



B E Y O N D S A N C T U A R Y

*The Humanism of a World
in Motion*

Ananya Roy *and*
Veronika Zablotsky,
editors

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The Humanism of a World in Motion

Edited by Ananya Roy and Veronika Zablotsky

With Leisy J. Abrego, Gaye Theresa Johnson,
and Maite Zubiaurre

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FOREWORD

Sanctuary Politics and the Role of the University in the Time of Trumpism

Ananya Roy and Maite Zubiaurre

A few days after he was sworn into office in 2017, President Donald J. Trump issued an executive order titled “Enhancing Public Safety in the Interior of the United States” (January 25, 2017). Targeting “sanctuary jurisdictions,” it focused on the “interior enforcement” of immigration laws and claimed that these jurisdictions, by sheltering “removable aliens,” had “caused immeasurable harm to the American people.” In the United States, the sanctuary designation refers to local governments that limit the cooperation of local law enforcement with federal immigration authorities. Trump’s order sought to withhold various kinds of federal funds from such sanctuary jurisdictions. A few days later, another executive order followed, this one blocking travelers from seven Muslim-majority countries from entering the United States, and suspending the resettlement of Syrian refugees.¹ Dubbed the “Muslim ban,” it was engineered by Trump strategist and white nationalist Stephen Bannon, who views the West as under assault by “Islamic fascism” (Shane 2017). Framing this “crisis” in terms of a supposed clash of civilizations, Bannon hails the “two historic victories of Christian forces over Muslim attackers” during the Middle Ages and calls for similar “actions” (Shane 2017). This is the significance of the question posed by Bannon to Jeff Sessions, Trump’s first attorney general, during the presidential campaign: “Do you believe the elites in this country have the backbone, have the belief in

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the underlying principles of the Judeo-Christian West, to actually win this war?” (Blumenthal and Rieger 2017).

Trump’s executive orders set into motion a series of lawsuits against the federal government by prominent sanctuary cities such as New York City, Chicago, and San Francisco. Pledging defiance, the mayor of Boston declared that as a last resort he would use city hall to shelter undocumented immigrants (Irons and Guerra 2017). Protracted legal battles also unfolded regarding the constitutionality of the Muslim ban. But the juridical limits of sanctuary also became quickly apparent. With varying degrees of “noncooperation” with federal immigration authorities, sanctuary jurisdictions do not prevent the detention and deportation of undocumented immigrants, and as Paik (2017) has shown, in many instances they deny protection to various criminalized categories of migrants. Indeed, in previous work (Roy 2019), we have argued that sanctuary jurisdictions must be understood as a technology of what Walia (2013) has called “border imperialism,” specifically a management of interiorized borders through liberal governance, one that entails the consolidation of the police state. While the white nationalism of the Trump regime framed the problem of sanctuary in relation to civilizational conflict, sanctuary is also a problem of liberal democracy. It raises this profound question: *What are the terms of protection through which liberal democracies recognize and include racial others?* In turn, such a question requires that we situate the question and problem of sanctuary in the long arc of what Rodriguez (2021, 1, 3, 6) terms “white reconstruction,” in which “white fascist statecraft” is part of a “historically persistent, continuous, and periodically acute logic of reform, rearticulation, adaptation, and revitalization.” White nationalism and liberal democracy are entangled rather than opposed. Indeed, hegemonic formations of sanctuary and refuge, those that center the West as the place of hospitality, are exemplars of what Rodriguez (2021, 17) calls “*multiculturalist white supremacy*,” “institutional rearticulations of liberal and neoliberal multiculturalism” that consolidate and strengthen “the logics of anti-Blackness and racial-colonial dominance.” They evade and obscure the grounds of dispossession that constitute migration regimes.

The problem of sanctuary soon came to haunt our university campuses. At our university, the University of California, Los Angeles, as at many others, students, staff, and faculty, while aware of the tenuous protections afforded by this juridical category, demanded the declaration of sanctuary. But administrators and gatekeepers were quick to reveal the complicities of liberal governance. We, Ananya Roy and Maite Zubiaurre, remember a particularly tense meeting with the leadership of our Academic Senate at

which we were reminded that the declaration of the University of California as a sanctuary jurisdiction would jeopardize federal research funding—for example, to the “big science labs.” Especially insidious was the argument that sanctuary jurisdiction would threaten, and possibly stall, the crucially important flow of federal funds for students in financial need, such as Pell Grants. Insidious because it was accurate. Accurate because such colonial logics of division—undocumented students versus low-income “eligible” students—animate and reproduce racial capitalism.

The problem of sanctuary is also then the problem of the university as an institution of racial capitalism, raising a question: *Who enjoys sanctuary on stolen land?* Many of our universities are land-grab institutions that have consolidated their financial and territorial power through the state-organized theft of Indigenous land and through ongoing processes of gentrification, policing, and displacement (Baldwin 2021; Lee and Ahtone 2020). Many of our universities are actively involved in practices of border imperialism, producing the algorithms, maps, and databases that facilitate militarized borders as well as detention and deportation. It is thus that Michele Lancione, in exposing the collusion between Frontex, the EU border agency, and the Polytechnic of Turin, where Lancione is professor of economic and political geography, writes of how “the violent and expulsive apparatus of the European Union [seeks] to legitimise itself, to clothe itself with scientific objectivity, to reduce everything to a technical issue that reproduces its evil by turning it into a passing of documents between hands.” The Stop LAPD Spying Coalition, an abolitionist organization based in Los Angeles, appropriately terms this “academic complicity” and calls instead for “academic rebellion.” The postracial university is especially proficient at legitimizing academic complicity through liberal governance, specifically the politics of recognition, from land acknowledgments to DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) bureaucracies. Sanctuary, as problem and limit, thus leads us to this fraught question: *How do we dismantle and disrupt the settler logics of possession on which the imperial university is founded?* Through radical love, Lorgia García Peña argues in chapter 5 of this book, noting that “what is needed in the university is not inclusion nor reform but abolition.” All through this book, we thus return to the question posed by Sarah Haley in the “Abolition on Stolen Land” convening,² a question that Gaye Theresa Johnson and Damon Azali-Rojas take up in chapter 1 of this book as incitement: “How does abolitionist refusal show up in your life?”

This book is our effort to take on the problem of sanctuary while being located within, against, and beyond the university. In the wake of Trump’s

election, we (Ananya, Veronika, Leisy, Gaye, and Maite), the editors of this book, embarked on a critical, historical, and transnational inquiry of sanctuary through a collective scholarly endeavor, the Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminar “Sanctuary Spaces: Reworlding Humanism,” housed at the UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy.³ Adapting to the difficult circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, and along with graduate student researchers, institute staff, and artists-in-residence, we invented virtual spaces and modes of convening around three themes that are also the scaffolding of this book: “Abolition on Stolen Land,” “The End of Humanitarianism,” and “Freedom and Fugitivity.” Our intent was always to (re)organize knowledge in accompaniment of struggle. Tomlinson and Lipsitz (2013, 9) remind us that accompaniment is “both a commitment and a capacity that can be cultivated.” We arrive at the critical inquiry of sanctuary with commitments to accompaniment. We undertake this inquiry with the firm belief that such inquiry can expand the capacity for accompaniment.

In the essay “Research as Accompaniment: Reflections on Objectivity, Ethics, and Emotions,” Abrego (2024, 38) writes, “We cannot fully distance ourselves from the structures that produce violence; intellectualizing is not the end goal. Instead, we are deeply committed to people’s wellbeing just as much as, and often more than, to the advancement of a field. We are aiming to be in accompaniment.” Abrego’s scholarship has actively involved serving as a pro bono expert witness in US asylum cases. Accompaniment is evident in the award-winning documentary film *Águilas / Eagles*, co-written, co-directed, and co-produced by Maite Zubiaurre, which, like the broader scope of Zubiaurre’s necro-art, militantly refuses the invisibility of migrant death.⁴ In the concluding essay of this book, Gaye Theresa Johnson shares how she enacted pedagogical praxis in the context of the Trump regime, teaching students how to accompany social movements and impacted communities, often while they themselves faced and resisted illegalization and endangerment. Veronika Zablotsky co-founded the Abolition Beyond Borders Collective with Vanessa E. Thompson and Daniel Loick to co-organize Germany’s first large-scale prison, police, and border abolitionist movement summit “Racial Capitalism, Crisis, Abolition” in June 2023, which emphasized cross-cutting solidarities, internationalist struggle, transformative justice, and movement-based (un-)learning beyond the academy.

In such work, the university as we know it cannot be kept intact. In anticipation of Trump’s inauguration and the executive orders that swiftly followed, Ananya Roy, in her role as founding director of the UCLA Luskin

Institute on Inequality and Democracy, organized a national day of collective action titled “Teach. Organize. Resist.”⁵ Through artistic practice, musical performance, teach-outs, manifestos, assemblies, and more, January 18, 2017, became a day of education about, and protest against, white nationalism in the United States and beyond. Instead of a demand for the juridical protections of sanctuary, such academic rebellion was a prefigurative politics. While aimed at Trump’s statecraft, it was, as is this book, one piece of a long and persistent struggle to reorganize knowledge in order to expand the capacity for disruption and accompaniment. The scholars who have come together in this book are on the front lines of such struggle. It is from the impossible space of the university as solidarity that we take up the problem of sanctuary as the ethico-political demand of a world in motion.

Coda

This manuscript is headed to publication amid the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza perpetrated by the Israeli state. More than ever, the Palestine exception—that liberals defend academic freedom and condemn mass killing except in the case of Palestine—is acutely evident in the universities of the West. Palestine is being rendered unutterable through the criminalization of solidarity. Even humanitarian reason, of which we are deeply critical in this book, is suspended in the case of Palestine. At our university, the University of California, Los Angeles, we find ourselves facing colleagues who would like to ban all speech, assembly, protest, and teaching regarding Palestinian liberation, even going so far as to equate those actions with supporting “terror.” On both sides of the Atlantic—the territory of this book—colonial amnesia and imperial presentism have come together in the weaponization of antisemitism. From legislatures to boardrooms to classrooms, right-wing and liberal interests are mobilizing this accusation against those who dare historicize and criticize the Israeli nation-state and Zionist ideology. We are inspired by the endurance of Palestinian resistance, by the thousands of people flooding city streets across the world demanding an end to the genocide and occupation, by movements and unions that recognize that what is at stake is the global history of dispossession and displacement and therefore our collective liberation. Refaat Alareer (2014), the Gazan poet, scholar, and teacher, assassinated by Israel on December 7, 2023, had asserted that “Gaza writes back.” We hope that this book, first conceptualized amid Trumpian ascendancy and now completed amid the US- and Europe-backed genocide in Gaza, is one such act of writing back.

