The "Need" to Control Human Movement: From Colonial Oppression to Postcolonial Immigration Policy

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Introduction

In the modern world, when people want to move to a different house, they buy, rent, or even build another house. When people want to move to a different country, or a different area of the same country, they migrate. Both processes are, of course, much more complex than they sound in such benign definitions. They are not inherently complex, but what complicates them are issues of privilege and power. Changing domiciles in most countries today requires a level of economic self-sufficiency (or compromising dependency on a creditor) and at least some social capital that provides access to the type of house and neighborhood that one desires. Changing countries is a fraught process, exceedingly more difficult than changing domiciles, because it requires an even higher level of economic power and social privilege due to tighter and tighter immigration controls. Indeed, this article will argue that contemporary immigration policy is largely a continuation and toughening of colonial immigration controls – both a past and present

approach that, under some ruse of "national" or other security, maintains an ideology of xenophobic authoritarianism. Instead, nation-states in the 21st century should learn from 500 years of history and begin to recognize as a basic right the desire and need for human migration.[1]

This article relies on two important and related historical presuppositions. First, European colonialism was a major force in globalizing and reshaping the world order.[2] Second, in the 21st century, the world order is a postcolonial one. Taken together, these suppositions are not intended to be a simplistic or totalizing explanation of the last 500 years of human history, to the exclusion of other undeniable forces such as capitalism, world wars, democracy and totalitarianism, the Information Age, and hyper militarization. In reality, colonialism and postcolonialism can be connected to all of these, and other, phenomena, but isolating or prioritizing one seems to be a fool's errand. These suppositions should also not be interpreted as saying that other colonial forces did not exist in the past, or do not exist today; *postcolonial* does not have to mean that colonial ideology is nothing but a relic. Indeed, (neo)colonialism continues to be a useful trope for explaining specific contexts today. But European colonialism in the past, along with the resulting contemporary societies that can at least in some sense be called postcolonial, is one of several important historical forces and defining features of the societies in which the vast majority of human beings participates today. These historical suppositions are, then, assumed here because of how fundamental they are to the sociopolitical structures of the contemporary world, and particularly to how societies view and control human migration.

From a postcolonial perspective, this article will examine two "needs" in relation to human migration – the "need" to control and the need to migrate. The use of quotation marks in the first instance is intentional, and their absence in the second case is also intentional. In its most

basic definition, a *need* is simply something necessary or essential. At this level, the word need has the dubious distinction of being among the more abused lexical items of the English language – abused because everyone from individuals to world powers tend to refer to desires and objectives as "needs" even when, in actuality, the phenomena being referred to are desires and objectives, neither of which are necessary or essential, important though they may be. In the context of migration then, it is highly unlikely that most governments actually need to restrict or control migration more than they do, or even to the extent that they currently do.

This is not to say that at the macro level of government the idea of *individual* needs could not be part of an immigration policy, since "needs have long played a role as guides to public policy" (Brock 2019). The point is, rather, to question how even such a consideration could lead a government to a restrictive stance on immigration – and "restrictive" is a generous word, given that many immigration policies tend more to the draconian.

The thesis here is that the "need" to control human migration, like most "needs" in the military and political context, are not needs so much as ideological (i.e., power-based) motivations. In other words, they are political desires or ideals. They could be understood as needs only in the sense that they are needed to maintain a certain ideology, but all ideologies can be contested morally (which is not to say that any given one is immoral), and thus they are not essential to human and social flourishing. To understand the "need" to control migration, this article will trace the ways in which colonial powers have controlled movement and also how postcolonial immigration policy reflects much of that same ideology of territorial control. Ideology is used in this article in line with John B. Thompson's conception of the term in his work *Ideology and Modern Culture* – in short, the service of meaning to power.[3] If a government restricts human migration much beyond that of true criminals, then it is most likely seeking to maintain a regime

that is xenophobic, oppressive, racist, or otherwise violent – if not all of the above. The first section of the article will consider different approaches to human migration, past and present, as well as the arguments that tend to support those approaches.

