

# FEMINIST NO BORDERS SUMMER SCHOOL REPORT





Ἡ ΜΕΤΟΥΣ ΜΕΤΑΝΑΣΤΕΥ  
ΚΑΙ ΤΙΣ ΜΕΤΑΝΑΣΤΕΥ

τα ταξικά μας αδέρφια, τη σάρκα φ

FEMINIST

FAC RESEARCH  
+ FEMINIST  
RESEARCHERS  
AGAINST  
BORDERS  
PRESENT THE  
4TH ANNUAL

NO BORDERS

SUMMER

SCHOOL

14-16  
JUNE  
2021

with: Watch the Med Alarm Phone Legal Centre Lesbos Youth  
Refugee Movement Khanapados

Parwana Amiri Bridget Anderson Heath Cabot María Cárdenas  
Emilia Carnetto Mrityunjay Chatterjee Deanna Dadusc Nicholas De  
Genova Eugenia D'Ermoggine Chiara Denaro Shareen Elnaschie  
Miranda Iossifidis Hela Kanakane Aiza Khan Moira Lavelle  
Lorraine Leete Marina Liakis Annie Pfingst Sreejata Roy Sandra  
Tejada M. Esfandiyar Torkaman Rad Georgina Ramsay Nandita  
Sharma Giulia Zoratti

FEMINISTRESEARCH.ORG/SUMMER-SCHOOL

# INTRODUCTION

**The fourth annual Feminist No Borders Summer School, co-organised by FAC research and Feminist Researchers Against Borders, was held virtually on June 14-16 2021.**

FAC research is a community-based research centre. Located in Athens, a city at one epicentre of global, intersecting crises, we have a need to build spaces in which encounters can take place, and coalitions can flourish. Particularly for groups excluded from the hegemonic mappings of the city, FAC offers a space to breathe, in the daily struggle against multiple forms of violence. It seeks to establish collaborations against borders with collectives, organisations, individuals, and communities in struggle. We see ourselves as part of an emergent global movement against heteropatriarchy, racial capitalism, neocolonialism, and ecological genocide. By unleashing our collective capacities for creativity, resistance, and care, we can unlearn the dominant ideologies that we have internalised and produce new knowledge.

The brainchild of **Feminist Researchers Against Borders** (a network of academics and activists formed in 2017), The Feminist No Borders Summer School was first held in July 2018 with this intention. The context of the three previous summer schools (2018, 2019, 2020) was shaped by the "refugee crisis" that was declared in the summer of 2015.

Since then, the multiple forms of precarity and the various velocities at which some human (and nonhuman) beings are consigned to death through the necropolitics of the "crisis regimes" have intensified divisions amongst us, along lines of racialised citizenship, class power, and heteropatriarchal normativities.

At the same time, a growing interest in, and commitment to abolitionist politics, in the wake of the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter Movement, opens up spaces for imagining and prefiguring border abolition, prison abolition, police abolition, as well as the abolition of the heteronormative family and of the system of compulsory binary gender assignment. The Feminist No Borders Summer School has aimed to think together these abolitionist demands. Thus, we ask:

**What becomes possible  
when we inhabit the  
borderlands  
with the conscious  
intention of  
breaking down  
the multiple borders  
that have been erected  
to keep us apart?**



# MEETING VIRTUALLY

Due to the pandemic, the last two summer schools (2020, 2021) have been held virtually. Whilst we had longed to be together in Athens for the summer school, and to get to know one another more intimately in a shared physical space, the virtual format allowed a larger number of people to participate, including those who would not be able to attend otherwise, precisely due to the exclusionary functions of borders, which have only intensified in pandemic times.

**The summer school was not designed to be a webinar with a passive audience, but rather a participatory, horizontal gathering.**

Given the ways we have been disciplined into roles of "speakers" and "listeners", "experts" and "students", "presenters" and "audience," especially in a virtual space this was, admittedly, not easy. We attempted to make space for "audience" participation in all sessions, to experiment with different formats, including open spaces for digestion and reflection.

A zine workshop offered a space for participants to share their thoughts and insights whilst creating artwork around the themes of the summer school. When we were not together during sessions, we were connected by our virtual community network, where people introduced themselves, offered reflections, shared pertinent information and calls to action.

Initially, we anticipated having no more than 100 participants in the summer school; however, an overwhelming number of responses to our open call led us to triple that capacity to 300 participants.