As we undertake the final copy edits and review of this manuscript, news arrives of Trump's second electoral victory and imminent return to power. Promising mass deportations and the denaturalization of US citizens, a triumphant Trump is set to consolidate the fascist restructuring of US democracy. Our book is a disruption of this arc, insisting on a world that must be made beyond liberalism, beyond humanitarianism, and beyond sanctuary.

NOTES

- 1 Executive Order 13769 of January 27, 2017: "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States," *Federal Register* 82, no. 20 (February 1, 2017). To bypass court orders, it was replaced by Executive Order 13780 of March 6, 2017, which imposed severe travel restrictions on citizens of North Korea, Syria, Iran, Chad, Libya, Yemen, and Venezuela. The latter order was permanently extended by Trump's Presidential Proclamation 9645 but revoked by President Joseph Biden on his first day in office, January 20, 2021.
- 2 The Abolition on Stolen Land convening is available to view at <https://challengeinequality.luskin.ucla.edu/abolition-on-stolen-land-with-ruth-wilson-gilmore>.
- 3 The materials of the Sanctuary Spaces endeavor are available to view at <https://challengeinequality.luskin.ucla.edu/sanctuary-spaces>.
- 4 *Águilas / Eagles* is a 2021 documentary film by Kristy Guevara-Flanagan and Maite Zubiaurre.
- 5 The publication *Teach. Organize. Resist.* can be read at <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8bp6r8qg>.

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INTRODUCTION

Beyond Sanctuary

The Humanism
of a World in Motion

Ananya Roy and Veronika Zablotsky

Thinking the West Otherwise

In March 2023, the Promise Institute for Human Rights at the University of California, Los Angeles, hosted an official visit by Soledad García Muñoz, special rapporteur on economic, social, cultural, and environmental rights of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. The request for such a visit had come from the Los Angeles Community Action Network (LA CAN), a Black liberation movement organization located in Skid Row, the city's downtown neighborhood where mass homelessness has been concentrated and contained. Noting the "serious homelessness crisis in the western United States," LA CAN's petition argued that "the situation of unhoused people in Los Angeles is a violation of human rights under the Inter-American human rights framework."¹ During the visit, a public hearing was held in Ananya's classroom at UCLA. Unhoused comrades who were part of a class on spatial justice testified through narrative, analysis, and art about the forms of criminalization, illegalization, discrimination, and dehumanization they face in Los Angeles. Unfurled behind the row of presenters was a banner inspired by ACT UP's activism during the AIDS pandemic: "If I die unhoused—forget burial—just drop my body on the steps of L.A. City Hall," which

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served as a reminder of the social murder underway in US cities, including in those that are known for their liberal governance.

This was not the first time that international rapporteurs had borne witness to the state-led displacement and disappearance of poor and unhoused communities in the United States. A 2018 report by Philip Alston, the UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, noted that conditions in LA's unhoused encampments were worse than those in refugee camps and that the local government relied on criminalization "to conceal the underlying poverty problem." Indeed, the language most often used to describe the state of mass homelessness in Los Angeles is "humanitarian crisis" (Levin 2023). In Ananya's class on spatial justice, which brought together university-based scholars with movement intellectuals and unhoused comrades for a yearlong "lab for liberatory projects," such transnational frameworks served as important methodologies for a defamiliarization of the rehearsed repertoires of state violence: evictions, encampment sweeps, sit-lie bans, human caging disguised as care, interminable waiting, permanent displaceability. The participants of this class came to reframe the necropolitical zone of the First World homeless camp in relation to other spaces of death by design, notably border regions of impeded passage and lethal non-assistance such as the US-Mexico border, the external borders of the European Union, and the Mediterranean Sea. Together they read the report by Balakrishnan Rajagopal, UN special rapporteur on the right to adequate housing, on "domicide," "the systematic and deliberate mass destruction of homes during violent conflict" (Rajagopal 2022, 4). Conceptualizing the United States as being in a perpetual state of violent conflict, rooted in settler conquest and legacies of slavery, they reinscribed mass homelessness, and its criminalization, as domicile. Inspired by E. Tendayi Achiume's (2019) powerful call to view unauthorized global migration as a process of decolonization, they came to see the unhoused encampments where our comrades reside and organize as decolonial spaces of forced mobility. Indeed, the connections were everywhere, threaded through the bodies and memories of those gathered in the class. As the class studied the search for missing migrants in the Arizona desert, a space of forced and deadly crossings, one of the class participants, Sandra, broke down in tears and shared the two crossings she had made there as a child. Sandra is a key protagonist in *Reclaiming Our Homes*, a movement of unhoused mothers to occupy vacant state-owned houses. That deadly desert haunts her, always.

But while the vocabulary of discrimination and the remedy of rights were omnipresent, the class struggled with two questions: To whom were

the displaced and unhoused to present a petition of discrimination and a demand for justice? Whom were those cast out into the world to charge with domicile? The class itself was already a refusal of liberal governance and its systems of aid and care. Like the ruse of asylum, such systems perpetuate containment, surveillance, separation, and carceral supervision and never deliver on the promise of domicile, of home. Unhoused encampments, migrant detention centers, and refugee camps are part of the same global geography of displacement and disappearance, managed through the twinned logics of non-assistance and humanitarianism. What, in such a world, is sanctuary? When thinking simultaneously from the streets of Los Angeles, where five unhoused persons die each day, from Sandra's route through the Arizona desert, from the migrant detention center where other unhoused comrades have been held before making their way into the perpetual state of violent conflict that is the United States, it becomes evident that sanctuary is not going to be found in international human rights or in juridical protections. Sanctuary laws in California have repeatedly made peace with the police state and sacrificed to deportation those illegalized migrants deemed less worthy. The insistence that global institutions bear witness, the accounting of death and domicile, the demand for the right to remain and the right to return, and the legal battles against criminalization and discrimination are important, but ultimately they were incommensurable with the intention for the class to be a lab for liberatory projects. Instead, class participants came to see their work as forms of being and knowing that emanate from being cast out in the world. Such too is the collective endeavor that is this book.

Our Mellon Foundation Sawyer Seminar, "Sanctuary Spaces: Reworlding Humanism," and this subsequent book constitute a project that foregrounds the necropolitical spaces and routes of forced mobility in a postcolonial world. Conceptualizing the territories of Europe and the United States as a fractal geography of camps and crossings, we are especially concerned with modes of humanitarianism that govern and manage the suffering and resistance that racial capitalism produces, keeping abjected subjects in a state of permanent displaceability. In such a world, sanctuary is a site of incommensurability. As a technology of liberal democracy, sanctuary is the West's promise to include and protect racial others. This promise, though, lays bare the problem of the racial other in a postcolonial world. Who is the migrant, refugee, asylum seeker, border crosser in relation to the (never) welcoming West? Such relationalities are unrecognizable within humanitarian reason, which can offer only conditional (and often carceral) protection but never liberation. Sanctuary as humanitarian reason is an essential part of "the story

of humanism,” which inevitably is told as a “European coming-of-age story” (Scott 2000, 197). Sylvia Wynter (2003, 260) reminds us that the imperative here is “securing the well-being of our present ethnoclass (i.e., Western bourgeois) conception of the human, Man, which overrepresents itself as if it were the human itself.” Those cast out into the world are incommensurable with Man. It is thus that the problem of sanctuary—its unfulfillable promise—is the problem of the West. It is in the face of such incommensurability that we undertake the seemingly impossible: the collective dreaming of freedom under conditions of fugitivity; the making of abolition as a rehearsal for life (as argued by Ruth Wilson Gilmore in our “Abolition on Stolen Land” convening)² on stolen land and in the wake of stolen lives; the assertion of solidarity in the face of incalculable loss of life, displacement, and disappearance. Drawing on intellectual traditions that demand a rethinking not just of humanitarianism but also of humanism itself—the Black radical tradition, Indigenous studies, postcolonial thought, and critical refugee studies—this book is an effort to think (from the West) otherwise, beyond sanctuary. It is therefore also an effort to think the West otherwise.

Genealogies of Sanctuary

This book takes up sanctuary as keyword rather than juridical category. While the imperative for this endeavor emanates from Trump’s US presidency and the assault on sanctuary jurisdictions, we do not limit ourselves to an analysis or defense of such policies and legal tussles. Instead, we wish to present the complex genealogies of sanctuary and expand the capacity for liberatory meanings and practices of sanctuary, while simultaneously marking the limits of sanctuary. For the purposes of sanctuary as keyword, we follow Raymond Williams (1983, 24) to understand keywords as “a crucial area of social and cultural discussion, which has been inherited within precise historical and social conditions and which has to be made at once conscious and critical.” Here we focus on two genealogies of sanctuary, each of which also takes us to the limits of sanctuary as inclusion and protection. The first is the religious histories and meanings of sanctuary, and the second is the call for sanctuary as cosmopolitanism.

Our intention is not to solidify these genealogies but rather to reworld them through a critical interrogation and reimagination of sanctuary, one that learns from and accompanies migrant movements. We use the term “migrant movements” to indicate the ethico-political demands of a world in motion and to foreground forms of revolt and mobilization by migrants and

their demands for justice. Migrant movements are connected to many other struggles against displacement and dispossession. To this end, the chapters are filled with key interlocutors and concepts that might not otherwise feature in a book on sanctuary—Fanon, Wynter, antiblackness, Palestine, abolition, coloniality, death, marronage, freedom, kinship, liberatory love. These serve as “a normative discursive space.” We borrow this phrase from Scott’s essay “On the Very Idea of a Black Radical Tradition.” By “a *normative* discursive space,” Scott means “not merely a descriptive but also an *argumentative* space in which what is at stake are *claims* on the moral-political present” (2013, 1). As we consider the conjuncture at hand, we situate our inquiry in two dominant migration regimes, the United States and Europe, where sanctuary has taken on new urgency in recent times. Reinscribing Europe through the modality of the Black Mediterranean, and reinscribing the United States through the modality of stolen land, we consider the moral-political present within the long history of global racial capitalism.

