

<http://somatosphere.net/?p=10673>

Epidemics and Xenophobia

2015-08-03 22:33:07

By A. David Napier and The Bellagio Task Force on Epidemics and Xenophobia

In June 2015 The Bellagio Task Force on Epidemics and Xenophobia met to discuss the resurgence of xenophobia across the globe—one most recently prompted by fearful and unsympathetic responses to the Ebola epidemic and those afflicted communities and healthcare workers who returned home. The problem of xenophobia is however part of a much larger and pernicious problem, one that falls most heavily on global migrants and stateless peoples. Thus, [we ask for co-signers](#) worldwide to support the following statement.

Statement on Epidemics and Xenophobia

Given the recent resurgence of xenophobia across the globe, and especially the increasing inability and unwillingness of governing bodies to assist the rising numbers of those in need, we the undersigned ask that decision-makers worldwide take concerted action to provide stateless peoples with human rights protection and to desist in treating them as potential bearers of disease.

We maintain that the current reticence of governments and citizens to acknowledge the tragic human rights needs of stateless peoples has been fuelled historically not only by ethnocentrism, but by the improper attribution of blame for infection and contagion—social and biological—to outsiders and foreigners. The connection between disease and xenophobia is deeply entrenched, making an underprivileged foreign location or population ground zero for every illness outbreak and related social ill.

The damaging connection of foreigners with danger and disease relies on false analogies based on biological and social models that promote racial apprehension and fear of the foreign. New images of border patrols wearing hygienic masks make clear that countries continue in the belief that the poor and desperate are carriers of cultural and biological infection, and that such people are profoundly threatening to citizens and national homelands.

Today the danger of equating others with the sources of contagion and

disease is made worse by unexpected changes to natural and human environments that have ignited an unprecedented movement of economic and political refugees on a global scale. The dangers of migrating are also made worse by profiteering on the part of those paid to facilitate irregular migration and by profoundly undemocratic financial practices that limit resources governments have to help those in need. The loss of state revenues caused by the large-scale shift of financial capital offshore has given way to a commensurate lack of local and regional investment, and to the unwillingness of governments to support much needed assistance.

It is our firm belief that new forms of inequality and accumulation are largely responsible for the inability of governing bodies to meet their moral commitments—not only to stateless peoples, but to their own citizens. We the undersigned, therefore, believe it is time to draw upon new foreign relations models that guarantee basic human rights for all people on our planet.

The Bellagio Task Force on Epidemics and Xenophobia

- 1) David Napier, University College London
- 2) Christos Lynteris, University of Cambridge
- 3) David Nugent, Emory University
- 4) Paul Stoller, West Chester University
- 5) Samuel Cohn, Jr., University of Glasgow
- 6) Ruth Kutalek, Medical University of Vienna
- 7) Paul Kadetz, University of Oxford
- 8) Todd Meyers, Wayne State University
- 9) Adia Benton, Brown University
- 10) Michael Fischer, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- 11) Rudolf Mrázek, University of Michigan
- 12) Carlo Caduff, King's College London
- 13) George Marcus, University of California Irvine
- 14) Mary-Jo DelVecchio Good, Harvard University

- 15) Emily Martin, New York University
- 16) Linda Garro, University of California, Los Angeles
- 17) Ruth Mandel, University College London
- 18) Warwick Anderson, University of Sydney
- 19) Paul Clough, University of Malta
- 20) Nancy Scheper-Hughes, University of California, Berkeley

Our efforts have also been covered in the [Huffington Post](#). If you would like to join in signing our letter, it can be found on [Change.org](#).

AMA citation

Napier A, on Epidemics and Xenophobia T. *Epidemics and Xenophobia. Somatosphere*. 2015. Available at: <http://somatosphere.net/?p=10673>. Accessed August 4, 2015.

APA citation

Napier, A. David & on Epidemics and Xenophobia, The Bellagio Task Force. (2015). *Epidemics and Xenophobia*. Retrieved August 4, 2015, from Somatosphere Web site: <http://somatosphere.net/?p=10673>

Chicago citation

Napier, A. David and The Bellagio Task Force on Epidemics and Xenophobia. 2015. *Epidemics and Xenophobia*. Somatosphere. <http://somatosphere.net/?p=10673> (accessed August 4, 2015).

Harvard citation

Napier, A & on Epidemics and Xenophobia, T 2015, *Epidemics and Xenophobia*, Somatosphere. Retrieved August 4, 2015, from <<http://somatosphere.net/?p=10673>>

MLA citation

Napier, A. David and The Bellagio Task Force on Epidemics and Xenophobia. "Epidemics and Xenophobia." 3 Aug. 2015. [Somatosphere](#). Accessed 4 Aug. 2015. <<http://somatosphere.net/?p=10673>>