For this reason, we used the zoom platform in order to accommodate the large number of participants and to be able to provide closed captioning (one of the access needs that participants frequently mentioned). We were ambivalent about this choice of platform, given the record profits (and tax avoidance) that the zoom corporation has made during the pandemic, and its implication in a number of attempts to stifle free speech and hinder academic freedom, as well as the fact that it is not an encrypted platform, which raises security concerns.





# OVERVIEW

# 281

INCREDIBLE PARTICIPANTS

# 17.5

HOURS (NOT INCLUDING BREAKS!)

# 3

INTENSIVE DAYS

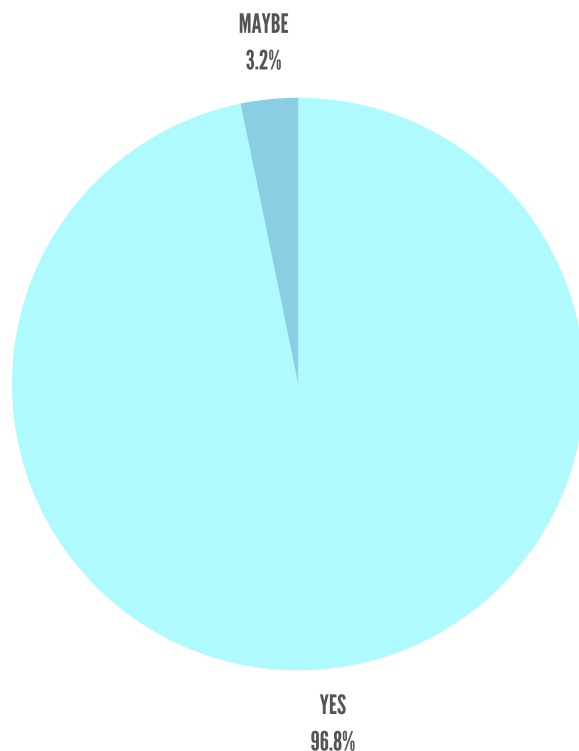
# 96.8%

WANT TO DO IT AGAIN

BASED ON RESPONSES TO THE POST-SUMMER SCHOOL SURVEY  
WHEN ASKED, ARE YOU INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING AGAIN  
NEXT YEAR? (OF 31 RESPONSES, YES: 30; MAYBE: 1; NO: 0)

THIS IS TOTALLY STATISTICALLY UNRELIABLE  
BUT WE HOPE YOU SHARE THE FEELING!

The fourth annual **Feminist No  
Borders Summer School**  
by the numbers



# NO BORDERS

# DEDICATION

## We dedicated this year's summer school to the memory of Aziz Choudry

Aziz was an activist, an organic intellectual, a chacha (uncle), a professor, a music lover and pop culture aficionado, and a friend to many around the world. He was an organiser for migrant workers' justice, against Israeli apartheid and for the liberation of Palestine, against capitalist globalisation (GATT, APEC, the IMF, the WTO, what was once the G7 and is now the G20...). For his activism, he was the target of state surveillance in New Zealand and was banned from visiting the US.

Aziz was one of the first people to become a member of FAC, and was eager to involve us in collaborations across and against borders. He was a true internationalist, seeking to create, join, and bridge communities of struggle everywhere. He was a feminist ally and LGBTQI+ accomplice, believing these communities of struggle had to be open to all of us, especially those facing the most brutal violence, oppression, and exploitation.

I [Anna] first met Aziz in Montreal around 2003-2004, when we were both doing our PhDs in that city. I loved his infectious passion, his durable commitment, his sense of humour, his optimism. He was always so supportive. The last time we spoke, we talked about the possibility of a post-pandemic reunion: I invited him to visit us in Athens, and he invited me to come visit in Johannesburg.

Aziz was a prolific writer and editor and in the last decade published ten books. In January, Aziz donated three of his books to the Feminist Library but due to postal delays we're still waiting for them to arrive [since we are still still waiting, they have probably been lost in transit]: *Learning Activism: The Intellectual Life of Contemporary Social Movements*; *Organize: Building from the Local for Global Justice*; and *Unfree Labour? Struggles of migrant and immigrant workers in Canada*.

We had invited Aziz to participate in the session on Struggles against Borders in this year's summer school. Despite his initial, characteristic enthusiasm, he eventually declined the invitation saying he didn't feel up to it this year.