The Sacred

Sanctuary is often understood to be a religious (Christian) practice. Indeed, in present times, one could argue that since there is no codified right to resist colonization and imperialist war-making within secular law, whether in the United States or in Europe, religion has been produced as the only site of legitimate solidarity action with refugees and migrants. US sanctuary movements have often relied on faith-based claims. In Europe, sanctuary congregations “petition” state administrations to uphold or expand their biopolitical mandate of protection. Furthermore, the 2011 Charta of the New Sanctuary Movement in Europe echoes Bartolomé de las Casas’s “In Defense of the Indians” when it grounds its politics of welcome and hospitality “in the conviction that God loves the strangers and that in them we encounter God” (Resolution of the Annual Meeting of the German Ecumenical Committee on Church Asylum, October 2010). We pay attention to this genealogy while marking its limits by foregrounding militant Black, Brown, and Indigenous horizons of sanctuary as practical abolition.

Etymologically, the word *sanctuary* denotes a holy place or altar where, in the Christian tradition, fugitives could take shelter from persecution. The Old Testament of the Bible designates “cities of refuge,” where those who had unintentionally committed manslaughter could find protection from “blood avengers” (Quant 2015). Amid the legal pluralism of medieval Europe, the practice continued, albeit contested, to offer protection to persons facing prison sentences and debtors. With the consolidation of modern state

power, ecclesiastic immunity was disestablished by decree in most European contexts (Tomba 2019). In the Americas, sanctuary traveled as a colonial technology that became imbricated with “genocide and forced removal of Indigenous peoples, the transatlantic slave trade, and other forms of persecution and unfreedom that marginalized groups suffered under European colonialism” (Villarreal 2019, 51). Since the Spanish colonial period, Indigenous people were made “refugees in their own homelands” and forced to congregate in Christian missionary compounds as “spaces for protection” against presumably “external spaces of violence” of which they were constitutive (Villarreal 2019, 44, 47). The Indigenous historian Aimee Villarreal offers a “counternarrative” of “mobile and intertribal sanctuary place-making in the Americas” that forged “Indigenous and African sanctuariescapes,” beyond the reach of the Christian church, in “regions of rebellion” (Villarreal 2019, 45, 51). The “deep historical memory” of Indigenous resistance to displacement and enclosure inscribes sanctuary as a “form of collective action against injustice” that offers an “alternative vision of solidarity and belonging” (Villarreal 2019, 64).

As a challenge to dominant accounts of sanctuary as a predominantly Christian or European tradition, our anthology is guided by anticolonial genealogies of “practical abolition” and “black fugitive sanctuary” (Haro and Coles 2019, 662) within landscapes of pan-Indigenous resistance to removal, enclosure, and dispossession. We foreground sanctuary as an “ethico-political mode of being” and “transformative power” forged through the “disruptive hospitality politics of [Black and Indigenous] fugitives” (Haro and Coles 2019, 656, 666). And we are attentive to the emergence of “new” sanctuary movements on both sides of the Atlantic since the 1980s, often inspired by Central American liberation theology, a syncretic set of doctrines and principles that “weaves together Indigenous Central American and Christian cosmologies” (Mei-Singh 2021, 80).

In the United States, asylum seekers from Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras introduced sanctuary to churches, synagogues, and then cities. As Renny Golden and Michael McConnell write in their “people’s history” of that moment, Central American refugees arrived as truth-tellers and political agents who “obliterate[d] the imperial vision” of the West (Golden and McConnell 1986, 5, 4). From the perspective of the movement, Golden and McConnell acknowledge the “inherent racism that judges newsworthy any risky act undertaken by whites” but routinely leaves out solidarity action by Black and Brown mutual aid networks and communities, such as a

“declaration of sanctuary” issued by Operation PUSH in Chicago (Golden and McConnell 1986, 5).

Across Europe, significant anti-imperialist and feminist mobilizations played a key role in moving congregations to shelter refugees against deportation orders. Memories of antifascist resistance gave moral and political force to the idea of sanctuary, while theological arguments were oftentimes elaborated after the fact.³ In the United States, sanctuary workers on trial cast their work as civil initiative, “one in which individuals carry out just laws their government is ignoring and misinterpreting” (Coutin 1995, 553). Rather than a philosophy of welcome to suffering strangers, the sanctuary movement of the 1980s was a framework of transnational obligation and responsibility meant to challenge Western imperialism. It is thus that Section 1 of San Francisco’s City of Refuge Ordinance, for example, passed in 1989, stated: “The people of the United States owe a particular responsibility to political refugees from El Salvador and Guatemala because of the role that the United States military and other war related aid has played in prolonging the political conflicts in those countries” (Ridgley 2008, 79).

It is important to note the limits of such sanctuary politics and practices. Despite the radical commitments of anti-imperialism, antifascism, and international solidarity that animated the sanctuary movements of the 1980s in Europe and the United States, sanctuary policies have narrowed to what Nicholas De Genova, in an interview for this book (chapter 10), calls the “ruse of asylum.” At present, as shown by Paik (2017, 2020), the structural violence of border imperialism is most forcefully challenged by self-organized refugee and migrant justice movements, which have built significant platforms and visibility since the 1990s. For example, as an anticolonial politics that resists the criminalization of people on the move, Black “border feminism” (Barry 2021, 39) denounces all too facile appeals to a shared humanity and insists upon actualizing them in practice. This, as Paik (2017, 16, 18) notes, is sanctuary as a “mode of resistance,” one that is necessarily abolitionist in its refusal of the criminalization of migrants and all other people “cast as illegal, terrorist, criminal, expendable,” and thus cast out into the world.

The Cosmopolitan

Another vision for sanctuary comes from French philosopher Jacques Derrida. In 1995, the Council of Europe and the European Parliament adopted a charter for “cities of asylum” that had been drafted by the International Parliament of Writers (IPW). Prompted by the fatwa against Salman Rushdie,

who was elected the first president of the IPW, and the assassination of writers in Algeria, the charter declared that cities that joined the network would provide “persecuted intellectuals” with asylum, including housing and access to municipal services. It is interesting to note that in the “declaration of independence” that Rushdie drafted in 1994 for the IPW, he presents a vision of a borderless world: “Writers are citizens of many countries. . . . The art of literature requires, as an essential condition, that the writer be free to move between his many countries as he chooses, needing no passport or visa, making what he will of them and of himself” (Council of Europe 1995). What if we were to replace the word “writer” with “migrant”? Derrida does just that in his 1996 speech to the IPW and in the subsequent essay “On Cosmopolitanism” (2001). Insisting that “*ethics is hospitality*,” he argues that cities must protect the “foreigner in general, the immigrant, the exiled, the deported, the stateless or the displaced person.” Drawing on Levinas, Derrida (1999, 45) is in fact challenging the distinction between host and guest, proprietor and visitor, concluding that “hospitality thus precedes property” (see also Dikeç 2002). As Carroll (2006, 822) writes, “What makes hospitality in its most radical, implacable sense, therefore, possible is not possession but a radical dispossession.” In advancing a radical ethics of hospitality, Derrida pushes against the limits of Kantian cosmopolitanism. Kant, Derrida (1997, 21) argues, formulates hospitality as “the right to visitation,” not “right of residence.” Right of residence, for Kant, “must be made the object of a particular treaty between states” and is thus “dependent on state sovereignty.” Derrida (1997, 3–4), on the other hand, makes a distinction “between two forms of the metropolis: the City and the State,” with the city of refuge or “free city” as one that “transforms and reforms the modalities of membership by which the city belongs to the state.” It is “above nation-states,” declares Derrida (1997, 9). But it must be asked: Where is the free city, this space of sanctuary? In Derrida’s vision of sanctuary, the answer to this question is Europe.

In *Monolingualism of the Other*, Derrida (1998, 15) writes of his sudden loss of French citizenship, repositioning himself, as Baring (2010, 258) notes, from “French Algerian, a European in Algeria . . . [to] Franco-Maghrebian, meaning a French citizen who by birth was North African, an Algerian in France.” Derrida (1996, 16) eventually regains his French citizenship, writing: “The state, to which I never spoke, had given it back to me.” But Algeria remains for Derrida, as Damai (2005, 89) argues, the “other of Europe,” and “the other is granted a place only in relation to Europe.” Silent on the matter of colonialism, Derrida conceptualizes radical dispossession as a universal condition, one to which he can lay claim when subjected to the loss of citi-

zenship by the French state. His cosmopolitanism is protected from “racial terror,” a phrase we borrow from Gilroy (1993, 73) to indicate the structured violence of postcolonial modernity. And his free city can only be in the place that is organized as Europe in the world, as Reason. In a footnote written in 1963, the year after Algerian independence had been won, Derrida makes the argument thus: “A bit like how the anti-colonialist revolution can only liberate itself from a *de facto* Europe or West in the name of transcendental Europe, that is, of Reason, and by letting itself first be won over by its values, its language, its technology, its armaments; an irreducible contamination or incoherence that no cry—I am thinking of Fanon’s—could exorcise, no matter how pure and intransigent it is” (quoted in Baugh 2003, 240; see also Baring 2010, 257). In other words, it is only Europe that can grant sanctuary to those constituted as the racial other of Europe. In an essay on “a European public,” El-Tayeb (2008, 655) notes how Derrida and Habermas came together in 2003, despite their profound differences, to condemn the Iraq War and present a united call for “new European political responsibilities beyond Eurocentrism.” As El-Tayeb notes, they were united by the idea of “Europe having to save the world,” which is an idea that relies on what El-Tayeb calls “colonial amnesia.”

In ongoing writings on humanitarian reason, Fassin (2005, 376) argues that “the recognition of refugee status by European nations appears as an act of generosity on the part of a national community toward a ‘suffering stranger . . . rather than the fulfillment of a political debt toward ‘citizens of humanity.’” It creates “the illusion of a global moral community” (Fassin 2013, 37). By constituting sanctuary as a problem, we draw attention to the ways in which humanitarian reason serves to uphold racial-colonial logics of detention, deportation, and even death. What does it mean to plead sanctuary on the basis of (recognized) suffering? Who has the power to grant such recognition? The power of recognition and reconciliation, as Danewid (2017) argues, lies with “white innocence,” a term that Wekker (2016) has mobilized to explain Dutch culture and its structured denial of racial-colonial violence. Scrutinizing frameworks of hospitality toward the suffering stranger that stretch from Derrida to Butler and that are premised on dispossession and precariousness as common ground for all, Danewid (2017, 1682) concludes that this is about “saving Europe for itself”: “By erasing Europe’s colonial past and its neo-colonial present—and with that, the responsibility that Europe bears for the bodies on its shores—the migrant’s status as a stranger is secured. This enables the European subject to re-constitute itself as ‘ethical’ and ‘good,’ innocent of its imperialist histories and present complexities.”

