terms of my own work, I think, and this is what a lot of researchers and writers and interviewers will say, there is something different about my ability to, for example, sit down with my grandfather, who has sadly now passed, and have a conversation about his experience of coming to the UK from Jamaica. It's a conversation that my dad wouldn't have been able to have with him.

So I think there is a responsibility among my generation to be having these conversations with our elders, knowing that potentially these are topics that have maybe not been talked about for many, many decades, and bearing that sensitivity in mind, but that urgent step is something as simple as sitting down a grandparent or sitting down an elder and saying, "I'd love to hear a bit about your life and when you came here," and knowing that it may take a couple of different sessions. You may not be able to go in with a set of your 20 questions and get all your answers.

Certainly, when I sat down with my grandad, there was a long part of the process which was him showing me all of his, like, technical certificates from college and then talking to me about being on the cricket team of the Post Office, and we went through a lot of that! You know, material about his life, because that was what was important to him. And that had to be a fundamental part of the conversation, not just, like, what are the topics that I want to talk about as well. So I think it's that institutional piece, and also having those conversations before the people are no longer with us.

K Biswas

I think that's such a brilliant point. On a personal level, I think these oral history projects are kind of essential. We did one for the GLC, interviewing the older members of the GLC who were, I think, in their 70s, and we were probably in our 20s. And it was a really rich experience speaking to people with all of these memories and tools for our generations that don't necessarily need to be kind of re-come up with out of thin air – they can be listened to. And I'm biased here, but I do think that Britain's community radio network is a great place to broadcast some of those conversations that you might garner from oral history projects. I mean, there are dozens and dozens of community stations all across the country, and actually, hundreds all across the world, who would be willing to broadcast this type of information, because it is urgent and it is essential. A lot of this documentation gets lost, never to be found again. So create more content, get it out to as many people as possible, see what's captured, is my advice.

We have a wonderful question from Lavinia. "A question that intrigues me is, inclusion – does it just become exclusion? Is DEI" – that's diversity, equity, inclusion – "just another way to discriminate against individuals and groups? How does constructive discrimination within institutes of integrity continue to operate in 2026 with the same key values of embedded colonisation over 200 years ago?" Big question.

Leah Cowan

Big question, great question. I mean, I think I am increasingly less interested and invested in DEI and EDI, and the various kind of acronyms we've been spun around with. I think if you're interested in, whether you frame it as inclusion or equity or justice or access to the basic things we need in your workplace, I would say join a union. I think union organising is the place where issues of inequality, injustice, discrimination, are going to be most meaningfully addressed. I think with DEI, it becomes a kind of HR procedural tactic for saying, "Oh, yes, OK, we had a Disability Day and we had Black History Month, "and we had a conversation of..." You know, "We got all the managers in a room "and we told them about how to not be misogynistic." It doesn't really get at the root of inequality within institutions. It doesn't look at who's at the top of the organisation, it doesn't look at what is the pay chasm between the top and the entry-level position. It doesn't do any of that kind of structural ruffling of feathers, and I think, in fact, your union, the place where you can have collective bargaining power and sit down with colleagues and say, "What are the problems here? "Who's got an issue with their terms and conditions? "How do we feel about our contracts? "Do we have adequate sick pay, holiday pay, pensions, parental leave?" I think those are the places where you can tease out things that we might think are inclusion and diversity issues and are actually more kind of basic workers' rights issues. That would be my thought.

K Biswas

I would agree with you. I see this tiny DEI window, in a historical sense, as an attempt to, I suppose, bureaucratised what are long-standing issues of discrimination against people of colour, disabled people, gay and trans people and women, and I suppose the 19th-century reaction was to organise, was to overthrow. Parts of the 20th century was to lobby for legislation. And these are long struggles. I think the DEI era is less interesting than those previous eras, and hopefully, the next iteration of how we address these fundamental human issues around equality and equity will be more exciting and more of a mass movement, rather than a sort of pen-pushing movement. That's my view. Please do continue to send questions in to the Q&A. Maybe this is a good opportunity to ask a question around the ways in which class and gender and sexuality might play into people's experience of modern-day borders. This is mentioned a lot in your book, Leah, so class, gender, sexuality and the experience of the border.