Aziz died suddenly in his home in Johannesburg on May 26, 2021. It's difficult to express the loss that Aziz's death represents, as his global community is still in shock and in mourning. I've been attending memorials and tributes held over zoom and feeling, at once, connected and lost.

From London (where Aziz was born and grew up and where his family lives) to Christchurch (where he moved in his teens and spent many years and cut his teeth in activism and organising); from Montreal (where our paths intersected) to Johannesburg (where he found a community of comrades and colleagues and hoped to make a home), Aziz's death leaves so many people grieving, including many who knew him only through his words.

To all who feel the loss of Aziz Choudry, especially his loved ones: his friends, family, comrades, students, colleagues, we extend our deepest condolences.





# SESSION SUMMARIES

## Session 1: Representations of/against Borders.

With Esfandiyar Torkaman Rad, Giulia Zoratti, Annie Pfingst, Moira Lavelle, and Aiza Khan

In this session, participants reflected on refusals of hegemonic representations of borders and people on the move in photography, film, journalism and ethnography. **Esfandiyar Torkaman Rad** in his presentation, **Art as a Political Tool: Contrasts between Revolutionary and Liberal Approaches in Documentary Art** discussed the positionality of artists and filmmakers vis-à-vis the oppressed subjects of their art, and the questions that this positionality raises for the ethics, objectivity, and validity of their work. Esfandiyar offered insights and examples from his experiences as a filmmaker, making specific reference to his film, *I Did not go to Lesbos*. **Giulia Zoratti's** presentation, **How to do an Ethnography of the Border**, raised similar concerns about the ethics and politics of conducting ethnographic work in borderzones. Giulia's presentation pushed back on the idea of objectivity and neutrality and advocated for feminist practices of empathy and solidarity in research concerning vulnerable groups. Giulia drew on her experiences in the field as a student and researcher in Lesbos wanting to share her knowledge of refugee groups in a respectful and ethical way. In her presentation, **Framing encounters in close-up**, **Annie Pfingst** analyzed practices of framing, encounters with temporal and spatial configurations, glimpsing those hidden, then revealed particularly in relation to historic Palestine and Kenya. She asked whether it is possible to see around the structures and language of military and global power, to resist the frames determined by the authorized violence of the state and hear through the silences, see beneath erasure, sense the presence of absence, recognise the structure of violence, of loss. **Moira Lavelle** introduced a journalistic lens to the discussion on objectivity and ethical representations of conflict zones. In her presentation titled **Reporting On or Against Borders: Ideas for a Different Journalistic Ethics**, Moira argued that traditional journalism advocates for a separation between journalism and source, and consequently between journalism and activism. By contrasting mainstream media's editorial standards and codes, and the reality of her work in Greece, Moira explored the possibility of different journalistic ethics that doesn't bolster borders between politics and journalism, between people, or certainly between spaces. Using oral history as her methodology, **Aiza Khan** described the United States' inaccurate representations of Afghan women as oppressed, docile, and lacking agency to advance their own political interests, to justify the War on/of Terror. In her presentation, **Beyond Activity and Passivity: The Experiences of an Afghan Woman Refugee**, She contended that while her interviewee did not fit the western ideal of a liberated woman, it did not mean that she lacked agency. What did limit her agency was her socioeconomic and political status. This presentation challenged popular discourses on Muslim women in conflict zones. After these presentations, participants raised some questions about what ethical representation should look like, who has the right to report or research, and whether there should be limitations on who can report or research in border zones where there are power imbalances. Autoethnography and self-representation through photography, film, and writing were discussed as potential alternatives to extractive journalistic and ethnographic practices. Presenters also offered their insights from the contexts of their expertise, the shortcomings of reporting in those contexts, and their thoughts on appropriate ways to address those shortcomings.



# SESSION SUMMARIES

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## **Session 2: Deexceptionalizing Displacement/Displacement Beyond Place With Heath Cabot and Georgina Ramsay**