In deliberate contrast, the Black Mediterranean Collective presents migration, specifically the Black Mediterranean, as “a powerful ethical-political demand” (Danewid et al. 2021, 17; see also Hawthorne 2022). In this book, we hold such present histories in clear view while paying attention to the specificities of the conjuncture at hand, including particular formations and deployments of border discourse, policy, and technology. In doing so, we seek to shift the question of sanctuary from the recognition of suffering to fugitivity and mobility in response to this ethico-political demand of a world in motion.

The colonial relationalities of Europe, on which Derrida is silent, remain activated in these present times. In chapter 13 of this book, SA Smythe writes of the election of Giorgia Meloni, leader of the neofascist party Brothers of Italy, as prime minister of Italy. Stoking fears of a “great replacement,” Meloni has called “for a naval blockade against migrants” (Horowitz 2022). In a seeming response to the election, Pope Francis warned Italians against “raising walls against our brothers and sisters, which imprison us in solitude” (Roberts 2022). Of course, the walls were raised well before Meloni’s ascendance to power. As Charalampos Tsavdaroglou and Maria Kaika argue in chapter 7, the containerization of migrants as bare life makes evident the (neo)colonial apparatus that is the European refugee management and asylum system. But as Smythe reminds us, Meloni’s intensification of migrant surveillance and detention goes hand in hand with the expansion of extractive ventures and plans in Africa, dressed up as development. In this vein, the United Kingdom’s deportation agreement with Rwanda was called a “Migration and Economic Development Partnership.” If Derrida’s cosmopolitanism delivers us to the threshold of Europe, then we must be attentive not only to Africa in Europe but also to Europe in Africa.

The Ruse of Sanctuary

Embedded in Western liberal democracies, sanctuary must be understood as a distinctive technology of state power. And it is within, against, and beyond such state power that migrant movements have organized the practical abolition alluded to earlier in this chapter and which we will take up again in the next section through a focus on fugitivities and mobilities. In this section, we ask: what is the nature of the administrative and governmentalizing power that is sanctuary?

In chapter 10, Nicholas De Genova foregrounds “the ruse of asylum,” analyzing how the European asylum system is designed to deny rather

than grant asylum. De Genova argues that “what on its surface appears to be about a humanitarian commitment on the part of European countries and the larger European Union, a humanitarian commitment to protecting and welcoming and receiving refugees—that asylum regime has as its very predictable and durable material outcome the production of *rejected* asylum seekers.” De Genova notes that this “machinery for . . . rejection” engenders a “conversion from the once-hallowed figure of ‘the refugee’ to the more derisive figure of ‘the migrant.’”

There are many aspects to the ruse of sanctuary, including the externalization of borders, which ensures that migrants do not reach European shores or cross the borders of the United States. Indeed, these borders produce death by design. After decades of relative porousness, the present-day US-Mexico border is a massively surveilled and militarized zone of extralegal violence, heightened exploitation, and mass detention of asylum seekers who have no access to legal counsel and are held in privately run and Immigration and Customs Enforcement-administered detention camps across remote areas of the United States. Since 1994, US Customs and Border Protection has officially deployed a border enforcement strategy known as “Prevention Through Deterrence,” which pushes border crossers away from urban ports of entry into the Sonoran Desert. As Amy Sara Carroll and Ricardo Dominguez note in chapter 9, this has gone hand in hand with the redirection, by the US Drug Enforcement Administration, of “hemispheric narcotics routes through the Greater Mexican corridor.” In this calculated way, the desert is weaponized as a “natural barrier to passage” that masks the “workings of social and political power” (De León 2015, 28)—as exposed by “Hostile Terrain 94,”⁴ an exhibition by the Undocumented Migration Project that geolocates the remains of thousands of migrants—represented by over 4,000 handwritten toe tags on a wall map—who died in the Sonoran Desert of Arizona since the mid-1990s.

Maite Zubiaurre, in chapter 6, shares “Mujer Migrante Memorial,” an art installation that brings the lives and deaths of migrant women who have died in the Arizona desert since the 1990s to the neighborhoods of Los Angeles. For those who survive the deadly crossing, policies such as the “Migrant Protection Protocols,” initiated by the Trump administration and informally known as “Remain in Mexico,” deny the right to petition for asylum in the US. Instead, migrants are returned to Mexico and made to endure the long and uncertain wait for an asylum hearing. Carroll and Dominguez show that the border is also virtual, with technology companies such as Palantir and Anduril anchoring a global network of security and surveillance.

The externalization of borders is long at work in Europe as well. Since the 2014 revocation of the Mare Nostrum program of the Italian coast guard, which extended over 150 kilometers into Libyan waters, the European Union's external border police, Frontex, patrols only five kilometers off the Italian coast under joint maritime command with NATO vessels. At the same time, civilian search and rescue missions are being disallowed and criminalized. The disastrous effects of this are compounded by the 2017 Italy-Libya Memorandum of Understanding that outsourced so-called pushback operations—illegal within the EU's own fundamental human rights framework—to the Libyan coast guard, a pseudo-governmental organization that does the EU's border imperialist bidding with boats and surveillance technologies provided by Italy. If not outright left to die at sea, those who are rescued by NGO vessels are frequently denied the right to disembark and arrive on European shores (Tazzioli and De Genova 2020). As documented by the Border Violence Monitoring Network, thousands of migrants are routinely pushed or pulled back into Libyan, Turkish, or international waters, resulting in over 60,620 documented refugee deaths as of June 2024 (UNITED for Intercultural Action n.d.).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, furthermore, public health and hygiene returned as motifs of border enforcement against migrants on both sides of the Atlantic. Ports of arrival in Italy, Malta, and Greece, for example, were declared “unsafe” for asylum seekers and closed in the name of “protection” (Tazzioli and Stierl 2021). With the political decision to establish an EU-wide resettlement scheme in December 2023, efforts to further restrict the arrival of “illegitimate” asylum seekers—those who are deemed “economic migrants” from presumably “safe” countries of origin or those who arrive by way of non-EU countries deemed “safe”—are well underway. Planned changes to the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) will result in the routine detention of asylum seekers—including families with children—in EU-funded camps across and beyond Europe as a “mechanism of partitioning” to funnel “admissible” refugees into “institutionally forced . . . channels of mobility” while “disrupting, decelerating and diverting migrants’ autonomous movements” (Tazzioli and Garelli 2018, 4, 2, 3). By normalizing “fast-track” deportations, Europe’s “asylum compromise” sanctions illiberal bordering practices that reveal the hypocrisy of any remaining liberal pretense of benevolence and protection by countries such as Germany and France.

The European border regime on the African continent is also responsible for outright massacres such as in June 2022 at the Morocco-Melilla

border fence (Bremner 2023) and at other EU-adjacent land borders. In 2021, the Polish-Belarusian border, for example, was infamously turned into an “exclusion zone” in which asylum seekers from Syria, Afghanistan, and elsewhere were left to freeze in subzero conditions and met with military force until a physical border wall was completed in July 2022. In contrast, Ukrainian citizens who fled after the Russian invasion of February 2022 were granted an automatic three-year right of stay in the Schengen Zone, free transportation, and access to employment, schooling, healthcare, and social services. Notably, for the first time after the “long summer of migration” of 2015 (Kasperek and Speer 2015), Europe’s self-proclaimed culture of “welcome” was reinstated on the implicit premise of Ukrainian assimilability to whiteness—as a product of selective inclusion rather than a historical given (Godzich 2014)—while Ukrainians of color and racialized international residents fleeing Ukraine were delayed, detained, and pushed back by soldiers and border guards. In response, coalitions of Black and Brown community groups and mutual aid networks in the European interior such as the Tubman Network in Berlin and the Black Is Polish Collective in Warsaw created alternative solidarity infrastructures, coordinated private accommodations for new arrivals, provided legal support, and offered access to basic healthcare. Equal rights for all refugees emerged as a demand of organized noncitizens and international students from Ukraine who rallied behind the hashtag #EducationNotDeportation while facing legal limbo and extreme vulnerability to exploitation.

The ruse of sanctuary also works through the interiorization of borders—for example, in the role of migration regimes as labor regimes and the subordination of labor through the ever-present threat of detention and deportation. De Genova’s substantial scholarship on border regimes, including the important essay “Migrant ‘Illegality’ and Deportability in Everyday Life,” shows how the systematic illegalization of migration serves as the linchpin of exploitative labor regimes, especially in the United States (De Genova 2002, 419).

Vanessa E. Thompson, in chapter 4, draws attention to mobilizations in France, such as those by the *Gilets Noirs* (Black Vests), illegalized and irregularized migrants. Thompson writes: “Inspired by the *Gilets Jaunes* (Yellow Vests) movement while critiquing their lack of attention to the question of superexploitation and the migration regime, the Black Vests put a focus on the conditions of undocumented racialized workers that occupy the lower strata of the workforce and bear the primary brunt of the expansion of the French carceral anti-state state . . . and its deportation regime.” Thompson

urges us to take up the question of borders within an analysis of racial capitalist “surplusification.”

Indeed, the ruse of sanctuary can be understood as the management of surplus populations. It is against such a ruse that there is, as Thompson highlights, “the multiplicity of strategies of resistance of working-class, working-poor, stateless, and surplus folks.” In chapter 12, Sharad Chari focuses on precisely such an archive of struggles, specifically “oceanic archives of struggle,” including maritime strikes as collective organizing. Through “human oceanography,” Chari connects various “imaginings and instruments of struggle, including the maritime origins of the strike, struggles for the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade . . . Third World lawyering on the determination of the Law of the Sea, and emergent critiques of oceanic ecocide.” In inviting us to think about the “oceanic international,” Chari reinscribes oceans of deadly crossings as the “planetary ‘storm’ of multiple struggles,” toward the horizon of “planetary sanctuary.”

