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(The Crisis of) "European Values"

Yildiz, C.; De Genova, N.; Jansen, Y.; Soto Bermant, L.; Spathopoulou, A.; Stierl, M.; Suffee, Z.

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Europe/Crisis: New Keywords of “the Crisis” in and of “Europe”

NEW KEYWORDS COLLECTIVE

A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT OF COLLECTIVE WRITING

coordinated + edited by:

Nicholas De Genova + Martina Tazzioli

co-authored by:

Soledad Álvarez-Velasco (SAV)

Nicholas De Genova (NDG)

Elena Fontanari (EF)

Charles Heller (CH)

Yolande Jansen (YJ)

Irene Peano (IP)

Fiorenza Picozza (FP)

Lisa Riedner (LR)

Laia Soto Bermant (LSB)

Aila Spathopoulou (AS)

Maurice Stierl (MS)

Zakeera Suffee (ZS)

Martina Tazzioli (MT)

Huub van Baar (HvB)

Can Yildiz (CY)

Authorship of specific keywords is indicated by contributors' initials (as above), with the first listed initials indicating the keyword's lead author, and the rest listed alphabetically.

EUROPE /CRISIS: INTRODUCING NEW KEYWORDS OF “THE CRISIS” IN AND OF “EUROPE”

Martina Tazzioli + Nicholas De Genova

“CRISIS”

Charles Heller, Nicholas De Genova, Maurice Stierl,
Martina Tazzioli + Huub van Baar

“MIGRANT CRISIS” / “REFUGEE CRISIS”

Nicholas De Genova, Elena Fontanari, Fiorenza Picozza,
Laia Soto Bermant, Aila Spathopoulou, Maurice Stierl,
Zakeera Suffee, Martina Tazzioli, Huub van Baar + Can Yildiz

NEW KEYWORDS OF “THE CRISIS” IN AND OF “EUROPE”

emerged from a meeting of the research network on “The ‘European’ Question: Postcolonial Perspectives on Migration, Nation, and Race,” convened by Nicholas De Genova and Martina Tazzioli at King’s College London on June 25–26, 2015, which included the participation of: Soledad Álvarez-Velasco, Manuela Bojadzijeve, Sebastian Cobarrubias, Nicholas De Genova, Elena Fontanari, Evelina Gambino, Giorgio Grappi, Charles Heller, Yolande Jansen, Bernd Kasperek, Shahram Khosravi, Sandro Mezzadra, Lorenzo Pezzani, Fiorenza Picozza, Lisa Riedner, Stephan Scheel, Laia Soto Bermant, Maurice Stierl, Zakeera Suffee, Martina Tazzioli, Huub van Baar, and Can Yildiz.

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SOLEDAD ÁLVAREZ-VELASCO (SAV) is a Ph.D. candidate affiliated with the “Spatial Politics” research group in the Department of Geography at King’s College London. Originally from Ecuador, since 2007 she has been investigating the relation between irregularized transit migration, violence, and the capitalist state, particularly in the case of the Mexico-U.S. migratory corridor. Her doctoral research focuses on the production of Ecuador as a zone of transit used by irregularized migrants moving towards the United States, and how the tensions between the politics of mobility and the politics of control have provoked multiple spatial and temporal transitions that shape the dynamics of that space of transit. In addition to various book chapters published in edited volumes (in Spanish), she is the author of *Frontera sur chiapaneca: el muro humano de la violencia: Análisis de la normalización de la violencia hacia los migrantes indocumentados en tránsito* (forthcoming), and co-editor of *Entre la violencia y la invisibilidad: Un análisis de la situación de los niños, niñas y adolescentes ecuatorianos no acompañados en el proceso de migración hacia Estados Unidos* (2012).