Leah Cowan

Yeah, I mean, I think the hostile environment is about enforced poverty and about creating sites of vulnerability and exploitation and, of course, this is particularly compounded for people who have less access to resources, whether due to being minoritised or

marginalised because of race, class, gender, disability, for example, and of course, through experiences that interrelate with these, such as being a survivor of domestic violence, being a single parent, not being able to work for a whole range of reasons. And I think the creation of the no recourse to public funds condition, and I talk about this a bit, because this is something that I work on in my day-to-day work, is one of the cornerstones of contemporary immigration policy that is particularly classed and particularly gendered, and pushes families into poverty. And there's been research done by organisations like the Unity Project, a really great organisation helping people to try and get this no-recourse condition taken off their leave to remain. It shows that this condition – which I should say, by way of a bit of an explainer – most types of time-limited leave to remain, so most visas that you get to come to this country – student visa, work visa, parent visa, spouse visa, etc – they come with this condition, that you can't access public funds. You can't apply for benefits. If you are having a housing issue, you can't get any help with housing from the council, and if you are undocumented, you have this condition by default.

So there's kind of two separate but quite interlinked groups, very large groups of people who have no recourse, as we say. And this work by the Unity Project, it showed that the NRPF condition disproportionately impacts women, low-income families, disabled people, pregnant people and people with new babies and black and racialised children, so those are the groups that are particularly vastly disproportionately impacted by this policy, and what it means is that when families need support and they can't rely on the welfare safety net, they often have a choice between potentially jeopardising their ability to stay in the country, because if you breach this no-recourse condition, it can impact your visa and future visas, or staying in an unsuitable, possibly violent situation, possibly sleeping on the street. And if people do manage to get support from social services, it's often a very poor standard of accommodation. Lots of issues of disrepair, overcrowding, mould, damp, infestations, etc. And so there's this culture, as I was saying a bit earlier, within local authorities which leads social workers to ask these questions – "Why did you come here without a plan, without money, why did you have this baby, can this child live with this other person who's been violent, can you sleep on the streets?" And the point here is that those who are the least resourced are the most targeted and the most impacted by the violence of modern-day borders, and I think we're also seeing increasing income requirements for particular visas, which means that you have to be earning a certain amount of money to be able to come here, settle here, survive here, and new proposals which the government is currently cooking up around longer routes to settlement, so people having this no-recourse condition for 10, 15, 20 years, and actually, that period of time that you might have no government support could be increased if, for example, you are on a low income, which, again, disproportionately is going to be women, single parents of young children, people with disabilities, people who for various reasons can't work.

And so this whole issue of being self-sufficient, this kind of neoliberal mantra, is what pushes people into poverty, and it can sometimes be fatal. There was the horrific case in 2020 of a mother called Mercy Baguma who was found dead in her flat next to her distressed child, who'd been crying for many days. And she'd been surviving on food banks, awaiting support from the asylum system, and this is the end point of the hostile environment. That's the kind of fatal sharp edge which disproportionately is going to

impact people who have nowhere else to turn, who are not as resourced because of living at these intersecting sites of oppression.

K Biswas

That's a great, great answer. We have another question from Joanne. "What are your thoughts on the role of technology in its use at the sharp end – the profiling at borders, etc, and in the proliferation of those AI-generated visions of a lost Britain or America, for example, that right-wing groups love to share in creating their weird narratives of a world they want to see? How as humans can we intervene in this?" Brilliant question, Joanne.

Leah Cowan

Yeah, I mean, I am famously a technophobe...

K Biswas

Same!