It is to this (im)possibility of crossings that we now turn. We do so with close attention to the many registers of rebellion against surplusification and ecocide, including those that are often illegible in the rosters of racial capitalism. In chapter 1, Johnson and Azali-Rojas remind us of Nick Estes’s intervention in the “Abolition on Stolen Land” convening of the Sanctuary Spaces Sawyer Seminar. Estes foregrounds “the deep relationships of land” that “Indigenous caretakers have with the living world” and which “are not counted as productive,” the forms of “land defense and water protection [which] are undervalued but necessary for a planet teetering on collapse” (UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy 2020b).

Crossings: Fugitivities and Mobilities

Our book is concerned with a world in motion, one in which fugitivities and mobilities are both structured by, and disrupt, cartographies of global racial capitalism. “The business of a border is, in fact, to be crossed,” argues Achille Mbembe (2018), in an essay on the control of movement. Such control, Mbembe notes, is about “the capacity to decide who can move, who can settle, where and under what conditions.” In a key essay titled “Migration as Decolonization,” E. Tendayi Achiume, professor of law and former UN special rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, challenges the notions of state sovereignty that underpin today’s migration regimes, specifically the exclusion of economic migrants. Achiume (2019, 1509) puts forward “a theory of sovereignty that obligates former colonial powers to open their

borders to former colonial subjects” and that views “economic migrants as political agents exercising equality rights when they engage in ‘decolonial’ migration.” This attention to colonial relationalities shifts the question of sanctuary and refuge to that of transnational reparations and what Mbembe (2018) calls “the redistribution of the earth.” What lies ahead, Mbembe argues (2019, 16), is “a creeping para-genocide, or imagining together different ways of reorganizing the world and redistributing the planet among all its inhabitants, humans and non-humans.”

We are concerned with sanctuary as an ethico-political demand that insists on the redistribution of the planet while also marking the limits of sanctuary as such a demand. For as Moon-Kie Jung and João H. Costa Vargas remind us in chapter 3, there is no means of charging genocide in a world structured through antiblackness. Analyzing *We Charge Genocide: The Crime of Government Against the Negro People*, the 1951 landmark human rights treatise of the Civil Rights Congress, which exposed the many forms of racial terror against Black people in the United States, they take us to the limits of the law and other institutions of national and international justice, notably liberal democracy. Their analysis reminds us that there is incommensurability between “the overwhelming historical and contemporary evidence of democracy’s own enabling of Black social and physical death” and the “prodigious confidence in democracy’s self-correcting abilities . . . [to] project an improved future.” As Jung and Vargas argue, if “Black Human” is “a foundational and perpetual oxymoron” because the “concept of the Human . . . is parasitic on Black lives,” then so is the possibility of sanctuary in the “empire-state.”

If Mbembe writes of a time of “creeping para-genocide,” this book is being completed at a time of genocide in Gaza. South Africa’s case to the International Court of Justice charging the state of Israel with genocide makes it clear that such violence is not a singular moment. Its application to the court places “acts of genocide in the broader context of Israel’s conduct towards Palestinians during its 75-year-long apartheid, its 56-year-long belligerent occupation of Palestinian territory and its 16-year-long blockade of Gaza” (International Court of Justice 2023). It is instructive to note the rejection of South Africa’s case against Israel by European powers that are themselves perpetrators of genocide. As the Namibian government reminded Germany on X: “On Namibian soil, #Germany committed the first genocide of the 20th century in 1904–1908, in which tens of thousands of innocent Namibians died in the most inhumane and brutal conditions. . . . Germany cannot morally express commitment to the United Nations Convention

against genocide, including atonement for the genocide in Namibia, whilst supporting the equivalent of a holocaust and genocide in Gaza.”⁵ In an essay titled “Reparative Futurities,” Zoé Samudzi (2020) draws our attention not only to the genocide committed by Germany against the Nama and Ova-herero people in present-day Namibia but also to Germany’s role in “the Ottoman genocide against ethnic Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek Orthodox communities.” Samudzi notes that while the German parliament has recognized the Armenian genocide, this is consistent with recognition and even reparation being reduced to a “singular harm rather than a commitment to address and repair the structure of colonial violence within which that harm was and is situated.” As Samudzi writes, “The imperial time scale renders colonial genocide and violence to a past because we are all now post-colonial.” Writing in the time of the Gaza genocide, we set aside the language of humanitarian crisis and the longing for what Jung and Vargas call a “planetary common sense.” Indeed, Samudzi (like Jung and Vargas in this book) raises the challenge with the charge of genocide in a postcolonial world: “Inherent to the politics of recognition is some ushering into whiteness: the affirmation of genocide is, crudely, an extension of and assimilation into an always Eurocentric *humanity* through a frame of event uniqueness no matter the identity of the victims.” The denial of genocide, then, with its state-orchestrated variants of denialism (Altanian 2024), symbolically repeats and materially continues the genocidal process of erasure from the juridical humanity (Esmeir 2014) that is protected by the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. We return to this dilemma of recognition in the final section of this chapter, where we wrestle with the concept of humanism and our aspiration of reworlding humanism. Here, we turn to fugitivities and mobilities that disrupt and trouble humanitarian reason and the modalities of recognition and inclusion. We argue that such crossings constitute what Samudzi calls “a grammar of futurity” and take us beyond sanctuary.

Take, for example, the African Mobilities initiative led by South African scholar and architect Mpho Matsipa and its exhibition “This Is Not a Refugee Camp” (Wolff Architects 2021). Seeking to challenge the logics of developmentalism and humanitarianism through which African mobilities are often understood, the exhibition positions itself as a counter-cartography of mobility. Matsipa argues that it is crucial “to destabilize Global North preoccupations with the spectacle of black death as the principal signifier of African mobility as well as the preoccupation with the large numbers of people from Africa, Asia, and Eastern Europe moving to the centers

of global capital” (Matsipa and Simone 2020). Counter-cartographies of mobility are also present in the US-Mexico borderlands. An example is the ongoing work of the Electronic Disturbance Theater 2.0 (EDT 2.0), an activist collective that, in collaboration with the migrant solidarity groups Border Angels and Water Station Inc., developed the mobile app Transborder Immigrant Tool (TBT), which supplies GPS location data and poetry—conceived by the group as a “geo-poetic-system”—to guide border crossers to safety along migrant routes in the Sonoran Desert. In chapter 9, Amy Sara Carroll and Ricardo Dominguez of EDT 2.0 draw on “trans/BORDER/ing,” a cross-genre and transmedia play, to suture divided geographies and to destabilize both “aid narratives and regimes of visualization that privilege surveillance and capture.”⁶ In conversation with the Sanctuary Spaces Sawyer Seminar, EDT 2.0 mobilizes an undocumentary aesthetics to challenge “hierarchies of personhood and movement” and reimagine witnessing after neo/liberal humanitarianisms. In chapter 9, they repurpose “the ubiquitous Mylar blanket of the detention center” as a “poem-quilt” that “maps Gloria Anzaldúa’s ‘third country,’” thereby separating “syllables, not families.” Carroll and Dominguez write: “In the break: my ‘Lar,’ a Roman spirit of the home, proxies a continental higher law doctrine for the 2020s, undocumenting histories of the vanishing present.”

Such counter-cartographies of mobility are part of a broader repertoire of spatial practices that reinscribe sanctuary through alternative relationalities of solidarity. From migrant squats to refugee strikes to cross-border solidarity action networks, they are part of the global history of revolt, engendered by those cast out into the world. As highlighted by Charalampos Tsavdaroglou and Maria Kaika (2020), grassroots migrant housing projects are a vitally important counterpoint to the institutionalized housing within which migrants are contained and managed in Europe. They show how refugees burned down the infamous Moria camp on Lesbos in Greece, thereby defying the “police cordon of isolation,” and created makeshift settlements to take care of one another (Tsavdaroglou and Kaika 2022a, 235–36). Other spatial practices have entailed squatting in abandoned buildings in the urban core of cities such as Athens (Tsavdaroglou and Kaika 2022b). In fact, squatting entered the repertoire of migrant justice movements in the 1960s, inspired practices of church asylum in Europe, and continues to provide autonomous solidarity accommodations and community centers for political education and activism, all in stark contrast to the isolation of state-run refugee camps. As Lafazani (2018, 896), a member of the former City Plaza squat in Athens, puts it, these housing commons must be understood “as an occupied place

and not a housing institution that belongs to the state or to any nongovernmental organizations.” Connecting migrants and locals, these autonomous solidarity projects challenge the “border between host and hosted” (Lafazani 2018, 896). Thus, in their chapter for this book, Tsavdaroglou and Kaika interpret such self-organized housing as a remaking of the urban commons through “infrastructures of decolonial solidarity.”

In Germany, the self-organized refugee strike movement organized caravans and occupied public squares to resist and draw attention to the colonial violence of the European asylum system. Over the cold winter months of 2012, an empty former school building in Berlin was transformed into the “Refugee Strike House,” an autonomous center for political education and sanctuary place-making. During a solidarity visit, Angela Y. Davis affirmed that “the refugee movement is the movement of the 21st century” (Bergt 2017). In 2022, Davis was invited back by International Women* Space, a feminist antiracist collective which formed at the Refugee Strike House to oppose all forms of sexualized violence. As part of a weeklong festival to commemorate the ten-year anniversary of the occupation, she discussed the refugee resistance movement as a crystallization point of intersecting liberation struggles—from Germany to the United States, Brazil, Palestine, Kurdistan, and Iran—while emphasizing the active leadership and resilience of displaced women of color, including queer and trans women of color, at the forefront of these movements (International Women* Space 2022).

On both sides of the Atlantic, cross-border solidarity action networks such as No Border Assembly and No One Is Illegal broaden the horizon of sanctuary beyond church asylum or liberal logics of hospitality by “challenging the nexus among border regimes, Western imperialism, and neoliberal capitalism” (Maira 2019, 139). As noted by Sunaina Maira, “Abolitionist sanctuary . . . links border violence to carcerality, neoliberal capitalism, white supremacy, settler colonialism, and fascism” (Maira 2019, 140). Through direct action and social media campaigns such as Voices from Moria, #say-theirnames CommemorAction, and Solidarity with Refugees in Libya, autonomous migrant solidarity organizing in postcolonial Europe contests migrants’ dehumanization in camps and prisons while aiming to achieve freedom of movement for all as a form of “grassroots democratic web-weaving oriented toward . . . collective well-being” (Haro and Coles 2019, 657).

