As a member of the South African Council of Churches, Frank Chikane was an articulate and witty activist devoted to bringing down apartheid. Frank found himself one day imprisoned, beaten and tortured, the torturer a white member of Frank’s own Christian denomination. Following his release, Frank reflected on this horrifying juxtaposition of torturer and tortured, both finding their mandate to torture and to resist to the point of imprisonment and torture within the pages of the same sacred text.

As Luís reminds us, our Bible is confusing, filled with contradictions. In the search for a theology of hospitality, of migration, we find both xenophobia and—a new word for me: xenophilia. We want our Bible to be something it is not. We are asking questions of it that it was never designed to answer. This is an important question in a country where, we see and hear a conflation of Christianity with racism, homophobia, sexism, and a nationalist xenophobic exceptionalism embedded in a biblical vision of purity—and thus, separation. And a key part of the civic religion that characterises so much of US American Christianity is a fidelity to a capitalism that every year funnels more and more of the wealth created at the bottom into fewer and fewer hands at the top—effecting a diagram of wealth distribution that mirrors that of first century Palestine—against which Jesus raged. The socialism of the primitive church that distributes enough for everyone and most clearly manifest in Scandinavia—is decried as evil, communist, and destructive of everything they are. Where are the churches in refuting such readings?

National identities, as with personal identities, are never historically fixed, in danger of contamination by the impure and the grasping. They are constructs, as Luis says, through social exchange—the result of which can be renewal and enrichment both of one’s own identity and that which results at the intersection of those exchanges.

I remember a breakfast conversation with the President of the Baptist Convention of the West Garo Hills. In my work with a variety of tribal groups in the majority Christian states of Northeast India, issues of identity are key to breaking new ground in the search for peace in an area in which 600,000 people have been killed in internecine violence. I asked him why is it that the responsibility for such violence lies with followers of Jesus. His answer was simple: because their tribal identity trumps their Christian identity.

Migration is not new; people have always been on the move—since humans abandoned hunter-gathering for settled agriculture. What gave rise to the ‘age of migration’? the painful decision to leave home?

There are bitter legacies of:

- Centuries of colonisation,
- Of nation states built on the blood and lands of the Indigenous,
- covert, militarised and corporate interventionism;
- Neoliberalism’s global orthodoxy of profit maximisation to the exclusion of all other moral or social demands;
- A skewed globalisation by the globalisers upon the globalised;
- a voracious military-industrial-carbon complex that annually diverts $1.9 T USD from social uplift of all sorts,
- each of these contributing to environmental degradation, driving yet more flows of desperate migrants.

So people move.
As Luis articulates so clearly, migrants are mistreated at either end of their journeys: caught between misery in their homeland and marginalisation where they land. When I was a church executive in the 1990s, I often worked with churches bringing in refugees, many, at that time, from Latin America. I remember facilitating discussions with them around two questions: What would success look like? And when I suggested, ‘going home’, they were shocked. Why in the world would they want to do that? The second question was about our role in contributing to the creation of refugee flows. For most of them, it had not occurred to them that, in going upstream to figure out what drove people to leave their homes, they would discover themselves. These were difficult lessons.

I am Canadian. So when I think about solutions, I turn to my own country—what we are already doing, what we need to do better? Here in Canada, we sometimes think that we can rest knowing that we are NOT the U.S. by so many measures (health care, wealth gap, government and citizen responses to Covid-19, social safety nets, gun stuff, a larger welcome mat), yet we have so much work to do: training, writing poetry, subversive preaching, acting out and acting up, getting into the streets, to organise into new ways of doing just about everything.

The combination of a pandemic with unprecedented economic disruption and the Black Lives Movement—in a context of impending climate catastrophe—is pulling back the veil: things once hidden—or not named—are now starkly obvious. Politicians and economists and communities on zoom are having conversations that seemed impossible such a short time ago. Just as inequities of all sorts are political choices, migrant flows are also the result of political choices. Dr Rivera Pagán suggests a choice between the dark—and for me, perplexing—vision of Samuel Huntington’s ‘clash of civilisations’ in which Latinx are a threat to the cultural and political integrity of the United States—and that of Edward Saïd, ‘that borders fade when human beings find differences issue more in amicable exchange than hostility’. Why not? So often in my work in conflict zones, after weeks of training, we discover that the biggest change in the room—is that which is due to simply changing our minds. No one is illegal; no one impure.