The second section of the article analyzes how there could be a legitimate need (or at least something stronger than a mere desire) to migrate, and especially to immigrate. To understand this need, as well as to illustrate the anti-immigrant ideology and different immigrant mentalities and motivations, the main literary text that will be analyzed is the novel *Soleils invincibles* by the Senegalese writer Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba Ndiaye. The protagonist of the novel is Dramane, an undocumented immigrant in the country of Cissane, an imaginary but symbolic country in a book where all geographic areas (countries and cities) are fictional. Cissane represents France, while Toumouranka, Dramane's country of origin, represents an African country, perhaps Senegal since Ndiaye is from Senegal. In Toumouranka, the main region is Biomo, of which Blocagne is the main town and also the capital of Toumouranka. These imagined countries and cities set up *Soleils invincibles* to analyze and critique immigration policy in the most powerful societies of the contemporary world (Ndiaye 2025).[4]

The context of migration in this article is then the francophone world, so primarily how French colonial power has controlled movement and how especially France now continues to attempt to control movement and territory. Although this presents a specific case study, the arguments, perspectives, attitudes, and mentalities tend to apply to other regions and borders of the world. Gloria Anzaldúa makes this point in writing about a different context, that of North American immigration, and specifically the centuries-long tension between the U.S. empire and its immediate southern neighbor:

> The psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands are not particular to the [U.S.] Southwest. In fact, the Borderlands are physically present

> wherever two or more cultures edge each other, where people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch, where the space between two individuals shrinks with intimacy. [...] It's not a comfortable territory to live in, this place of contradictions. Hatred, anger and exploitation are the prominent features of this landscape. (Anzaldúa 2007, 19)

Border issues are not unique to any one region. Immigration is not particular to any one people group or social class. Xenophobia is not characteristic of just one ethnicity, nor is authoritarianism limited to only one type of government. In examining these "needs," whether to control human migration or to seek one's liberty and to migrate even in the face of control, this essay seeks to push the reader towards a more humane approach to immigration than the standard xenophobic authoritarianism of family separations, visa controls, border police, and deportations. Human migration, it turns out, is a common human desire and need.

The "Need" to Control Human Migration: From Colonial Oppression to Postcolonial Immigration Policy

In the colonial world, colonists were the main migrants. In the contemporary world, the descendants of the colonized and enslaved tend to be the ones who migrate more. This directional distinction is essential in understanding the differences between the colonial world and the postcolonial world. Fundamental, individual reasons for migration do not much change; they tend to be economic, perhaps religious or familial, not infrequently related to safety and security, but primarily driven by the movement of or access to capital. But exactly who moves, and who gets to move or is even able to move, has morphed as the colonial period passed through decolonization and into a postcolonial and neocolonial period.

The European colonizers, often backed by royal capital, moved, if not easily, at least more or less freely around the world. Seeking new conquests and personal or national glory, they established themselves on all of the major continents. Rarely was their right to migrate even considered, nor the correctness of establishing colonies questioned. In the francophone project of colonialism, the *colons* settled in new places generally with the idea of establishing French customs and governments. In the colonial myth, this brought French political ideals, French education, French infrastructure and investment, and, of course, French slaves to the civilizations that the French colonized. Slaves, to consider the other aspect of human migration during the French colonial period, also migrated, only under not just tight control but also severe oppression and abuse. The *colons* could migrate, perhaps along with their families and others from their communities, and they had at least the potential to return to France. The slaves were forced to migrate, often separated entirely from their families and communities, and, always, with the impossibility of ever returning to their homelands.

As colonialism "matured," or, more accurately, faced increased opposition and criticism, especially after the Haitian Revolution and the application of the so-called *droits de l'homme*, human migration patterns began to change. The colonizers could, in general, still move freely. This was guaranteed either by the ongoing presence and might of the French military or the signing of accords generally favorable to France and her citizens. After the abolition of slavery, slaves, former slaves, and the colonized or oppressed were still highly regulated in their movement. In the 21st century, some nationalities of former French colonies have more access to France, and thereby the European Union, than others, but the overall discourse leans towards skepticism of non-French immigration, if not outright anti-immigrant xenophobia.

To understand this history in the francophone world, consider the example of the pieds-noirs of Algeria in the 1960s and beyond. The

pieds-noirs were essentially the colons – the white, French settlers or descendants of them. When Algeria became restless and fought for its independence, the *pieds-noirs* were sympathetic to France and against the independence forces. The *pieds-noirs* emigrated *en masse* to France, where they did experience some discrimination themselves, just as they had in Algeria, but all from a position of relative privilege and certainly with the backing of the French state and the right to migrate. This example illustrates what the French historian Christelle Taraud calls the "two Frances," a phenomenon that dates back at least to the 1700s and the philosophical ideals of republican liberty and rights. Speaking specifically of the French-Algerian context, Taraud stated in an interview, "It's like you have two Frances: one in the mainland, with new symbols, new rights; and in another world, overseas, you have another France with absolutely different principals, rules and rights" (Elzas 2020). This may not be quite as starkly obvious as in the late 1700s and early 1800s, or even the 1960s, but it continues to be the case today with immigration policy.