In this workshop, Heath Cabot and Georgina Ramsay focused on shifting the frameworks within which much scholarship, advocacy, and activism understands and approaches displacement. They advocated for a critical engagement with the causes of displacement in addition to the movement of people. They suggested that focusing exclusively on the movement of people such as the framing of the so-called "refugee crisis" often reinforces rather than challenges the legitimacy of borders. Heath drew on her findings doing research with legal aid workers in Greece, whilst Georgina discussed her learnings while working with people who had been resettled in Australia. Heath and Georgina invited the participants to consider displacement as an interruption of ways of living that promote flourishing by processes that dehumanize individuals. This would allow for us to think about displacement in a deexceptionalized space beyond borders and mobility. Participants then engaged in a discussion about the ethics of conducting ethnographic work. They shared the collective need to move beyond the extractive practices of collecting stories from vulnerable people and writing them for personal gain in ethnography, and exchanged the ways in which they tried to do so in their own work. Heath emphasised the importance of forming alliances and engaging affected people themselves in the knowledge production process rather than assuming the role of an analyst of people's lives. Participants exchanged the ways in which they felt influenced by colonial and oppressive structures in their work as researchers and activists in their respective contexts.

## **Session 3: Decolonial Struggles and Antiracist Feminist Pedagogies in the University: Presentation of the BRIDGES Toolkit With Deanna Dadusc, Sandra Tejada M., Emilia Carnetto, María Cárdenas, Eugenia D'Ermoggine, Shareen Elnaschie, and Marina Liakis**

The BRIDGES toolkit provides antiracist and feminist strategies for addressing and dismantling structures of exclusion in Higher Education curricula. The aim of the toolkit is to introduce new methods of knowledge production to academia by bringing together civil society organizations, activists, and researchers to learn from people's lived experiences in social movements. It is available in the English, Spanish, Greek, and German languages. Participants and presenters collectively reflected on the following questions: To what extent is it possible to do antiracist, feminist, anticolonial, and decolonial work within European and Eurocentric academic institutions? Given the institutionalisation of "decolonisation" as a buzzword, how can it be reclaimed and radicalised in conjunction with a no borders politics?





# SESSION SUMMARIES

## **Session 4: Struggles Against Borders**

**With Lorraine Leete (Legal Centre Lesbos); Hela Kanakane, Chiara Denaro, and Deanna Dadusc (Watch the Med Alarm Phone)**

This session addressed the context of the Mediterranean and Aegean borders, from the perspective of activists engaged in no borders politics and resisting the criminalisation of people on the move, as well as those in solidarity with them. Participants in this session not only critiqued the move towards xenophobic strategies of deterrence; they took a step further, critiquing the framework of "deterrence" as an adequate analytic through which to critically view and resist the global war on migration. They explained how increasingly people's mobility and solidarity with people on the move are criminalised by states (including Greece and Italy), in part through the concepts such as "human trafficking" and "smuggling." People crossing borders to survive and people acting in solidarity (e.g., in sea rescue) are being targeted with criminal charges.

## **Session 5: Mutual Aid in the Pandemic of Borders: The Khanapados collective kitchen in Delhi**

**With Revue (Sreejata Roy and Mrityunjay Chatterjee a.k.a. Joy)**

Revue discussed the role of art in a time of crisis. They described how their initiative, the Khanapados Collective mobilised artists and community members to respond to the urgent needs produced by the multiple borders intensified by the coronavirus pandemic. Roy and Chatterjee also discussed their motivations for starting the initiative in 2011, and the ways that the Khanapados Kitchen has grown over the years. They shared their experiences of working with various refugee communities and their strategies for avoiding and resolving conflicts while operating in a tense political climate.

## **Session 6: Open Space**

The open space, facilitated by Penny Travlou, was intended for participants to be able to reflect on the summer school thus far, discuss any thoughts that had arisen and share their work and insights with one another. One of the dominant themes of conversation in this session was self-care when working on emotionally charged topics as activists, journalists, artists, and researchers. Participants also discussed the vocabulary used to describe people who had migrated, and the connotations of specific words such as "migrant," "refugee," "immigrant" and "expatriate." They shared how the meanings of these words varied across their different contexts. Extending issues raised in the first session, some questioned what "media" meant in the age of digital media, and the developments as well as the limitations of social media. They raised concerns about the rise in state censorship in the digital realm. Participants reflected on what feminist media would look like and how it can have a realistic and impactful presence in conventional and unconventional media spaces.