Leah Cowan

...and absolutely detest AI, so I think, yeah, I'm very terrified by this potential horizon. Not just in terms of the broader structures of inequality that AI, of course, replicates because of who owns it, because of who creates it, not just because of the environmental aspect of AI and the massive data centres that are going to be using so many natural resources – and there's a really important campaign actually happening here in London against a proposed data centre in Brick Lane, which I think is... unfortunately, those plans seem to be marching forwards. Also, the threat to creativity and intellectual property.

I think, on a personal level, a book that I contributed to, I realised, had been used to train AI in one of those kind of big cases where people could look up whether your work had been utilised, and there's something quite personal and quite painful about knowing that your work, which is in intense confrontation and contestation of these techno-fascist corporate companies, has been stolen and is being used to train and to hone and refine the abilities of these AI and large language models, etc. So my thoughts are that I'm quite terrified. Your question, how as humans can we intervene in this... I don't know that I have a great answer for that. I think my very twee, corny answer is that I'm increasingly turning towards analogue forms of idea sharing and information sharing. I'm involved, as was mentioned at the beginning, in setting up a new magazine called Lasta, which is a feminist abolitionist publication, and it will only be print. We won't have... Well, there will be some online content for people in other countries for ease of sharing, but the primary mode of sharing that information is going to be a print magazine, and I've also been over the past year working with people and developing ideas around zines, so thinking about DIY, handmade forms of information sharing, collecting ideas, making things that are wonky and very visibly made by humans, and that being the beauty of those items. I know that's a very, like, small-scale, personal answer, but I suppose what I share is the horror and the rage around this context that we're existing in.

K Biswas

It's a brilliant answer, and I wholeheartedly agree. There is such joy in creating a physical print magazine with your friends or with your colleagues or people you share viewpoints with. The discussions over the layout, over the visual effect on a real human reader, is wonderful, and there are a number of community presses springing up across the country and across the world, and I would suggest, get involved with two or three, more, like-minded people, see if you can get an editorial team together, print, distribute... It's the most enjoyably human thing that you can do.

We have another question from Raheela. "As members of the global majority raised in the UK, we are faced a multilayered disconnection. We are visibly minoritised by race or faith, and we have completely lost our mother tongues to English. When we are disconnected from our motherlands by economic barriers and yet visibly excluded from fully belonging to the UK, how do we as a diaspora define and feel a genuine sense of belonging? How do we heal from this displacement?" And of course, Stuart's autobiography is called *Familiar Stranger*, which kind of deals with this neither/nor situation, both feeling disconnected from home, but also feeling disconnected from your country where you arrive in.

Leah Cowan

Yeah, I mean, I think it is this very large question of belonging as a diaspora, as somebody with a migration history, and I can't remember who said it recently – somebody was talking about how such a massive chunk of literature is fundamentally asking this question of, like, can you ever return home? How do you ever find a place that is home? And I think... I'm not sure I have an answer to it, but I think the way in which I've grappled with that question for myself is around a lot of the things we've been talking about today, in coming together with people who have a shared analysis, a shared understanding of the fight that we're fighting and building things together, building things in coalition.

Sometimes, yeah, critiquing the idea of a nation state or the idea of coalescing around a particular national identity, because we see so many ways in which that can really go west, right? And instead, thinking what are our shared political formations, what are our shared visions of this liberatory horizon that we're hopefully marching towards together, and how can we organise, how can we dig where we are, whether that's getting involved in pushing back against raids in your area, whether that's joining together and making a publication where you're sharing and exchanging and critiquing ideas.

I think I've had to think quite laterally about what it means to carve out a sense of belonging, and without getting into too much, like, diaspora poetry, you know, it's about knowing that you're never at home here and you're never at home there, and in fact, home is this potentially mythical place, and actually, a sense of groundedness for me is built through shared political conviction with the people that I'm organising with. I hope that's not a slightly dissatisfying idea, but that's as good as it gets for me, I think.