**NUMBERS (OR, THE SPECTACLE OF STATISTICS
IN THE PRODUCTION OF “CRISIS”)**

Maurice Stierl, Charles Heller + Nicholas De Genova

“HUMANITARIAN CRISIS”

Martina Tazzioli, Nicholas De Genova, Elena Fontanari,
Irene Peano + Maurice Stierl

MOBILITY

Lisa Riedner, Soledad Álvarez-Velasco, Nicholas De Genova,
Martina Tazzioli + Huub van Baar

(THE CRISIS OF) “EUROPEAN VALUES”

Can Yildiz, Nicholas De Genova, Yolande Jansen, Laia Soto Bermant,
Aila Spathopoulou, Maurice Stierl + Zakeera Suffee

(THE CRISIS OF) “EUROPEAN VALUES”

What, indeed, are the values often referred to as distinctly “European”? How has the project of European integration, now effectively synonymous with the European Union, ensured that such “European” values have been re-branded as specifically EU-ropean? The European Commission asserts that the EU “is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.”⁹ Purportedly conceived around this set of supposedly shared values, the EU is routinely lauded as a “post-national” enterprise where sovereign power is shared amongst its member states, for the collective good of all. The several stages of EU enlargement and integration were formulated around the key accession criteria of respect for, and promotion of, the EU’s “democratic” values, and among the chief characteristics of (properly) “European” societies

9. http://europa.eu/scadplus/constitution/objectives_en.htm#VALUES

are counted: “pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men.”¹⁰ For its efforts to create a community “united in diversity,” the EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2012 and in their acceptance speech “From War to Peace: A European Tale,” European Commission President Barroso and President of the European Council Rompuy declared: “Over the past sixty years, the European project has shown that it is possible for peoples and nations to come together across borders. That it is possible to overcome the differences between ‘them’ and ‘us.’”¹¹ Indeed, for a time, many on the Left across Europe also entertained the illusion that the project of “Europe” might present openings that seemed to promise possibilities for a politics that could transcend the European legacies of nationalism, fascism, the Nazi genocides of the Jews, Roma, and Sinti, the treacheries of Stalinism, the impasse of the Cold War, and the bitter disillusionments of “post-socialism.” Nonetheless, numerous scholars have noted the contradictions inherent in the vision of liberal democracy on which the European project relies for legitimacy. As Talal Asad notes, while “it is often conceded that several peoples and cultures inhabit the European continent,” it is also believed, seemingly paradoxically, that “there is a single history that articulates European civilization – and therefore European identity” (2003:170). It is indeed this homogenized civilizational and identitarian *Europeanism* that riddles the “European” project with the incontrovertible contradictions of its own (post-)coloniality. Indeed, it is precisely this agonistic project of re-stabilizing a “European” identity that requires a fatuous discourse of “European values,” which in fact serves no other end than to re-inscribe and re-affirm “the differences between ‘them’ and ‘us.’”

The “single history that articulates European civilization,” of course, has always looked strikingly different from the standpoint of those who were colonized, enslaved, tortured, raped, mutilated, or massacred by Europeans in their diverse but interconnected quests for imperial power in the consolidation of global capitalism. Indeed, such values as the respect for human dignity, liberty, equality, solidarity, democracy, pluralism, tolerance, justice, and so forth would appear instead to have been the precious achievements of struggles that were always fundamentally and profoundly *anti-European*. There was, after all, never a moment in the history of modern slavery that was not riddled with the specter of sabotage, defiance, and insurrection, nor any moment in the history of European colonialism that was not similarly haunted by resistance, mutiny, and insurgency. In these contexts, furthermore, the hallowed “rule of law” was usually no less than the systematic rationalization of systemic injustice and brutal violence. At the very core of any contemporary values of liberty or equality, therefore, we must recognize the acts of individual and collective rebellion on the part of those whom European power sought to muzzle, throttle, and flog, and from whose bonded labor such an inordinate proportion of European wealth and prestige was mercilessly wrenched.

The very assertion that such values could be depicted as “European” (or “Western”) is itself a deplorable act of pillage and, furthermore, a re-bordering that would seek to impose anew a proprietary enclosure on the universal heritage of liberation struggles that properly correspond to the global commons. Indeed, the promulgation of the very notion that there is such a thing as “Euro-

10. http://europa.eu/scadplus/constitution/objectives_en.htm#VALUES

11. http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2012/eu-lecture.html

pean” values is a core component of the contemporary project of *Europeanism*, which tends to casually elide the whole history of centuries of European colonial domination around the world and the resultant global (post-)colonial fact of white supremacy. Thus, Europeanism today is predicated upon a staggeringly shallow reconstruction of “European” history as an insular and hermetically-sealed affair. Of course, amidst the current proliferation of these self-satisfied ideological narratives of “European” culture, civilization, values, and identity, the overtly racist outrages of neo-fascist / far-right populisms merely make explicit and blunt the delicate matter of the inextricability of *any* Europeanism from the propagation of “European”-ness as a formation of racial whiteness, even as it emphatically dissimulates race in favor of ostensibly “cultural” or “civilizational” constructions of difference, and above all, in most prominent opposition at present to those “values” cynically attributed to “Muslims” (De Genova 2010a; 2015; De Genova and Tazzioli 2015).

