

Close the Mersey tunnel

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Liverpool has been my home since 2015. I moved to the city to better myself and to give myself better opportunities in life when I was eighteen years old. I escaped from the freezing temperatures that is the North-East of England so I could finally leave the house without a coat in mid Spring. Welcomed with open arms, Liverpool and its people have been nothing but kind and warm since my arrival.

But what if I was not from North-East England and I was from Turkey, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan or Iraq? What if my problems were not limited to degrees celsius but war, rape or perhaps even persecution? Would I still be welcomed? Or are the imaginary lines that we call borders, the culture difference and the language barrier too much? Does that make them too different to escape the terror of their lives and be welcomed into a new city?

The answer is, let's be honest, probably yes.

But that's because I already lived within the lines on a map that was named the United Kingdom many moons ago. Originally from Newcastle-upon-Tyne, my move south was smooth and non-problematic. I did not have to cross any boarder, go through security checks or be worried that the Liverpoolians would not accept me.

So I began to think. Why were people of Liverpool perfectly fine with me, and individual who moved to Liverpool to better their life by going to university but if a Syrian refugee or asylum seeker was to, they may not be so welcoming?

Is it because of the invisible line that separates us from them. Does that automatically make them 'the other', the enemy? Why does a line determine where people can and can't go? Just because I'm within the line of the United Kingdom I have the privilege to move around freely within. The line should not be seen as a cage to hold people in.

I did not flee from anything. I did not HAVE to move to Liverpool, I had a choice. Asylum seekers and refugees do not have a choice. Their home towns are riddled with destruction and war.

According to the 1951 United Nations Convention, a refugee is defined as:

"A person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of the protection of that country."

Refugees are running for their lives, for their children's lives. I did not run; I did not have to run. Yet, I am the one who is accepted with ease and them with such hostility.

I've been thinking... there MUST reason behind people's unease/. What if our problems are derived from asylum seekers and refugees? What if we should build a wall to put an end to it all? What if Trump is right?

But let's not stop at dividing America and Mexico. Let's build a wall between every country, perhaps even every city? Wouldn't that solve all of the world's problems straight away? Wouldn't that be great.

Let's think about it. Chips and gravy will stay in the north of England; the trend would not spread. Curries can stay in India, I don't even like onion bhajias anyway so I won't care. Chinese food? Stay in China. Who needs the spreading of cultures? Who needs diversity, anyway?

Everyone who is Italian can stay in Italy. I have a friend who is half Romanian. That's OK – we'll just cut her in half. The Romanian half can go back to Romania and the English can stay here, that's fine.

All of the Syrian refugees who fled terror, war, rape and prosecution? We'll just send them back. If there's a wall, then it's not our problem anymore. They can sort it out.

But what about closer to home? What about Liverpool. Well of course we'll have to close the Mersey tunnel. We can't have people from the Wirral mixing their culture with those of Liverpool. Definitely not. That'll have to change.

Surely that will fix all of our problems... right?

But we cannot cut people in half, we cannot close the Mersey tunnel and the world doesn't revolve around one person. I may not like onion bhajias but others do. People may not like the influx of refugees due to the age old fake news that they steal our jobs, money and benefits. Or they may get annoyed at Indian lady selling the big issue outside of Macdonald's to feed her children. But what people need to remember is that it's not all about them.

As citizens of the United Kingdom we must live up to that name. United. We have the privilege of moving freely without prejudice or second thought. We can do so because we feel like it, because we WANT to.

Asylum seekers and refugees do it because they HAVE to. Stop being selfish, let them in.