

# On the "good immigrant" reflex and what antifascism actually requires

Words by Poppy Groves

Content warning: Mention of rape and assault.

There is always, when events like those of the past few days unfold, an impulse on the so-called British left to highlight instances where people from global majority backgrounds have acted with exceptional compassion or decency. It is deeply frustrating.

People should not be called to prove their humanity or perform their worthiness in the face of racism and hatred. As solidarists, we must refuse to participate in the "good immigrant" narrative. When we respond to dehumanisation with counter-examples of exceptional virtue, we implicitly accept the fascist premise that humanity is something to be earned and demonstrated.

The particular irony, of course, is this: while British fascists busy themselves falsely attributing violence and moral deficit to people by ethnicity or culture, so-called traditional Britain has considerable amounts to learn from the warmth and generosity practised as easily as breathing in many of the cultures that people currently facing violence here originate from.

When I talk about being violently assaulted in the town where my family live, I don't talk about the hairdresser who cut my hair for free until my face healed, so upset was he by the scars. Or the security guard who, when I had FOMO for an Ellen Allien show shortly after being discharged from hospital, put me (two black eyes, stitches and all) in the VIP area, and paid for my taxi home. These were deeply valued acts of solidarity from people who look like and come from the same places as those currently being terrorised in pogroms. But I don't centre them, because doing so would make their humanity the argument. It isn't. And every time we make it so, we devalue whatever antifascist movement we claim to be part of.

What I focus on instead is what happened when I confronted someone on the opposite side of a solidarity action, someone shouting about reclaiming streets, remigration, the standard repertoire. He was yelling about protecting English women and children, so I told him I'd been attacked in a white English town, by a white English man, born and bred there. I told him how the justice system failed to hold my attacker accountable. How that man still lives nearby, meaning I encounter the possibility of seeing him every time I leave the house, and have done so on multiple panic-inducing occasions. I asked him where I could find support from his group the next time I felt unsafe. Which of them could I call? Who would stand with me?

He got angry when I wouldn't let it go. As he walked away, he told me he hoped "next time", I'd be "raped by an illegal immigrant", so I would learn.

Bingo. Underneath the mask: the hypocrisy at the heart of their project.

Nigel Farage spent years building his Brexit campaign on the backs of Polish people and others from Central and Eastern Europe, casting them as threats, invaders and contaminants. He is now exploiting the murder of a young man of Polish heritage, against the explicit wishes of that boy's family, to fuel the very same anti-migrant sentiment he was previously directing at people who share that boy's surname.

Tommy Robinson, whose only actual lived experience of Muslim violence is the psychological campaign he was himself prosecuted for waging against a Syrian schoolboy, is a grifter who has built his entire political identity on false victimhood and manufactured hatred.

Fascism does not arrive as an aberration from liberal democracy. It arrives as its extension. The same state that failed to hold my attacker accountable, that criminalises migration rather than the conditions that produce it, that selectively protects some bodies and renders others disposable, is the same state these movements invoke in defence of English women and children. We cannot appeal to that state to defend us from fascism, because the state and fascism share a common interest in managing, containing and suppressing the people they fear.

Our defence has to be rooted in the horizontal relationships, mutual aid networks and collective presence that make fascism materially harder to operate. It means showing up, every time, to build the kind of trust and solidarity in our streets and towns that makes it too costly for these movements to take hold. It means confronting them in every space they try to surface and normalise, making clear that they will be met with organised, sustained, unapologetic resistance and collective refusal.