In his little book *L'immigration expliquée à ma fille*, Sami Naïr uses a dialogue format to explain to his inquiring daughter both the immigration laws of contemporary France and the ideology behind it. He tells her, "L'immigré installé en France normalement, c'est celui qui a une carte de séjour, ou teomporaire ou de longue durée. . . . Il a le droit de travailler, de bénéficier des droits sociaux, etc."[5] (Naïr 1999, p. 9). And just a bit further along he clarifies, "Sache seulement que ce titre de séjour doit correspondre aux besoins du pays d'accueil, en l'occurrence la France"[6] (Naïr 1999, p. 10). The idea of a permit, card, or visa is mundane in today's world, but the writer matter-of-factly and almost off-handedly explains not just the why of the permit but also the conditions for obtaining one – conditions, that is, for human migration. Any permit, card, or visa must meet the needs (*correspondre aux besoins*) of the host country. What needs might the country have that could ever supersede the needs and rights of the individual? This question is not to delegitimize a government's attempts to take a census or monitor individual activity. Certainly visas, like passports or social

security numbers, can be issued in a situation of less immigration regulation, and even under a policy of "open borders." Nor should one question a government's responsibility to hold violent criminals to account. The right to movement, like any right, can be forfeited by trampling the rights of others. But what is any country's actual need to limit movement of laborers and their families? The ideological – not essential or individual – need is to control movement in order to control national and personal identity.

This answer is well illustrated in a scene from the first section of Ndiaye's novel *Soleils invincibles*, which is divided into four parts: *L'intrus* (the intruder), *Le linge sale* (dirty laundry), *Le tombeau de l'humanité* (humanity's tomb), and *Déchets* (trash). The last three sections of the novel cover Dramane's return to his native Toumouranka, and issues of integration, family, and identity. But the first section in particular covers issues of immigration and discrimination, as seen in the title where Dramane is an "intruder," as a hard-working, inobtrusive, but undocumented immigrant. As a black man, he experiences common, racist micro-aggressions, but then, through no fault of his own, he has the misfortune to come across a dead coworker in a tragic construction site accident. He calls the police, who conveniently pin the accident on him (as well as some astutely placed drugs) in order to take him in and process him as an undocumented immigrant. Of the various police officers who interrogate, feed, and observe him, one is a black man, like Dramane. This officer brings him food on a couple of occasions, and Dramane thinks that he senses a kindred spirit:

> Le même agent, un Noir, vient pour la troisième fois m'apporter de l'eau et un sandwich. . . . Comme les autres, il ne me parle pas, mais je lis dans son allure une certaine sympathie. Il ne peut pas être indifférente à mon sort, il doit même en être désolé.
>
> — Merci beaucoup, mon frère.
>
> — Quoi ? me coupe-t-il. Quelles sont ces manières de m'appeler « frère » ? Parce qu'on est noirs ? D'où est-ce

> qu'on se connaît ?
> — Pardon, je m'excuse.
> — S'excuser, s'excuser : c'est tout ce que vous autres savez faire. Où vous vous croyez ? dans vos pays ? ici, il faut savoir être réglo, en tout. Mais vous…
> Le mépris qu'il a pour moi est sincère. Profondément sincère. Il ne peut pas l'exprimer, me regarder pour me le dire. Il le porte en lui, assurément avant même de me rencontrer.
> Perdu dans ses pensées, toujours agrippé à l'une des grilles de ma cellule, il murmure :
> — Je n'ai rien à voir avec Toumouranka. C'est Gétoula mon continent, Cissane mon pays. Rien à voir avec Toumouranka. Rien.
> . . .
> Je suis comme lui. Je déteste Toumouranka.[7] (Ndiaye 2025, 34-35)

This interaction shows that the "need" to control human migration is not a need in the true sense, but rather part of an ideological campaign directly related to power and privilege rather than human flourishing. Both black characters are expected to conform to some degree to the identity of the host country, Cissane (representing France). In the "enlightened" world of the last 50 years or so, no country can discriminate based on color, and so immigration policy replaces skin color in order to perpetuate discrimination. The black man must now conform not only to the laws but also the identity and desires of the host country. He must even learn to hate his own country of origin, seeing it as lesser, poorer, or otherwise not equal to Cissane. And immigration policy is central to this ideological effort.

