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America's party has an exclusive guest list

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Letter to the Editor

Since genocides and holocausts happen because of the silence of people of good will, I must respond to Chris Yonker's September 11 column "Broad Stripes and Bright Stars."

Europeans came to America (and to Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia, India, Australia, etc.) with no invitation during several hundred years of waves of many successions of invading armies from several European countries. America exists because Europeans invaded and conquered the people who already lived here.

Racism ("scum"!) cannot be used as a defense of the American worker, and immigration is not the cause of poverty. Capitalism has long benefited from cheap labor in the form of immigrants and workers employed for pennies a day by mostly American capitalists abroad. And it is not just labor that is taken, but resources (which is one reason all those people are so poor in the first place). It is actually business (not illegal immigrants) that crosses the boundaries of nation states most effectively. Mexicans, in particular, often come to places that were part of Mexico until American expansion swallowed them up. We are the beneficiaries of cheap goods produced by the labor of immigrant, Third World and America's poor, and resources taken from the poorest regions of the world. This includes everything from mountaintop mining in West Virginia to blood-for-oil in the Middle East. All of this (i.e., not illegal immigration) has created more poverty and the most obscene display of concentrated wealth among the top 1% of Americans that the world has ever seen.

Maybe your life in America is a party, Chris. But look around you. Most of the world — Americans and immigrants alike — are not invited.

—Judith Grant is a professor of women's studies at Ohio University.

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