## SESSION SUMMARIES

### **Session 7: Discussion of *Home Rule: National Sovereignty and the Separation of Natives and Migrants*, by Nandita Sharma** **With Nandita Sharma, Bridget Anderson, and Nicholas De Genova**

Following a pre-recorded lecture by Nandita about her recently published book, the author and two other no borders scholar-activists, Bridget and Nicholas, engaged in an informal discussion on the "Postcolonial New World Order." [You can read the Introduction to *Home Rule* [here](#).] In her book, Nandita calls for a rejection of nationalism and a dissolution of the binary between the categories of native and migrant in order to establish a world where all people have the liberty to move or stay in one place. She traces the historical formations of the binary division between "native" and "migrant": from the European colonisation of the world, to the contemporary treatment of migrants as people who do not belong. In her book, Nandita invites her readers to envision a world where these categories do not exist. In the discussion, participants of the summer school shared their thoughts about the possible repercussions of the dissolution of this binary to Indigenous populations, who have suffered tremendous loss of life, culture, and resources in the processes of colonisation. Further, question were raised about whether reparations for these losses would be possible in the transformed world that Nandita proposes.

### **Session 8: Open Space**

The open space, facilitated by Aiza Khan, focused primarily on the theme of decolonising academia, picking up threads from the third session, in which the BRIDGES toolkit was presented. Participants discussed the Western canon as a collection of ideas and texts produced or privileged under the conditions of colonialism. They debated how we could make use of the knowledge produced by the canon while being able to engage with it more critically as a product of its time, and shared the challenges they faced while doing so.

They also discussed academia's role in solidifying the binaries of "global" and "regional" literature, and established and elite scholars' role in upholding a hierarchy between the two. Participants also reflected on gatekeeping of knowledge in academia, for example, through the use of jargon, and the languages of publication primarily being colonial languages; they emphasised the importance of making knowledge more accessible to all.

### **Session 9: Break Down the Walls, Close the Camps!** **With Parwana Amiri (Youth Refugee Movement)**

Parwana Amiri, an activist and a member of Youth Refugee Movement discussed her experiences, her poetry, and her work as an educator in the self-organised school at Ritsona camp (near Athens, Greece). She described the often unnoticed participation of women in the resistance to the regime of borders and camps, and brought attention to the [Build Schools, Not Walls](#) campaign.





# SESSION SUMMARIES

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## Session 10: Zine Workshop, Reflecting on the Summer School With Miranda Iossifidis

Miranda Iossifidis conceptualised and facilitated a virtual zine workshop that allowed participants to reflect on the Summer School in small groups clustered around themes which emerged over the three days. These themes included: refusal as a generative stance, decolonizing the university, and feminist politics of care over patriarchal forms of control. Later, Miranda compiled the art works produced in the workshop to create a large format poster (see next page).