One can, of course, mention a list of reasons that governments should seek to control human migration, even in ways that may seem oppressive. Anti-immigration advocates will often mention national or economic security as well as cultural or religious identity, among other

reasons. But really at the end of the day, this is an ideological desire, not a need, for there is no compelling need to control human migration for the very basic reason that it tends towards dehumanization.

The Need to Migrate: Towards an Acceptance of the Human Desire for Liberty

Lahsen is the name of character who dies in a horrible workplace accident, and whom Dramane, the protagonist, stumbles upon in the early chapters of Ndiaye's *Soleils invincibles*. Lahsen is incidental as Dramane's coworker who dies in the first few chapters, and at the same time, his death is instrumental in the entire drama of the novel, because Dramane gets unjustly blamed for the death, beginning the sequence of event that will lead to his deportation and return to their country of Toumouranka. In chapter 4, reflecting before his death on his immigrant status and his separation from Barabo, his town of origin in Toumouranka, Lahsen makes the following observation:

> Demain, la terre de Barabo se fâchera de mon absence. Elle dira que je l'ai quittée, l'ai oubliée, et ne lui as même pas confié mes os, lui ayant préféré celle de Cissane. Cissane qui m'a accueilli, mais n'a jamais su vivre avec moi. Cissane qui m'a parfois donné, mais toujours en exigeant le prix fort : que je renonce à mes origines, que je cesse d'être qui je suis, pour être entièrement à elle. À elle toute seule.[8] (Ndiaye 2025, 22)

Here we see again the ideological control of human migration, requiring Lahsen to renounce who he is, to belong body and soul to Cissane. And we also see why he would have ever even considered this terrible, almost Faustian, exchange. Cissane, it is true, gave him something – money, work, financial security perhaps. He does not make it explicit, but he does clarify that this is always at a great price. And thus we see the crudest of exchanges – money, in some form, for a human body and identity.

And yet humans migrate. This is often for economic reasons. Sometimes it is for safety reasons; hence the existence of refugee laws. There are also practical reasons, such as family and education. But above all, humans migrate because humans need to move, or at least be able to. Migration is a human right. Or at least it should be. And why would it not be? When did the human race collectively decide that national sovereignty or border "control" and "security" became more important than the freedom to move? In the words of another francophone writer, the Martinican Patrick Chamoiseau, "*Homo sapiens* est aussi et surtout un *Homo migrator*"[9] (Chamoiseau 2017, p. 44). One might object here that this argument makes human migration little more than a desire, coming into natural conflict with ideological desires as mentioned above. Even if this were true, why should the latter trump the former?

But of course, this is not true; the desire to migrate does not mean that the need to migrate does not exist. Even before discussing how the desire might also be a basic, necessary, essential human need, it must be remembered that the economic, security, and practical reasons make a pressing case for the need to migrate at times. If wealth is hoarded in a handful of countries, then how could we say that those "underprivileged" enough to be born elsewhere do not need to migrate to the richer countries? If the hoarded wealth is use to hoard also military might and protection, then why do the poorer and more vulnerable populations not need, at least at times, to migrate to safer countries? If the chronically undocumented have any connections whatsoever to the authoritarian "developed" countries, then how could they not feel compelled to travel there, or at least to consider it, in order to visit family, study, or otherwise establish themselves? And while doing this, certainly they could be expected to keep some of their cultural identity, while also hybridizing it?

But of course, it can easily be argued that the mere desire to migrate actually is also a need, just like the desires to eat, sleep, reproduce, and survive. And this can be unequivocally asserted when it is remembered

that the privileged also migrate. Indeed, they are inveterate migrants. Consider the *colons* discussed in the previous section. Or consider Dramane's tit-for-tat discussion with the police commissioner who interviews him about his undocumented status. Speaking of Dramane's country of origin, the commissioner cannot see why Dramane would need to be in Cissane instead of Toumouranka:

> — Il n'y a pas de guère là-bas, reprend le commissaire. C'est mal parti pour toi. . . . Tu sais que tu n'es pas autorisé à être ici.
> — Je ne peux pas retourner là-bas.
> — Ta présence est illégale.
> — Je travaille ici.
> — C'est illégal, je te dis.[10] (Ndiaye 2025, 43)

Apparently, only the most urgent of survival needs, the danger posed by a war in his country, could justify Dramane's presence in Cissane. Dramane tries to explain why he is there by relying on the normal needs, in this case economic: "I work here." That, however, is insufficient.