Following numerous incidents in 2015 that fashioned the figure of “Europe’s” “Muslim” Other in securitarian terms (as a threat of religious “fundamentalism,” “fanaticism,” and “terrorism”), the abrupt outbreak in January 2016 of a moral panic over a multiplicity of sexual assaults during the New Year’s Eve festivities in Köln/Cologne, allegedly perpetrated by “unruly mobs” of young men, casually characterized as being “of North African or Middle Eastern appearance” (and eagerly depicted as including “asylum-seekers”), notably reinvigorated the racialization of “Muslim” identity. In the face of these offenses, the racialization of “Muslims” / “Arabs” could now be represented in terms of unsavory “cultural” differences that must be excoriated and criminalized as transparently inimical to “European values.” Thus, the rather selective logic of “antiterrorist” suspicion that has been mobilized for the purposes of more stringent (external) border enforcement, once confronted with the palpable presence of recent arrivals of “Muslim” refugees and migrants, has been promptly re-purposed as a considerably more expansive problem of (internal) policing, emphatically conjoined to arguments for new powers to expedite the deportation of (“criminal”) “asylum-seekers” deemed to be dangerously “deficient” in terms of “European values.”

There is a specificity to the dissimulation of race in the European context which has to do with the ways in which it is imagined both historically and geographically. Historically, as David Theo Goldberg (2006; 2009:151–98) argues, in the hegemonic European imagination, race is operative within Europe only to the extent that it is temporally confined to the Nazi period and principally concentrated on the genocide of the Jews. Geographically, it is otherwise projected outside of Europe as something that pertains to “others,” “elsewhere”: there is of course some public recognition in various European countries of the role of race and racism on the parts of their regimes in the colonies, but it remains paltry. Usually it is fully projected as strictly “external” to Europe, and not seen as a practice and legacy of “Europe,” and imagined as having no traces (or in any case, only negligible ones) within contemporary (“post”-colonial) Europe (Gilroy 2004). Contemporary Europe “itself” – the “Europe” that is customarily exalted as the inheritor of universalistic “values” of the Enlight-

enment, and the self-anointed “inventor” of liberal democracy – simply cannot acknowledge race, and hence pretends to know no racism. This self-conception of a race-blind “Europe,” where racism is simply a thing of the past (and which can only pertain now to the atavisms of the far-right fringe), is reflected and reinforced in EU-uropean border policies today (Jansen 2015). The presence and racial struggles of fellow citizens (co-nationals) with personal or family backgrounds in the postcolony, and the very belated, slow but steady advance of postcolonial critique within European universities, together are gradually introducing a significant (albeit still meager) shift in wider perspectives and sensibilities. For example, in the Netherlands, the Dutch disgrace surrounding *Zwarte Piet* (“Black Pete”) has met with increasingly vociferous controversy and ever-more effective critique. In France, the uncompromising decolonial militancy of the Parti des Indigènes de la République (PIR) has persistently put race into the foreground of contemporary debates, although this movement has met with unrelenting hostility from across the political spectrum, particularly in the contemporary neo-“Republican” ideological landscape following the reinvigoration of “antiterrorist” securitarianism in 2015 (De Genova and Tazzioli 2015).