While autonomous solidarity networks are criminalized for accompanying those who seek to arrive and to remain in a desired destination (Mudu and Chattopadhyay 2017; Dadusc and Mudu 2020; Stierl 2019), defense attorneys and human rights lawyers who assist asylum seekers face

“politically motivated legal harassment” (Amnesty International 2019). Some, like Nicole E. Ramos, director of the binational legal advocacy organization Border Rights Project of Al Otro Lado, were placed on no-fly lists by the US Department of Homeland Security for advocating on behalf of asylum seekers in Tijuana.⁷ Engaging in solidarity action with refugees and migrants produces corridors of solidarity (Kubaczek and Mokre 2021) that sanctuary activists link to the nineteenth-century Underground Railroad (Golden and McConnell 1986), which facilitated the escape of fugitives from slavery in the United States.

At present, the Indigenous cross-border activism of groups such as Kumeyaay Defense Against the Wall, the O’odham Anti Border Collective, and the Beyond Borders Caucus of the Red Nation, a pan-Indigenous liberation organization, links anticolonial resistance to decolonial visions of migrant justice through grassroots solidarity and immediate aid to border crossers, many of whom are themselves Indigenous persons fleeing political persecution in Central America and elsewhere. In 2018, the Red Nation Beyond Borders Caucus joined an occupation of the Tornillo-Guadalupe Port of Entry, on Rarámuri territory, in opposition to the Trump administration’s policy of family separation and the detention of unaccompanied minors. “Settler nations have no right to say who does and doesn’t belong,” they argued, nor “to detain, deport, and kill people fleeing violence” (Alvarado, Lira-Pérez, and Cruz 2019).

To prevent the partition, militarization, and desecration of their homelands, the Kumeyaay people have blocked access roads and construction equipment for the US border wall. In September 2020, Amber Ortega and Nellie Jo David, two young women of Hia-Ced O’odham and Tohono O’odham descent, were arrested by the US Border Patrol for resisting the destruction of Quitobaquito Springs, a protected site of profound spiritual significance to the O’odham people that had been slated to make way for a ten-meter steel border wall. By putting their bodies on the line—which crossed *them* in the first place—Indigenous communities resist colonial border violence and assert Indigenous sovereignty, which “stands for: caretaking and creating just relations between human and other-than-human worlds on a planet thoroughly devastated by capitalism” (Red Nation 2021, 7–8).

Acquittals in the high-profile cases of Indigenous border resister Amber Ortega and Scott Warren, a No More Deaths volunteer who faced twenty years in prison for providing shelter, food, water, and medical care to two undocumented men (Ingram 2020), rested on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993. Even if framed in liberal terms, and thus depoliticized

as “belief,” “practices of sanctuary tending to individual and collective well-being” (Haro and Coles 2019, 658) pose an ethico-political demand that cannot be fully domesticated. Outside of the federal courthouse in Tucson, Ortega affirmed Hia-Ced and Tohono O’odham sovereignty: “This is our land. . . . We, today, again defended our culture, our ways, our songs, our locations, our mountains, our sacred sites. Today was a victory for our people” (Dominguez 2022).

Inspired by Indigenous land and water defense, the focus of migrant justice movements has notably shifted from bids for citizenship rights and inclusion to frameworks of decolonization and anticapitalist critique (Walia 2013; Walia 2021). On unceded Wet’suwet’en territory just north of the present-day US-Canada border, for example, refugee activists have participated in “several delegations to Indigenous blockades, while Indigenous communities have offered protection and refuge for migrants facing deportation” (Walia 2012). Such experiments in decolonial solidarity displace the liberal binary of church and state by rejecting both terms as colonial technologies of control and dispossession that are incommensurate with Indigenous modes of governance and “relational futures” (Yazzie 2018).

On the other side of the Atlantic, solidarity action transforms the Black Mediterranean into a “sea of struggle” (Stierl 2016) to intervene in the necropolitics that is Europe. To force states to account for the practices and policies that lead to migrants’ deaths, projects such as Forensic Oceanography, a research-based collaboration between Lorenzo Pezzani and Charles Heller, scrupulously reconstruct and collect evidence to build legal cases against responsible parties that fail to render assistance despite distress calls by migrant boats at sea (Lynes, Morgenstern, and Paul 2020). Following Sharpe (2016, 59), we interpret counter-cartographic endeavors such as those of Forensic Architecture, a research agency directed by Eyal Weizman, as “wake work . . . that might counter forgetting, erasure, the monumental, and that ditto ditto in the archives.” In doing so, we are especially attentive to Black fugitivity (Sojoyner 2017) and marronage as “creative and emergent methods of life-building . . . the valuation of Black life amidst a world that saw Afro-descendant populations as completely devoid of humanity” (Bledsoe 2017, 30, 32).

Reworlding Humanism

When we wrote the first draft of this introduction, the world was riveted by the search effort for missing billionaire tourists on the *Titanic*-bound submersible that ultimately imploded in the deep Atlantic. For a brief moment,

the contrast between this rescue and the abandonment of migrants crossing the Mediterranean became starkly visible, especially as hundreds—from Pakistan, Egypt, and Jordan—died with the sinking of a fishing trawler off the coast of Greece. For a brief moment, the global media deemed these migrant deaths to be “preventable,” noting that the gatekeepers of Europe watched the distress but did not assist (Stewis-Gridneff and Shoumali 2023).⁸ Not only are such drownings commonplace, with De Genova (2018) stating that the Mediterranean has become a mass grave, but also those providing nongovernmental assistance are subject to criminalization and punishment. This lethal non-assistance, which governs the Black Mediterranean and other zones of deadly crossings, includes the invisibilization of death, rendering lost lives into those that cannot be remembered and mourned. Indeed, following the argument presented by Jung and Vargas in chapter 3, we can think of this as “genocide beyond genocide.” They write: “If genocide is the murder of a people, it is, for Black people, the murder of an already murdered ‘people’—or, more precisely, the murder of a *nonpeople of nonpersons*.”

In the essay “On Difference Without Separability,” Denise Ferreira da Silva explains how Europe’s “refugee crisis” is structured through a “racial grammar” disguised as “cultural difference”: “For in the tale of the dangerous and undeserving ‘Other’—the ‘Muslim Terrorist’ disguised as (Syrian) refugee and the ‘starving African’ disguised as asylum seeker—cultural difference sustains statements of uncertainty that effectively undermine claims for protection under the human rights framework, thereby supporting the deployment of the EU security apparatus” (Ferreira da Silva 2016, 57). Indeed, as De Genova (2016, 76, 82) argues, Europe’s “migration question” is now refracted through the “Muslim question,” positioning migrants as potential terrorists and threats to national security and thus beyond recognition. Genocide beyond genocide is on our minds as we write the final version of this introduction amid the unfolding genocide in Gaza, which is carried out as openly as it is being denied. Indeed, critical scholars of genocide are now grappling with the “futility of genocide studies after Gaza” (El-Affendi 2024) due to seemingly discarded normative commitments to prevention.

The expensive and elaborate search for the *Titan* submersible generated a fleeting moment of global shame for the sanctioned sinking of migrant ships, and in some media platforms of the West, the lives lost in these forced crossings were humanized. A black-and-white photograph of Thaer Khalid al-Rahal circulated widely. In it, al-Rahal tightly hugs his four-year-old son, Khalid, who is suffering from leukemia. Fleeing the war in Syria, the family lived in a Jordanian refugee camp for a decade, where the Office of

the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the UN refugee agency, would not fund an urgently needed bone marrow transplant for Khalid. Risking near-certain death, al-Rahal boarded the fated fishing trawler with the intent of making it to the shores of Europe, where he hoped to earn money for his son's treatment (Loveluck et al. 2023).

We could fill this book with such humanizations, telling the stories of countless al-Rahals. Theirs is the ethico-political demand of a world in motion. But we are acutely aware of the limits of this “planetary moral commonsense.” Whom are we to charge with genocide for the hundreds of lives lost in this latest crossing? Humanitarian reason governs abjection but does not intervene in the structured and sanctioned violence that casts abjected subjects out in the world—what we call domicide. Humanitarian reason reproduces racial-capitalist surplusification, proliferating a global geography of containment and containerization. Saree Makdisi, in chapter 8, appropriately coins the term “humanitarian racism,” exposing the hypocrisies of celebrity humanitarian interventions. In such governance, humanitarian reason sorts valued and devalued lives, deserving and undeserving refugees, good and criminal migrants. But, as Makdisi shows, there is more. As in the case of Palestine, humanitarian racism whitewashes present forms of settler colonialism and ethnic cleansing through the metonymical identification of the Zionist project with global values of democracy, tolerance, and human dignity. Such transactions, cast in the discourse of human rights, uphold the moral standing of the West, especially the United States, as the keeper of humanitarian reason. To disrupt such metonymies, it is necessary, as Melanie Yazzie (2015, 1007) reminds us, to build solidarity across “interlocking, transnational, and hypermilitarized forms of settler colonialism.” Of the Diné Bikéyah campaign for solidarity with Palestine, Yazzie (2015, 1007) notes: “The campaign understands that Palestinian liberation requires the liberation of Indigenous and other oppressed peoples from occupation by Israel’s collaborator and guarantor, the United States.”

