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I am an immigrant.

I am an immigrant but you don't see me. I am a Commonwealth citizen so I can vote in the UK. I am a white woman so you don't see me as an immigrant. I am from a white settler colony in the Commonwealth so you don't see me. You don't see me as a threat. You don't racialize me. You listen to me. You let me walk by in peace. You let me say my peace. I have a voice. You give me a home. You stamp my passport and welcome me at the borders. I am an immigrant.

Brexit is about whiteness and Britishness, it is about race. As a white Australian living in London for twenty years I am never labelled or acknowledged as an immigrant. I don't suffer racial taunts, I am not told to go home (unless it a bit of sporting humour). The United Kingdom referendum that resulted in the majority vote to leave the European Union brought home, for me, the privilege of whiteness, of colonial settler states and of language as a marker of belonging: all drenched in stories of nation, belonging, safety and economics and driven home as racism. When I invoke home I invoke home as a space of belonging, I am allowed to belong – in theory the stamp on my passport decides this and yet a thousand micro acts tells me this, permit me to walk in London and the United Kingdom and be told I belong. Brexit demonstrated how the belonging colleagues and friends had thought was similar to mine was always something given, something conditional and something racialised.

If Britain no longer belongs in Europe, which community of states does it congregate with – the Commonwealth? The Commonwealth is an old-fashioned story of Empire that pretends the outposts of the British Empire still gaze back to the metropole as mother-country and re-tells colonialism as prospering and in the absence of indigenous lives. Europe too has a genealogy of violence, of occupation and conquest that must be rendered present in our lives. Brexit turns its back on how these histories of racial hatred and national pride fragmented and killed. Brexit reminds me of how privilege is so simply and easily carried, an invisible marker of belonging with brutal consequences for those who are no longer permitted to belong. I am a white Australian immigrant living in the UK, I voted to remain in the EU and stand against all racism, all stories of exclusion and I fear the insurgent nationalism told as parliamentary sovereignty, security and economic gain.