Dissimulating race and disavowing the socio-political dynamics of racialization, Europeanism has a long history of imagining “minorities” as fundamentally “different” and, by implication, inimical to properly “European” cultural identities and values, thus converting them into “cultural” and / or “religious” problems and questions: The Jewish Question, The Gypsy/Roma Question, The Muslim Question. The recent critical proposal to instead turn “Europe” itself into such a Question (De Genova 2016) invites us to reverse the focus and examine anew those pronouncedly European histories as formative of the global histories of race and imperialism. This does not mean a reducing of religious difference or the differentialization of religion to race, but rather bringing the socio-political history of inter-religious relations and race together. The Jewish Question, Marx already noted implicitly, was always in fact the “Christian Question,” and it has always been intimately connected to the history of race. It is no coincidence that turning “Europe” into a Question has been proposed by scholars of critical migration and race studies more or less in tandem with those more directly concerned with the histories of religious difference and inequality in relation to secularism and secularity in the European context (Anidjar 2012; Jansen 2016; Nathan and Topolski 2016). Bringing the insights of those critical discourses together is of premier importance during this time of “crisis,” so marked by the rise of new manifestations of anti-Muslim racism complexly intermingled and mostly overlapping with the histories of antisemitism, Islamophobia, Orientalism, and anti-Gypsyism.

Scrutinizing more rigorously the racial underpinnings of our “civilizational” categories, especially those surrounding religion, is crucial in the French context, for instance, where the racial dimensions of the social position of “Arabs” / “Muslims” have been pronouncedly evident at least since the first Headscarf controversies in 1989, but in which the sacrosanct concepts of secularism and *laïcité* simultaneously retain an aura that the French (white) left does not dare to question. “Secularism” thus remains wedded to a concept of religion that

is deeply embedded in both Christian and European racial history. Thus, a secularist and “Republican” ideological impasse continuously adds fuel to the “re-theologization” of debates that are only apprehensible in social and political terms (Jansen 2016). This sort of ideological refraction and the accompanying discursive diversionary tactics have indeed been among the eminent strategies for re-animating race and racism – precisely through its culturalist dissimulation and disavowal (Balibar 1991; Gilroy 1987).

Meanwhile, where race has not been completely relegated to derisive silence, clumsy and superficial discourses of “superdiversity” pretend to name the real harvest of empire that, for many decades now, has amplified the actual racial heterogeneity and socio-political complexity of “actually existing” Europe, but the notion of “superdiversity” woefully lacks any meaningful postcolonial analysis or decolonial critical perspective. Indeed, recourse to the anemic rhetoric of “superdiversity” is proffered as a comfortably de-politicized surrogate for previous debates around “multiculturalism,” which have long been considerably more contentious precisely because they were perceived to open up a space for more candid engagements with race and racism, as well as other social formations of difference (such as religion). Whereas liberal proponents of “multiculturalism” promoted more pluralistic affirmations of difference, however, “multiculturalism” has also been increasingly domesticated and coopted. Hence, “respect for difference” and multiculturalist “tolerance” are themselves now retrofitted as putatively “European” values. Furthermore, as Finex Ndhlovu (2015) argues, the “hegemonic dominance of Euro-American perspectives, which include multiculturalism and superdiversity, has meant that the promises held by other ways of knowing, reading and interpreting the world have been consigned to the fringes of mainstream identitarian discourses.” In addition, the systematic disregard and endemic ignorance of theory from the South, as Ndhlovu characterizes it, in favor of the reductionist lens of (super) “diversity,” merely replicates the vectors of unequal power that uphold anachronistic notions of “European” identity (as a supra-national racial formation of whiteness) by containing and encompassing the racialized identities of supposedly “non-Europeans,” both inside and outside of “Europe.” Such hegemonic multiculturalisms, in other words, merely reinstate the status of “non-white” difference within Europe as so many “non-European” exceptions – discrepancies from the norm, to be “integrated,” domesticated, and neutralized. A critical scrutiny of “European values,” then, is necessary for a decolonial interrogation of “the crisis” in and of “Europe.”

We may perhaps see most clearly how these grandiose gestures about “European values” in fact operate as technologies of government when they are “dressed down” as the more mundane (but no less pompous) “values” claimed as the virtues of particular nation-states. We need only consider, for instance, how such purportedly “fundamental British values” as “a belief in freedom” and “tolerance of others” become conjoined in the discourse of British Prime Minister David Cameron to the neoliberal imperative of “accepting personal and social responsibility” and the implicitly authoritarian mandate of “respecting and upholding the rule of law” – all “as British,” we are assured, “as fish and