Our conceptualization of sanctuary spaces takes seriously such practices of solidarity and liberation in a world of social death, or what Smythe (2018) terms the “wet cemetery.” We grapple with Gilroy’s (2021, 122) provocation that “a new and urgent articulation of . . . planetary humanism” can emerge from the “humanizing gestures” of “human salvage, naming, and burial” that in turn emerge “from the deadly waters of the Mediterranean.” But also at stake is how we understand such death. To this end, we grapple with Saucier and Woods’s (2014, 62) understanding of the Black Mediterranean as “an old and repressed issue that haunts and composes the European project

and modernity itself.” In their critique of migration and border studies, they situate the deadly crossings of the Mediterranean within the “accumulated violence against black people globally” (Saucier and Woods 2014, 55). In doing so, they challenge “Western humanism’s conception of violence as contingent,” noting that it is a mistake to interpret border violence as “a punishment for a transgressive act” (Saucier and Woods 2014, 60). Instead, such violence is precisely what Sharpe (2016, 13) calls “living in/the wake of slavery.” As the Black Mediterranean Collective argues, the crisis of the Mediterranean “is not the state of exception . . . but a state of repetition of the subjection of Black life through the same old means: borderless apparatus of surveillance, containment, captivity, forced displacement, forced labor, the slave markets, and dehumanization” (Lombardi-Diop 2021, 4). In this book, we take up the Black Mediterranean as a conceptual framework that makes possible an understanding of such subjection and repetition while also being attentive to the reemergent geopolitics of exclusion and expulsion that bring a diversity of migrant lives into deadly crossings from old and new war zones. Whether or not such diverse migrant lives should be understood as Black life is a matter of debate and leads us to the consideration of antiblackness. Here it is worth keeping in mind Stuart Hall’s (2005, 442) reminder of how, why, and when the term *Black* comes to reference “the common experience of racism and marginalization,” of when it even becomes “the organizing category of a new politics of resistance, among groups and communities with, in fact, very different histories, traditions and ethnic identities.” Writing to mark “the end of the innocent notion of the essential black subject,” Hall (2005, 444) emphasizes “that ‘black’ is essentially a political and culturally *constructed* category, which cannot be grounded in a set of cultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantee in nature.”

As we discussed in the section “Genealogies of Sanctuary,” we are acutely aware that dominant conceptions of sanctuary as asylum and protection rest on the tenets of Western humanism. But such humanism is constituted, as Jung and Vargas remind us in chapter 3, through antiblackness. Antiblackness, Jung and Vargas (2021, 3) note, “is a profoundly ‘*antisocial*’ condition,” one that consigns the racial other to what Patterson (1982) has famously called “social death” and thereby negates the social as “common ground for all.” What is sanctuary for those subjected to social death? What human rights can be ascribed to those marked as (Black) nonbeing? Our work in this book entails the reworlding of sanctuary through what Kelley (1999, 1048) has called “black revolt.” Smythe (2018), inspired by Kelley,

reinterprets the Black Mediterranean as “a variegated site of Black knowledge production, Black resistance and possibilities of new consciousness.” Such is a “mobile commons” (Papadopoulos and Tsianos 2012), elaborated by “fugitive planning” (Harney and Moten 2013).

The concept of reworlding takes us to postcolonial critique. The problem of sanctuary is also a problem of Western thought. As Ananya Roy has argued in previous work (Roy and Ong 2011; Roy et al. 2020), the reworlding of disciplines is a refusal of Eurocentrism as well as a rehistoricization and reconceptualization of the histories and futures that are narrated and consolidated under the sign of the West. It is a counter to what Spivak (1985, 247) pinpoints as the “worlding of what is today called the Third World.” Such worlding is pithily captured by Spivak (1985, 247) in the opening lines of her iconic essay on archival inheritances: “Two years ago, when a conference with the title ‘Europe and Its Others’ was proposed by the Sociology of Literature Group at Essex, I made some pious remarks about an alternative title, namely, ‘Europe as an Other.’” What is sanctuary if we understand Europe as an other rather than as a place of asylum for Europe’s racial others? Spivak continues by noting that the proposed revision implied that “a critique of imperialism would restore a sovereignty for the lost self of the colonies so that Europe could, once and for all, be put in the place of the Other that it always was.” Rejecting this reversal, Spivak argues that “if instead we concentrated on documenting and theorizing the itinerary of the consolidation of Europe as sovereign subject, indeed sovereign and subject, then we would produce an alternative historical narrative of the ‘worlding’ of what is today called ‘the Third World.’” Our critical interrogation of sanctuary, and thereby of Western humanism, is precisely such an analysis. As Mignolo (2015, 108) writes, “the problem of the Human is . . . in the *enunciations* of what it means to be Human.” In the universal grammars of Western humanism, in enunciations such as humanitarianism and cosmopolitanism, who is recognizable as human? In other words, the problem of sanctuary is the problem that is the West.

Here we return to Gilroy and what, following Wynter, Gilroy (2018, 19) terms the “creative re-enchantment of the human.” In a rather surprising move, Gilroy (2018, 19) draws inspiration from Europe’s sanctuary cities where “solidarity activities” both “pressurize” and “bypass government power.” Our book is filled with such examples, from migrant squats to migrant revolts. These are for Gilroy (2018, 14, 16) “a vernacular energy” that has the potential for a “reparative humanism,” a “planetary humanism.” The question at hand, Gilroy (2018, 19) argues, is “whether we perceive the vital, vulnerable cargo

of this and other wrecked boats as human rather than as inhuman,” reduced to “objects among other objects.” The equally difficult question at hand is whether this is a form of postcolonial restitution: “More is indeed being recovered from the waves than wreckage and corpses. Europe’s relationship with its own shrinking civilization is at stake in the decision to intervene as well as in the later lives of the survivors” (Gilroy 2019, 19). Is the creative re-enchantment of the human possible without the creative re-enchantment of Europe? Here it is worth considering what Gilroy writes prior to the previous passage: “a wider struggle to re-enchant humanism by endowing a stronger sense of *reciprocal* humanity in Europe’s proliferating encounters with vulnerable otherness.” What is sanctuary when we refuse benevolent gestures of protection and insist upon reciprocity? But what then are the limits of reciprocity in a world of genocide beyond genocide? Here we return to Spivak’s argument about the limits of reworlding Europe. In an interview with Wynter about “the re-enchantment of humanism,” Scott (2000, 153) puts forward the notion of “embattled humanism.” Wynter expresses enthusiasm for the term: “You know that you cannot turn your back on that which the West has brought in since the fifteenth century. It’s transformed the world, and central to that has been humanism. But it’s also the humanism against which Fanon writes [in *The Wretched of the Earth*] when he says, they talk about man and yet murder him everywhere on the street corners. Okay. So it is that embattled [humanism], one which challenges itself at the same time that you’re using it to think with.” This is the reworlding of humanism at work in this book.

The reworlding of humanism requires, as Rinaldo Walcott elaborates in chapter 15, “a different order of knowledge.” As Mbembe (2018) argues, “The western archive does not help us to develop an idea of borderlessness. The western archive is premised on the crystallisation of the idea of a border.” In this book, we do not seek a resolution of humanity/humanism but rather take it up as a question. For after all, as Hartman (1997, 5) reminds us in the landmark book *Scenes of Subjection*, the discourse of humanism is “double edged”; for those relegated to social death, it means seizing upon “that which had been used against them and denied them.” Our intent is not the recovery of humanism but rather the reinscription of the Western archive through fugitivities and mobilities, revolt and freedom. We focus on a world in motion that must be understood as “living in/the wake of slavery” (Sharpe 2016, 15). To this end, Walcott claims the idea of freedom, or “freedom’s revenge,” as a way of undoing “Euro-American white supremacist logics of what it means to be human, to be a life-form, to be speciated.” Refusing the ruse of

liberal democracy, Walcott reminds us that “those institutions marked as democratic manage unfreedom.” As we have already argued earlier in this introduction, this is the ruse of asylum, the ruse that is sanctuary, and the ruse that is the West. Instead, Walcott imagines an “untethering” for which the “only name . . . is decolonization,” or “freedom beyond humanism.”

We follow Walcott in refusing the renovation of Western humanism and its institutional scaffolding of liberal democracy and humanitarian reason. Instantiations of freedom beyond humanism are evident in the fugitivities and mobilities, the Black revolt, the oceanic strikes and struggles, the migrant squats, and the cross-border solidarity initiatives that we study and accompany in this book. If the prominent philosophers of Western humanism have felt at home in the world, dwelling securely in realms of freedom, then we are concerned with forms of being and knowing that emanate from being cast out in the world. When unhoused comrades in Los Angeles living in street encampments assert the right to remain and demand the right to home, when anticolonial migrant justice movements such as No One Is Illegal assert the right of stay, the freedom to move, and the right to return, they unsettle the “bare humanity” of human rights as critiqued by Hannah Arendt. Once a stateless person is “forced outside the pale of the law” (Arendt 1962, 286), they are turned into an “outlaw by definition” (283) and “set outside human jurisdiction” (Agamben 1998, 82)—a condition that Agamben theorizes as the “sovereign exception” (82). By taking “exception from the exception” (Bargu 2017, 5), migrant movements unsettle the grounds of dispossession and disrupt (neo)colonial border regimes. The humanity invoked by such rights discourses is not that of universal Man but rather of those rendered illegal and beyond recognition.

Walcott reminds us that freedom beyond humanism is not a singular endeavor but rather one of “multiple theoretical routes.” Walcott writes: “The critique provided of Euro-American humanism is not one in search of a space, a gap, or a position to enter it, but rather one that demolishes its edifice. What these thinkers have in common is not a theoretical unity but a political project that writes us toward freedom beyond Euro-American humanism.” In this book, we take up the reworlding of humanism through such multiplicity and what might in fact be incommensurability. Take, for example, the closing event of the Sanctuary Spaces Sawyer Seminar. Titled “Freedom and Fugitivity,” this online convening featured Saidiya Hartman along with Aisha Finch, Tiffany Lethabo King, Kyle Mays, and Sarah Haley.⁹ A key line of conversation and debate was Hartman’s (1997, 5) argument that “the recognition of humanity and individuality [can act] to tether, bind, and

oppress” and that this can take place “through notions of reform, consent, and protection,” as was the case with “benevolent correctives and declarations of slave humanity.” Indeed, in our Sanctuary Short *Enclosure: Geographies of Refusal*, Tina Campt refuses the imperative of humanism, reworlded or otherwise, and foregrounds refusal as a key modality of Black feminist thought and practice (UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy 2021d).¹⁰ “Refusal,” Audra Simpson (2017, 19) argues, “is an option for producing and maintaining alternative structures of thought, politics and traditions away from and in critical relationship to states.” Simpson, also featured in this Sanctuary Short, exposes the “ruse of consent” that underpins the politics of recognition and reconciliation, or what Gooder and Jacobs have dubbed the “postcolonial apology.” As Gooder and Jacobs (2000, 229) point out, “The apology becomes a lifeline [for settler subjects] through which a legitimate belonging in the nation may be restituted.” Sanctuary, asylum, and refuge, as enacted by the West, must be understood as different forms of the postcolonial apology. The ruse of sanctuary is the ruse of consent. Simpson (2017, 19) argues that the “ruse of consent” must be understood as “a technique of recognition and simultaneous dispossession . . . for Native people, this ruse of consent marks the inherent impossibility of that freedom after dispossession, a freedom [that] is actually theft.”

