

### **A future of grey houses and red balloons?**

It hurts me to think that a child, like I once was, growing up in this city finds it normal to be screamed at in public, bullied by teachers, and told that they are worth less than others. This hatred has become just another part of everyday life. A few years ago, you would have seen so many cultures walking these streets. You would have seen vibrant buildings with the whole rainbow as the colour palette. Nowadays, the houses are grey, with red roofs and blackout curtains covering the windows.

I had a colourful home once, but to avoid the hurtful, contemptuous, and disgusted looks of the local community, I had to paint it all grey so I would fade into the background and become invisible. I had fled to Europe wanting safety and security, but it was all just false hope. After Europe closed down its borders and prohibited immigrants from entering, people began to see us as a different species—one they didn't like. They started throwing balloons filled with red paint against our colourful facades, and the more we tried to wash off the paint, the more balloons they started throwing. So many of us were forced to leave.

The government set out xenophobic bills to pour oil onto the fire that was already burning in our basements. Laws like the anti-immigration bill or the ethnic workers act, created by small-minded politicians living comfortable lives in their luxurious mansions with expensive cars and the occasional tax fraud, led to an immense wave of immigrants leaving Europe. They had to return to their war-torn countries. Some of those were my friends or my family; only I could stay behind.

European bills are causing more harm than good, and the people are happy about it. They want to lock us up in our basements that they have set fire to first. It is our despair, and the people are happy about it. Their actions destroy our children's future, and the people are happy about it. My brows furrowed as a familiar fury boiled up in me—fury at the hatred of Europeans, fury at the irrationality of political decision-making, fury at the inhumane treatment of *my* people. How come the citizens of Europe have the right to throw paint at our houses and stomp on the flowerbeds in our gardens, but we can't walk a street where they live without getting chased down with pitchforks and torches? It's not like they don't suffer from this too. The economy is dying, and every country is drowning in debt because of high import, export, and wage costs. No one can afford workers anymore. No one wants those badly paid, insufferable jobs that are so monotonous you could stare at a blank wall and have more fun. We were the ones who did those jobs because we couldn't get anything better. And now, no one does them. I get it. Who would want to work on an assembly line being paid wages so small you could call it modern slavery? Politicians see the cause of these problems, but instead of fighting it, they make us take the blame. We are their scapegoat on our way to the gallows.

Was that really what the people wanted back then when all of these changes started to occur?