Insisting on the illegality of Dramane's status, as if the breaking of an abstract law were of more significance than economic need, the police commissioner continues, but Dramane does not give in easily. He proceeds from the arguments of common needs to the randomness of the law and the fact that all human beings, including the police commissioner's countrymen (namely, citizens of Cissane; metaphorically, the French; and symbolically, the oppressors), migrate because they want to. He points out:

> — C'est illégal parce que vous avez voulu le rendre ainsi. . . . Il fallait être en règle, avoir des papiers, un titre de séjour valide.
> — Vos papiers servent à mieux refuser l'entrée. Ou à mieux mettre à la porte.
> — Nous ne pouvons pas accueillir toute la misère du

> monde. Violence, chômage, mendicité : tout serait en hausse.
> — Vos compatriotes entrent et s'installent sur les territoires des autres, partout dans le monde.
> — Ce n'est quand même pas pareil !
> — Parce que leur mobilité importe plus que celle des autres ? (Ndiaye 2025, 44)[11]

Their conversation does not end here, but the debate does. That last retort of Dramane's ends the debate, and thus the citation. The police commissioner has no answer (because, obviously, his people's movement or mobility is not more important than that of Dramane's people), and so he changes the subject. Clearly, it is not only the poor and oppressed who want to migrate. It is a basic human inclination, desire, and yes, need.

Not to put too fine of a point on it, but when the specter of "illegal immigration" (or worse, the unjustly discriminatory label of "illegal immigrants" or, for the truly prejudicial, "illegal aliens") is raised, one may be excused for asking the question, "So what?" In other words, yes, illegal immigration is a real phenomenon. And yes, theoretically, it could even be negative or dangerous for a given country (are terrorists entering the country incognito in order to pursue malevolent purposes?). And it could even be granted that having laws that are not fully enforced is a less-than-ideal political situation, in some philosophically abstruse sense. And yet, the burden of proof must be on those who condemn the phenomenon. After all, it is a common phenomenon, practiced throughout history by European colonizers as well as their dependents and descendants.

Once again, Gloria Anzaldúa points out as much with a specific example from the North American context. And once again, her keen observation applies not only to her own context but also to the francophone world and really every other site of contested immigration:

> In the 1800s, Anglos migrated illegally into Texas, which was then part of Mexico, in greater and greater numbers and gradually drove the tejanos (native Texans of Mexican descent) from their lands, committing all manner of atrocities against them. Their illegal invasion forced Mexico to fight a war to keep its Texas territory. The Battle of the Alamo, in which the Mexican forces vanquished the whites, became, for the whites, the symbol for the cowardly and villainous character of the Mexicans. It became (and still is) a symbol that legitimized the white imperialist takeover. With the capture of Santa Ana later in 1836, Texas became a republic. Tejanos lost their land and, overnight, became the foreigners. (Anzaldúa 2007, 28)

The point is not to present a naïve defense of illegal immigration, nor is it to justify immigration of the oppressed, but not the oppressors. Even if in a begrudging way, one could concede that even oppressors have the right to migrate. But of course, in Anzaldua's example, when "Anglos migrated illegally into Texas," the problem was much less with their status and much more with their intentions and violence upon arrival. One must remember that any right can be forfeited by trampling on the rights of others.

The real point here, however, is simply that migration is a basic human need and should be recognized as such – and, ultimately, as a human right. Everyone at some point migrates, wants to migrate, considers migrating, or at least knows others who migrate and, therefore, probably daydreams about migration. And so human movement should not be so obsessively critiqued, fretted over, and controlled as it so often is in our postcolonial world.

Conclusion

Immigration is an intensely personal issue. Even more than other political issues, immigration relates not merely to movement but

movement of individuals, bodies, families, and communities. Immigration is such a politicized issue that the beginning of life determines in ways entirely beyond an individual's control everything from nationality to rights, not to mention privileges and possibilities of work, marriage, and migration. And then immigration policy even draws its invisible boundaries around death, capriciously setting humans' thanatological parameters so that at times people are not able to be buried or to bury their loved ones where they desire, even if separated only by a few kilometers from the physical space. From birth to death, then, and through all of the vicissitudes of life between those to points, this highly personal issue raises emotions as very few other sociopolitical issues do. To restrict human migration is, therefore, a tricky undertaking, to say the least. Even assuming an a priori right or responsibility of a government to restrict movement, it is difficult to come up with a justification or need to do so.