chips.” Unabashedly asserting that such values may be claimed as “a matter of pride and patriotism” regarding “traditions” that “set Britain apart,” Cameron goes on to congratulate the British for having given “so much of the world the way of life that they hold so dear.”¹² That such “gifts” were the poisoned bequest of centuries of colonial domination, apparently, in retrospect requires no mention. Writing in the era of an earlier British societal “crisis,” confronting the rise of neoliberal globalization and the concomitant austerity regime of Thatcherism, Stuart Hall and his colleagues detected that postcolonial “crisis” – specifically, “the crisis ... of an advanced industrial capitalist nation seeking to stabilise itself in rapidly changing conditions on an extremely weak post-imperial economic base” – generated the conditions of possibility for “a decisive return” to a narrow exclusionary cultural politics of English national identity (Hall et al. 1978). Similarly, today, the pervasive obsession with “home-grown terrorism,” “radicalization,” and “extremism” – while not overtly racializing “Muslims” or other so-called “second-generation migrants” as non-white, or directly affiliating “terrorism” with Islam – manifests a revised version of what Hall and his colleagues discerned in the racist right-wing demagogue Enoch Powell, as a “pervasive, paranoid sense of crisis facing social order and authority” (Hall et al. 1978). Thus, the democratic ideal of “the rule of law” gets cynically transposed into a disciplinary demand for “respect” for the law, and converted – especially for “Muslims” and others racialized as “non-white” – into a punitive discourse of “law and order,” which is to say, ever-more draconian policing and surveillance.

It is unsurprising, then, that the question of (“European”) “values,” and therefore identity, is so acutely tied in with a discourse of “crisis.” Shorn of the parochialism of Cameron’s (post-Thatcherite) fish-and-chips populism, now elevated to the level of “European” values, such propositions become all the more ungrounded, abstract, and ideological. The Europeanization of the values of freedom and equality nonetheless remains a flagrant act of hijacking the struggles of the millions who historically languished under European rule.

When the very idea of “Europe” is purportedly based upon a set of values centered around notions of human rights, democracy, and inclusion, and when it sanctimoniously promotes itself as a force for peace in the world, using “soft” or “normative” power or even “moral” force, furthermore, the ways in which EU borders are enforced and human mobilities are governed must necessarily pose profound and radical questions for “Europe” and its cherished “values” (De Genova 2016). In enunciating, demarcating, and defending its complex borderscapes, *where* precisely does “Europe” (EU-rope) emerge? As *what* exactly does this “Europe” become manifest *as*? *Who* indeed is included or excluded in the name of Europe?

With the activation of migrant and refugee “illegality” at the borders of “Europe,” there are also differential enactments of degrees of “European”-ness, which is to say, different degrees of access to “legality” within (but also beyond) the EU-ropean space, activated as different degrees of “belonging” or potential “deservingness,” related to various degrees or approximations of racial “whiteness.” When referring to the so called “refugee crisis,” for example, the Greek government emphasizes how Greece has shown a “human face” to the refugees

12. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/british-values-article-by-david-cameron>

arriving by boat on the Greek islands, and has thereby purportedly exhibited its “European values.” Emphatically contrasting this hospitality on the Greek islands with the implied or explicit allegation of “inhumanity” on the part of the Turkish state, Greece effectively re-inscribes itself within “Europe” by depicting Turkey as the site, just beyond the borders of “Europe,” where “the problem” of a “migration” or “refugee crisis” begins. Thus, apart from the violence and upheaval in places such as Syria – so this particular “European” logic goes – the actual reason for “the crisis” is a combination of Turkish governmental disregard for both the humanitarian needs of the refugees and the predatory ruthlessness of Turkish “smugglers” who are purported to be “sending migrants to their deaths.” Hence, we see the recapitulation of Europe’s self-serving rhetoric of criminalizing and denigrating “the smugglers” as inhumane “criminals” and virtual “slave traders,” reproduced now in the reanimation of familiar orientalist gestures with regard to the putative “barbarism” of Turkey. Thus, the Greek-Turkish maritime border across the Aegean Sea becomes implicated in competing projects of re-essentializing and de-essentializing the historically racialized boundary between “European” Greece and “Oriental” or “Asiatic” Turkey.