Our book and the related Sanctuary Spaces Sawyer Seminar foreground ways of knowing and being that transform colonial relationalities into radical relationalities of kinship. We do so, as Sarah Haley argues in chapter 11, by paying attention to how such histories and relationalities “operate, of course, *without sanctuary*.” And in this way, they defy “the violence of normative humanism produced by the historical archive through a practice of creative social reproduction that entails inhabitation, confrontation, elusion, and intuition.” Haley emphasizes, “Although there is no sanctuary on the page, Black creative life undermines the terror of Western humanism and charts possibility in its beyond.” As Tiffany Lethabo King (2019, 12) argues, “Specific forms of Black abolition and Native decolonization interrupt . . . liberal (and other) modes of humanism . . . [and] offer new forms of sociality and futurity.”

One example is “No Ban on Stolen Land,” a powerful Indigenous-led rallying cry of the migrant justice movement (Monkman 2017). When the Trump administration passed its infamous Executive Order 13769 in 2017, also known as the “Muslim ban,” Melanie Yazzie, one of the founders of the Red Nation, joined a spontaneous protest led by Indigenous organizers and communities at the Los Angeles airport. In an interview we conducted with her in 2021 for the Sanctuary Short *Asylum: At the Borders*

of *Humanitarianism*, Yazzie described the intervention as one that asserts “legal and political orders of belonging . . . that predate the United States” and that provide “an imaginary of . . . how we might . . . be able to relate to the rest of the world differently than the United States does.”¹¹ Yazzie noted the protest was an “Indigenous hospitality and an Indigenous welcoming” that disrupts US empire, including the settler-colonial narrative of the United States as a “nation of immigrants” (UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy 2021c).

In chapter 2 of this book, Tongva and Acjachemen scholar Charles Sepulveda presents *kuuyam* as a decolonial possibility of hospitality on Indigenous terms and land: “*Kuuyam* is an Indigenous theorization that disrupts the dialectic between Native and settler through a Tongva understanding of non-natives as potential guests of the tribal people, and more importantly—of the land itself” (Sepulveda 2018, 41). *Kuuyam*, the Tongva word for “guests,” is a framework that “disrupts the view of land and people as domesticable and instead understands place to be sacred and as having life beyond human interests” so that “settler colonialism can eventually be abolished” (Sepulveda 2018, 40). Expanding on his crucial intervention at the opening event of the Sanctuary Spaces Sawyer Seminar, titled “Abolition on Stolen Land” and featuring Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Charles Sepulveda lays out the imaginative intersection of abolition and decolonization: “Both decolonization and abolition are not simply seeking an end result. Instead, they are continuous creative processes: an imagining of life beyond prisons and the theft of land” (UCLA Luskin Institute on Inequality and Democracy 2020b). We thus follow Sepulveda to propose a radical retheorization of sanctuary as *kuuyam*, an insistence on the rematriation of land and an invitation to form strange kinship(s) against “the social death of conquest.”

In their concluding chapter for this book, Gaye Theresa Johnson and Leisy J. Abrego reimagine sanctuary “in the inspired intersections of migrant imaginaries, prison abolition, and Land Back.” Building on visions and practices of fugitivity and *marronage*, they are concerned with a “praxis of solidarity” that refuses both the criminalization of sanctuary by white nationalism and the depoliticization of it by liberal recognition. Kyle Mays, in chapter 14, situates solidarity in “sites of Black and Native fugitivity.” In a seminal essay that has deeply influenced this book, “Abolitionist Futures and the US Sanctuary Movement,” A. Naomi Paik (2017) shows how organizers have been building this praxis of solidarity. In subsequent work, Paik (2020, 5) argues that the convergence of these various struggles is forging “an abolitionist approach to sanctuary.”

We want to be clear that the question of sanctuary in the US empire-state and in Europe is a fraught one. This book is not a blueprint for radical sanctuary but rather is an accompaniment of global revolt toward liberated life-ways (Gilmore 2022; Abrego 2024). As we have argued all through this introduction, how we think about a world in motion, whether as Chari's "oceanic international" or Mays's "sites of Black and Native fugitivity" or Smythe's *poēsis* of the Black Mediterranean or Walcott's (2021, 65) conceptualization of the "black aquatic" as a "hauntology of contemporary claims of black subjectivity." But the difficulty—indeed, incommensurability—of sanctuary in the empire-state leads us also to the question of land, or rather to land as relationality. What is sanctuary on stolen land? What is an abolitionist approach to sanctuary on stolen land? Accompaniment, as a methodology for abolitionist research partnerships (Mei-Singh 2021, 79), entails a "position of co-resistance based on a commitment to decolonial Indigenous futurity." As Johnson and Azali-Rojas argue in chapter 1, to imagine and enact abolition in the empire-state of the United States requires acknowledgment and repair of community and land relationships upon which the carceral system is imposed. Mays explicitly addresses this question of land, writing: "The paradox I want to explore entails calls for reparations and decolonization, specifically the question of land. As we move toward the aftermath of settler colonialism and white supremacy, we might critically interrogate the meaning of justice, freedom, and reparatory justice. We must think as creatively and judiciously as possible regarding Black freedom and its relationship to Indigenous sovereignty." For Mays, kinship is a speculative tool for visualizing a future in the aftermath of settler colonialism and white supremacy. Mays reminds us that "centering land is also about kinship—and it is through kinship that we might find solidarity."

And so the question of sanctuary has brought us to kinship. Inspired by Smythe's Black register of *poēsis*, we understand kinship as "a metaphysical paradox in which black life is possible," "an otherwise orientation that does not look to any state for recognition but considers coalitional practices . . . via the Mediterranean's seascape, peripheries, and stories/storytellers on the move rather than national European borders and the economics-driven valuation of human life." We can understand this to be a queering of kinship, one that insists upon relationality beyond and against heteropatriarchal and colonial-racial social structures. Smythe asks us to dwell on this question: "Who, that is to say, is 'we' at all?" Our book takes up this question as "a love letter to freedom," which is Lorgia García Peña's lyrical analysis in chapter 5 of the twinned endeavors of abolition and sanctuary. Thinking with bell hooks

and insisting upon abolition as love, García Peña challenges us to do more/other than “write about death, dispossession, violence, oppression, domination, patriarchy, capitalism.” “The unloving world in which we racialized, colonized, otherized peoples have come to exist is the norm,” García Peña reminds us. How do we write/dream/make otherwise? In the essay “On Plantations, Prisons, and a Black Sense of Place,” Katherine McKittrick (2011, 953–54) gives us “a cautionary tale,” writing that the “intellectual work of honoring complex racial narratives that name struggles against death and a black sense of place can be, paradoxically, undermined by the analytical framing of racial violence.” McKittrick calls for “plantation futures—the insistence that spaces of encounter, rather than transparent and completed spaces of racism and racist violence, hold in them useful anti-colonial practices and narratives.” The condition of “un-breathing” that Vanessa Thompson foregrounds in chapter 4 is precisely such a practice, “a political device for struggle . . . [with] a long history in anti-colonial critique.” This is, as Thompson notes, following Fanon, “combat breathing” in a world in which “the impossibility of breath . . . is an effect of colonial state violence, dispossession, and expropriation.” This is, in Thompson’s words, “a breathing that is characterized by living under the conditions of occupation and war.”

In reimagining sanctuary as the ethico-political demand of a world in motion, as strange relationalities of kinship created through fugitivities and mobilities, our book strives to be more than the condemnation of an unloving world. Sepulveda argues that “the logic of conquest deployed throughout the Americas can be reduced to a single word: *possession*.” García Peña draws our attention to a very different kind of possession, that of *montarse*, which in Afro-Caribbean religions “refers to the act of the dead taking possession of a living person’s body to share truth.” In this book, we write from and about the necropolitical zones of the empire-state—the unhoused encampment, the container camp, the deadly oceans, the racially segregated *banlieue*, the desert that does not give bodies back—but we do so through *montarse*, to insist upon freedom beyond sanctuary.

NOTES

- 1 The petition was disseminated by the UCLA Promise Institute for Human Rights.
- 2 The convening “Abolition on Stolen Land” can be viewed at <https://challengeinequality.luskin.ucla.edu/abolition-on-stolen-land-with-ruth-wilson-gilmore>.

- 3 This is evident from interviews with sanctuary activists in Berlin, collected in the oral history archive “40 Years of Church Asylum” available at <https://portal.oral-history.digital/en/catalog/collections/21894753>. See also Mitchell and MacFarlane 2022.
- 4 The participatory art project “Hostile Terrain 94” is documented at <https://www.undocumentedmigrationproject.org/hostileterrain94>.
- 5 The tweet is available at <https://twitter.com/NamPresidency/status/1746259880871149956>.
- 6 The convening “trans/BORDER/ing” can be viewed at <https://challengeinequality.luskin.ucla.edu/trans-border-ing-the-aesthetics-of-disturbance-and-undocumentary-flight>.
- 7 As part of the online conversation “Sanctuary & Solidarity: Resisting the U.S. War on Refugees and Migrants,” Nicole E. Ramos speaks about her advocacy work with Al Otro Lado, available at <https://challengeinequality.luskin.ucla.edu/sanctuary-solidarity-resisting-the-us-war-on-refugees-and-migrants/>.
- 8 The online mapping platform “Watch the Mediterranean Sea” monitors deaths and migrants’ rights violations at the maritime borders of the EU, <https://watchthemed.net>. Its volunteer-run Alarm Phone project fields and redirects migrants’ distress calls to coast guards, documenting cases of non-assistance and alerting civilian search and rescue in the entire Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea. More information is available at <https://alarmphone.org/en/>.
- 9 The convening “Freedom and Fugitivity” can be viewed at <https://challengeinequality.luskin.ucla.edu/freedom-and-fugitivity-event>.
- 10 The film *Enclosure: Geographies of Refusal* can be viewed at <https://challengeinequality.luskin.ucla.edu/freedom-and-fugitivity>.
- 11 The film *Asylum: At the Borders of Humanitarianism* can be viewed at <https://challengeinequality.luskin.ucla.edu/the-end-of-humanitarianism>.

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