Even if one has a certain anxiety about borders, and feels against evidence and that immigrants are dangerous, the humanness of the issue must remain forefront in our consideration. Wherever one falls on the political spectrum relating to rights and needs and risks in the immigration debate, all humans need to understand the deeply personal stakes when migration is severely limited. It is difficult to help people understand these stakes, but the power of storytelling advocates for much more reading, and much deeper analysis, of stories, both real and fictional.

Stories have persuasive power, from foundational postcolonial novels like George Lammings' *The Emigrants* and Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* to contemporary novels that continue to examine the postcolonial migratory dystopia that controls so many lives, such as Patricia Engel's *Infinite Country*, Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West,* Min Jin Lee's *Pachinko*, and Maaza Mengiste's *The Shadow King*, and, especially, Ndiaye's *Soleils invincibles* (Lamming 1954; Salih 1969; Engel 2021; Hamid 2017; Lee 2017; Mengiste 2019, Ndiaye 2025). Storytelling, in

books like these, proves to be not only as revealing as but also as powerful as (and perhaps more powerful than) statistics, historical data, and philosophical arguments in demonstrating the plight of the poor and underprivileged migrant and why, ultimately, that migrant may actually need to be a migrant.

Human migration, it turns out, is a common human desire and need. It is high time that it be recognized as such.

NOTES

1. Of the terms "migration," "immigration," and "emigration," the first holds the broadest denotation. "Immigration" refers to moving into and settling in a new country, different from one's country of origin, while "emigration" refers to leaving one's country of origin. "Migration" means simply to move from one place to another ("Merriam-Webster Dictionary"). With these definitions in mind then, this article for the most part uses the term "migration," occasionally with "movement" as a synonym, and less frequently "immigration" since the situations and policies under discussion do most frequently refer to immigration.

2. The term "world order" should be understood in the analytical sense of "the arrangement of power and authority that provides the framework for the conduct of diplomacy and world politics on a global scale" (Falk 2024).

3. Thompson writes, "I propose to conceptualize ideology in terms of the ways in which the meaning mobilized by symbolic forms serves to establish and sustain relations of domination: to establish, in the sense that meaning may actively create and institute relations of domination: to sustain, in the sense that meaning may serve to maintain and reproduce relations of domination through the ongoing process of producing and receiving symbolic forms" (Thompson 1990, p. 58; emphasis in the original).

4. This article will rely on a number of citations of texts in the French language. All translations are the author's own.

5."The immigrant who settles in France legally is the one who has a resident card, whether temporary or long-term. . . . He has the right to work, to benefit from social programs, etc."

6. "Just know that this resident card must conform to the needs of the host country, namely France."
7. The same officer, a Black man, comes for the third time to bring me water and a sandwich. . . . Like the others, he doesn't speak to me, but I sense a certain sympathy in his demeanor. He can't be indifferent to my plight; he must even be sorry for me.
"Thank you very much, brother."
"What?" he interrupts. "What's with calling me 'brother'? Because we're Black? How do we know each other?"
"Sorry, I apologize."
"Apologizing, apologizing – that's all you guys know how to do. Where do you think you are? In your own countries? Here, you have to be on the right side of the law, in everything. But you…"
The contempt he feels for me is sincere. Profoundly sincere. He can't express it, can't look at me to tell me. He carries it within him, surely even before meeting me. Lost in thought, still clinging to one of the bars of my cell, he mumbles: "I have nothing to do with Toumouranka. My continent is Gétoula, my country is Cissane. Nothing to do with Toumouranka. Nothing."
I'm like him. I hate Toumouranka.

8. "Tomorrow, the land of Barabo will be angry at my absence. She will say that I left her, forgot about her, and didn't even entrust her with my bones, having preferred the land of Cissane. Cissane who welcomed me, but never knew how to live with me. Cissane who has sometimes given to me, but always demanding a high price in return – that I renounce my origins, that I cease to be who I am, to be entirely hers. All hers."

9. "Homo sapiens is also and above all Homo migrator."

10. "There is no war there," the commissioner continues. "Things are not off to a good start for you. . . . You know you're not allowed to be here."
"I can't go back there."
"Your presence is illegal."
"I work here."
"It's illegal, I'm telling you."

11. "It's illegal because you wanted to make it that way. . . . You had to be in good standing, have papers, a valid residence permit."
"Your papers here are just used to refuse entry. Or to kick people out."
"We cannot accommodate all the misery in the world. Violence, unemployment, begging – everything would get worse."
"Your compatriots enter and settle in others' territories, all over the world."
"That's not the same!"
"Because their movement is more important than that of others?"

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