K Biswas

I think that's a great answer, and I suppose for me, it's this idea of culture having no borders. I suppose one of the boons of what could be described as the globalisation era is that culture flies through methods of communication, across borders, in a way that bodies can't. So I love the fact that a grime scene that is just up the road, born where me and Leah are in east London, can travel... There's a grime scene in the Czech Republic. There's one in South Africa. These are things that spread like wildfire. I heard some French drill music that namechecks postcodes in Camberwell in south-east London! So it's... The idea that even away from the sort of functioning political world, in the cultural world, these things spread, and we are in that era where you can find like-minded cultural figures in every part of the globe, should you wish to communicate with them. That's a great question, Raheela.

I suppose something that's on my mind – it links a bit with youth culture – is there feels like there's a bit of a generational divide at the moment between popular feelings around migration... It seems that, certainly in western countries, it's older voters voting for what could be seen as ethnonationalism and authoritarianism, keeping their western countries white, and it's younger voters that understand more of a multicultural make-up of their populations post-war, and you see voting for left and I suppose egalitarian-looking parties skews towards the youth, and voting far-right parties, older people. Not in every country, but in the countries that I'm seeing. So is there something to... Is there a way of bridging that gap between that generational divide in relation to popular feelings around migration?

Leah Cowan

Yeah, I suppose I would wonder why... If you have any thoughts about why you think that generational divide has emerged, because I absolutely saw it, for example, around Brexit. That was a time when I was working for a migration charity and having lots of conversations, panels, discussions with community elders, with young people, with lots of different groups about Brexit, and it was interesting that there was notably, you know, quite a bit of pro-Brexit – I even forgot the dichotomy! Leave/Remain – pro-Leave sentiment among elders that I spoke to, including my own grandfather, right? Like, I had a conversation with him about Brexit, and he said, you know, the country's too full, and we can't have more people here, and you can only fit a pint in a pint jar, and other such Jamaican aphorisms. And I don't know if that was because of the media he was consuming. I'm not sure where I fall on why I think that divide is happening, because I think we need to know... We need to have ideas about why it happens before we can understand what we do with it.

K Biswas

I mean, my answer's slightly esoteric. I think after the Second World War, in western European countries which have seen the far-right kind of explode, the reconstruction led to, I suppose, generations that remember the war fetishising suburbanisation. We're getting out of the inner city. The inner city is where you work, the suburbs is where you... You know, you almost make your home, and these are two separate things. Now, that suburbanisation and those suburbs, the places which are most monocultural in Western Europe, are the places that historically, certainly in the last ten years, vote far-right. It's

very rarely the places that have experienced multiculturalism that vote for those far-right parties. It's the homogenously white suburbs – not all suburbs – that go, "we don't want what the inner city has here." I remember speaking to an MP who... his local area got 10% vote for the BNP and it was 99.9% white, so we're talking a neo-Nazi party gets 10% in the 99.9% place. His wife was mixed-race, and he joked that she's literally the only person of colour in, like, the whole constituency. And I feel a similar thing happened in Austria and in Sweden – these homogenously white places have the fear. And I suppose going back to Joanne's point, those memes – the radicalisation of older generations that no longer understand media messaging... The media messaging that they saw was curated by television executives or radio executives, and now this new, anyone can make it, make it what it's like and distribute it across the world, is seen by older audiences in a way that those previously curated media messages are seen, and that's where part of that radicalisation, in my opinion, has come from. Bit of an esoteric answer, but suburbanisation and a lack of understanding of modern media techniques.

Leah Cowan

Yeah. And so do you think, then, there's an argument for a kind of... How would we counter that? Is there a need for some kind of critical literacy programme or, you know...