## Session 11: Closing Assembly

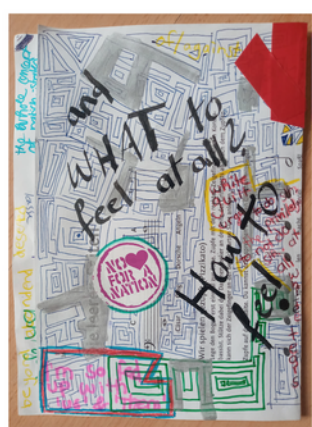
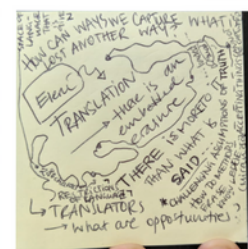
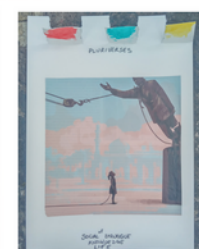
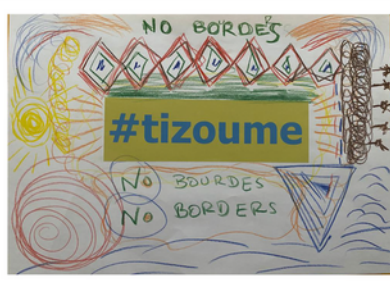
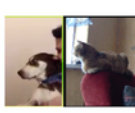
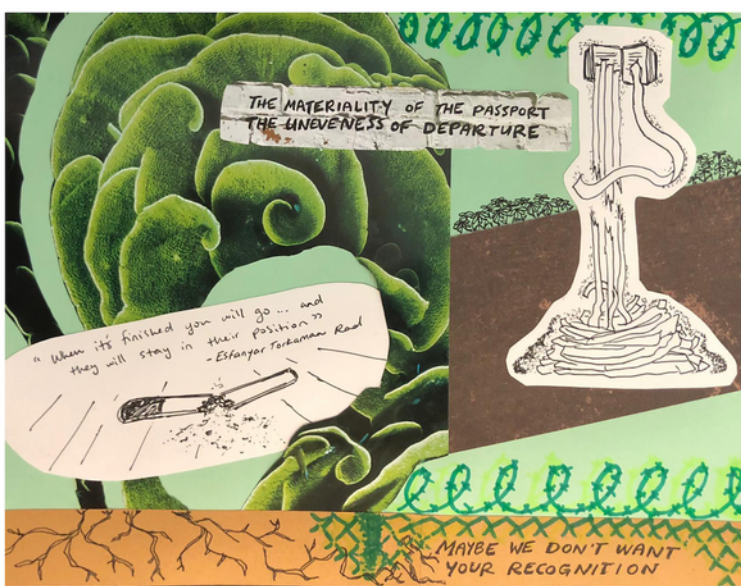
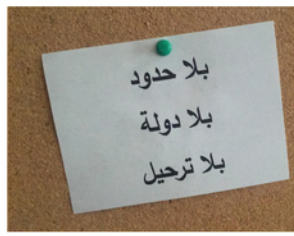
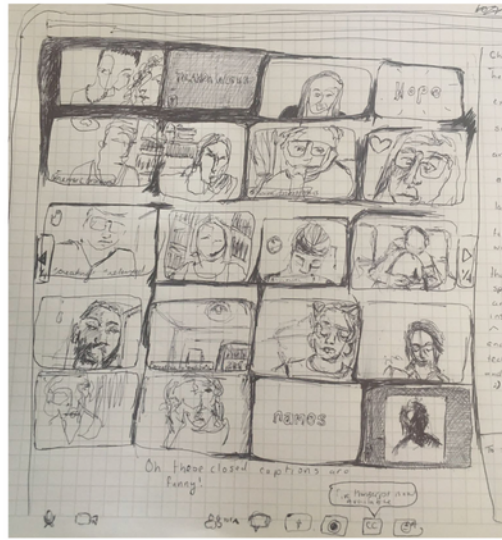
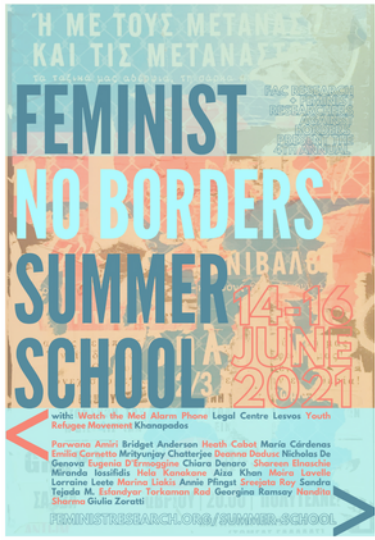
The closing assembly, facilitated by Anna Carastathis, enabled all participants of the summer school to come together and reflect on their time together. They shared what they learned, enjoyed, and also what they felt could be improved in future summer schools. They talked about how the virtual space was co-constructed over the duration of the summer school, and whether they found it to be fruitful (opinions were mixed!). The closing assembly also allowed everyone to participate in a circle of care, where we were able to check in with ourselves and each other after a busy three days filled with conversations about important and sometimes difficult topics. We were pleased to conclude on the 2021 Feminist No Borders Summer School's motto:

**No Borders, No Nations,  
No Binary Gender  
Formations!**

Session summaries were written by **Aiza Khan**, who was an intern at FAC research (May-July 2021), as part of her master's degree at Hamad Bin Khalifa University (in Doha, Qatar). We thank Aiza for all her work preparing this report and helping organise the summer school!







**Zine workshop 16-06-2021.** Themes we discussed:  
 Creating shared spaces online; Refusal as a generative stance; Resisting the demonising, sacralising, fetishisation, exoticisation, dehumanisation of migrants; Border abolition: not making it more humanitarian or benevolent; creating antiracist and feminist tools and strategies; Decolonising the university: is it possible? if so, what becomes of it? is feminist decolonial praxis possible within these spaces? Practical solidarity with people on the move; Honouring and respecting the intellectual labour and experiences of people on the move; Commemoration; Feminist politics of care as opposed to patriarchal forms of control; Feminist mutual aid during a pandemic; What is the role of feminist media, networks, collectives? The role of language, terms: reclaiming, erasures, new meanings? Contemporary struggles for the commons. Collective struggles against extraction, exploitation, the fight for dignity and land; Futures: emerging forms of nationalism to anticipate and work against.