Nevertheless, as the allegedly true starting point of “the crisis,” Turkey is likewise figured as the ultimate site – emphatically “outside” of “Europe” – where a “solution” must be put in place. Thus, EU-rope’s cynical strategy today, as has been true for several years, is to outsource its putatively “un-European” border violence by externalizing border enforcement to its “European” (non-EU) peripheries and (“non-European”) “third countries,” such as Turkey (see “Externalization,” in Casas-Cortés et al. 2015). The repeated insistence, almost a mantra, of all sorts of European politicians at both the national and EU levels that the “migrant” / “refugee crisis” should first and foremost be “managed” (if not “solved”) through the processing and so-called “admission” of refugees “in their own region” – along with simultaneously “stricter” control of the EU’s external borders – is fully in line with this strategy of “outsourcing” border enforcement. Through these and similar strategies of border externalization, however, countries such as Turkey become “valuable” junior partners in the European border regime with substantial leverage, and thus acquire a semblance of semi- or quasi-“European”-ness. Meanwhile, in exchange for Turkey’s vital service in enforcing the borders of “Europe” (as well as its strategic geo-political and military role in the region), EU-rope casts a blind eye towards the brutal atrocities committed by the Turkish state toward its subjugated Kurdish “minority” as well as the repression of anti-war dissidence within Turkey. Turkish military actions and persecution perpetrated against the Kurds actually produce “internally displaced” refugee populations, yet these systemic abuses do not really impede the process by which Turkey is effectively becoming more “European” – which is to say, more useful and valuable to the EU-ropean border regime, and thus, more potentially “worthy” of membership in the EU. Simultaneously, since the summer, following the threat of a “Grexit” (a Greek exit from the euro currency union as a result of the “debt crisis” and the prospect of Greece defaulting on its loans), a new threat has been imposed in turn on Greece: its possible expul-

sion from the Schengen zone, precisely because Greece has been increasingly deemed incapable of adequately fulfilling its role as a premier watchdog at the EU's border with Turkey. The question that begs attention, therefore, is the extent to which notions of "European"-ness become a tactically malleable and highly relative exchange value in relation to the convulsions of the expansive EU border enforcement regime. From the critical standpoint of migration and borders, therefore, we must demand: What exactly satisfies the requirements of upholding "European values" in a context where such a high premium is placed on being useful and valuable to the EU-ropean project and the externalized projection of "European" border zones?

The contemporary "migration" or "refugee crisis" – or, rather, the unprecedented and disruptive force of disobedient human subjectivities appropriating mobility toward and across Europe and claiming space within Europe – has instigated a crisis of representation by juxtaposing these supposedly magnanimous "European values" with the truly violent and callous European border realities. The (temporary, but repeated) resurrection of nation-state borders by several member states since the summer of 2015 has starkly manifested the frailty of European unity and "solidarity" in haphazard attempts to regain at least the semblance of control. While Europe's border work – and especially its (flagrantly "un-European") violence – have been and continue to be externalized and outsourced to "third countries" or peripheral member states, the unsettling and determined movements of hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants through the Balkan routes into central and northern European countries have provoked humanitarian / securitarian "emergencies" across the continent. Images of countless thousands of "unauthorized" (and frankly unwelcome) travelers relentlessly menaced by European border enforcement authorities, beaten and gassed by riot police or soldiers, have circulated around the globe. Likewise, Europe's maritime border policing, which has converted the Central Mediterranean Sea and the Aegean Sea in particular into gruesome scenes of mass death, have repeatedly exposed a border regime truly predicated upon atrocity, by both omission and commission. That these horrific spectacles of desperation and death are predominated by the evident and plainly cruel disposability of lives and bodies racialized as non-white – and thus, "non-European" – only seems to abundantly re-confirm that the project of "European" integration has in fact been dedicated all along to the re-institutionalization of what Étienne Balibar (1999/2004:43–45) anticipated to be a "European apartheid."

While the EU-ropean project is substantially new and unprecedented in significant ways, the deeper historical roots of its infrastructure of expressly "European" apartheid remind us that apartheid was always indeed a truly European value, a special variant of a world economic, geo-political, and racial order of European colonialism that has profoundly shaped the brutal contours of contemporary global inequalities of wealth, power, and prestige. In this regard, it is precisely from the critical vantage point made possible by migration and borders that we may incisively discern the extent to which the self-styled "European values" of dignity, liberty, democracy, equality, the rule of law, rights, justice, sol-

identity, and peace have always been postulated, in fact, as values “for Europeans only.”

CY, NDG, YJ, LSB, AS, MS, ZS