K Biswas

I have the answer for you, and it's called the housing crisis, whereby people, younger generations, are pushed out of the affordability of living in inner cities, bleeding into the suburbs or in commuter towns or places which are more affordable. And we've actually seen in a number of places – I won't name them – in the UK, where that affordability crisis has created progressive... or more progressive communities by first-time buyers or long-term renters moving... being priced out of a major city. So I think that's step one, and it's already happening. I think secondly, it's an understanding of basically what you said earlier. It's talking intergenerationally. Myself and Gary Younge last year put on a series of public assemblies, and it was interesting getting the older people who... Many of whom – I'm paraphrasing – are like, "young people spend all their time on their phones", and the young people saying, "why have you left such a terrible world, older generation, for me?" Getting them actually physically into a room and talking for four hours, giving some testimony and coming up with practical solutions together, it made... Well, I mean, it's wonderful how people's viewpoints can adapt over such a small amount of time, just through sheer presence of other people who they don't normally meet in their day-to-day lives. So more intergenerational transmission, I think.

Leah Cowan

Mmm. And I think maybe it comes back to – I can't remember whose question it was around kind of archives and around... Obviously, it's not a perfect proxy for engaging with a real person and having a real human connection, but the time that I've spent in archives reading the minutes of, you know, groups like the Brixton Black Women's Group, and in a kind of pre-internet age, how were progressives and radicals organising together? How were they managing to communicate? How were they managing to get together and do

things? And I think there's something about learning from that history that is quite helpful in understanding that chasm, and also working out how we maybe counter some of the more oppressive and flattening aspects of this current digital age.

K Biswas

And do you think your print project that you're working on... I mean, in terms of distribution, is this, like, handing stuff over hand-to-hand, or is this having events where people can read and discuss the content? Because I feel that those physical events are the most important way to break down these barriers between people.

Leah Cowan

Yeah, I think a bit of both. We're definitely still working out what our kind of distribution plan is, but we were very clear from the beginning that we don't just want to give a chunk of magazines to a distribution company and let them send them all over the country. We definitely want that to be an in-person exchange, and we're going to be organising events and talks and reading groups around the subjects in the magazine so that we can expand and have bigger discussions on them. And I think... it's kind of a conversation that I have with other writers. When I was writing my first book, you feel this tremendous amount of pressure to put everything you want to say into the book and cover all the topics, and actually – and I don't know if this is a bit depressing or not – the vast majority of people obviously aren't going to read your book. They might buy it and then they still might not even read it. They might just have it on their shelf and be like, "Oh, that's nice, I supported my friend." But actually, the places where you're going to get into the meat of the issues that you're talking about is going to be in conversation, probably. It's going to be at a panel or at a talk or in a space where some people who've read the book and some people who haven't and some people who never will can come together and have a conversation. I think... Yeah, I agree with you, and that is an essential part of distribution.

K Biswas

And I suppose, to go back to that... I suppose our overall conversation around borders, I feel that there is more interest in 2026 than at any point in human history in a way that another human lives. Wherever they are based and whatever their situation is, there is a clamouring for finding out about other people's human experiences, and I feel that us that are involved in print media and radio, it's part of our duty to take those individual experiences and give them a platform, like Leah has done with her wonderful book and will continue to do with future print work. I think we're going to have to end our conversation here, but thank you so much, Leah, for sharing your wonderful insights today on both your book, *Border Nation*, and Stuart's essay, *Cosmopolitan Promises*, *Multicultural Futures*. Have I got that wrong? Oh, no!

Leah Cowan

Realities! Realities.

K Biswas

Cosmopolitan Promises, Multicultural Realities! Thank you so much, and hope to see you again soon. Thanks to Tayyab Amin for producing this event, and also to our funders, the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, the Hollick Family Foundation, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the Power of Pop Fund. A huge thank-you to all of you for joining us today, and thank you so much for submitting your questions. There'll be a recording of this event available in the next few weeks. Please sign up to the newsletter and the social channels, and do keep an eye on the Explore section of our website, which has an ever-growing free-to-access set of digital learning resources. That's at stuarthallfoundation.org And you can watch the previous conversations with Laleh Khalili on economy and Wendy Liu on technology. And finally, please join us for the next Reading the Crisis conversation, where I will be talking to Richard Seymour about democracy and his most recent book *Disaster Nationalism*, and that's on Wednesday, 30th September, from 5:30pm UK time. Hope to see you there. Thanks, and see you again soon.