

# ITHACA Diaries

Migrant Stories around  
the Mediterranean



ITHACA Diaries is part of the H2020 project ITHACA, Interconnecting Histories and Archives for Migrant Memory, [www.ithacahorizon.eu](http://www.ithacahorizon.eu).



The project is funded by the European Commission under G.A. 101004539.

The content does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the European Commission.

The European Commission is also not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

#### INTRODUCTION

Paule Roberta Yao

#### EDITORS

Paule Roberta Yao  
and Federica Manzoli

#### GRAPHIC DESIGN

Gloria Maggioli

ISBN 9791259969101

Introduzione p. 04

01  
EXILE p. 11

02  
VIOLENCE p.39

03  
FRONTIERS p.55

04  
IDENTITY p.65

## BEYOND THE MEDITERRANEAN

"WE ARE THE MIGRANTS" is the climax in a journey which has seen the ITHACA Project build a community around a collection of stories celebrating the diversity at stake when exploring past and contemporary migrations. In this eBook, from Tunisia all the way to England, we sensed all the potential that comes with this extremely simple and powerful tool.

Embracing this intuition led the partner countries and their respective institutions to launch the first ITHACA Diary Contest in September 2023, encouraging people with migratory backgrounds throughout the Mediterranean region to share family or personal autobiographical accounts.

This call merged with the successful experience of DiMMi Multimedia Migrant Diaries, born in Tuscany in 2012 thanks to the National Diary Archives of Pieve Santo Stefano. We gathered 47 stories from 7 different countries, using diverse codes. What you will find in this eBook are 16 of the 18 finalist authors.

The eBook is divided into four main sections that render the multifaceted aspects of migrations, thus suggesting that any reading which fails to adopt an intersectional lens on the topic is bound to fail. The structure itself exemplifies the complex relationship between multiple causes and effects.

In fact, the section exile which features both a magnificent documentary by Basela Abou Hamed "D'un exil à l'autre" (From one exile to another) and a summary of Amara Bouomrine's pilot documentary project called "Mémoires d'émigration" (Memories

of emigration) - exploring the Tunisian diaspora as a workforce in France in the 60's - see their natural evolution in the section identity, as the emotional, psychological and human toll that the former has on the latter. But along different lines, identity is also the right to choose how to represent oneself in Doreida Xhogu's fierce conviction that her drawing should bear no title at all or Jasemina Zeqiraj's refusal to adhere to preconceived labels: "[...] la mia anima non cerca nessuna integrazione" (my soul seeks no integration). Also, the physical apparatus of frontiers unleashes devastating violence on migrant bodies, minds and lives as Agos Bereket Tamene unpacks with his painting "The Red Way". But it also encompasses all the hardships faced by Ismail Alkhateeb, Doris Emmanuel and Marcel Kazadi when your political, religious or sexual truth is considered as breaking the norm.

Besides, we owe Mohammad Almohur for a poignant depiction of one of the most adverse childhood experiences which unfolds at various levels.

He shares the vivid memory of his ten-year old body literally overwhelmed by the weight of the water barrels he had to carry in Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan where he lived with his family after fleeing war-torn Syria:

"وبدأنا نغمس أكثر فأكثر، أذكر المياه وكيف كنا نحصل عليها. تلك الطريقة التي كانت تعد إحدى أكبر المخاوف لدي. يأتي صهريج المياه ليملاً خزان الشارع، فيلتزم الناس بسرعة حتى يتسنى لهم أن يحصلوا على نصيبهم من تلك المياه وأنا أنظر وأسمع صراخهم. وما كان مني إلا الخروج من ذلك الخوف المترجج به حاملاً تلك المطرة التي كانت تتسع إلى عشرة لترات من المياه فيتساقط منها المياه ليمتزج بالتراب، فيلطخني الطين، فأسرع إلى إفراغها بلجدي مواعين الطبخ لكي أستطيع أن أملئها مرة أخرى، وكل ذلك يحدث في غضون دقائق يتمثل فيها أشد لحظات الصراع."

This recollection epitomizes the condition of anyone who grew up in a refugee camp and had their innocence stolen as a result and inevitably brings about another reflection of paramount importance. In his book "Johnny the Partisan", Beppe Fenoglio described migration and war as the two most absolute experi-

ences for a human being because of their intensity and harmful impact on the psyche. Let's pause for a moment and realize that Mohammad faced both, each with their sets of daunting challenges.

One of the biggest barriers encountered by the author had to do with the struggle to pursue his education under Covid-19 restrictions and the stringent rules surrounding access to scholarships for refugee students, which he exposes clearly:

قد تلاشى كل ذلك الفرح بصدمتين: فالأولى لا زلت أعيش بؤسها وهي صدمتي بأنني لم أستطع أن أكمل دراستي الجامعية لتحقيق ذلك الحلم الذي لطالما دفعني لكي أصل هذه المرحلة من الدراسة رغم كل الظروف، ويعود السبب في ذلك إلى التكلفة المرتفعة للدراسة الجامعة في الأردن، والتي أعيش عكسها تماما حيث نعيش أسوأ أوضاعنا المادية وشح المنح الدراسية. أذكر أنني أعدت الثانوية العامة (التوجيهي) عدة مرات حتى يتسنى لي أن أرفع معدلي وأن أحصل على أي منحة تتكفل بدراستي وتحقيق حلمي وبعد أن استطعت أخيرا بأن أحصل على نسبة عالية تقدر بجيد جدا، صدمت بقرار يصدر بأنه لا تكفل المنح إلا شخصا واحد لكل أسرة، حتى لو أن ذلك الشخص قد تخرج من الجامعة. بمعنى أن هذه الأسرة استقدنت نصيبها من المنح. وبما أن أخي قد درس على نفقة إحدى المنح، حرمت من تحقيق حلمي.

For all these reasons, I like to think of this eBook as embodying a platform of advocacy and agency where people can speak all these truths while also fostering a healthier public debate on migrations and overcoming the binary narrative of the victimized hero or the villain. There is no need to glorify Marcel, Mohammad, Basela and Jasemina for what they went through, but by saying their names we are making a difference, and remembering that beyond the Mediterranean and cold numbers their dignified outcry demands of us the recognition of our same attributes in the shape of ambitions, desires, dreams, fears, extraordinary strength and weakness.

Since I had the honour to coordinate this process and also shared my story with DiMMi in 2019, I strongly believe there is only one way to engage with stories. That is by acknowledging how radical and solemn it is for a person to choose to make themselves vulnerable, and share with the world what they usually try not to dwell on because it sometimes reverberates

a burden of sheer deprivation, pain, and shame as Ismail reminds us "Nothing had happened but everything happened" when referring to his arrest by the Syrian regime in his "Doomsday: Preserving Sanity in a time of Insanity".

This is why something ritual - and almost sacred - happens when we become the recipients of stories. Sofia Polou Cambiri in the introductory video to her story "Machi", Mikal Semerere's documentary "Kill the cake" and Doris' audio file "How I left to live" all echo each other by conveying this urge through the words "I decided to participate in the ITHACA Diary Contest because I wanted my life story to be heard", "I will be telling you my mother's story" and "I'm here to tell you my story." It is a clear mandate to manage with care. One we have taken seriously by nurturing stories - and therefore lives - and putting those who are silenced and made invisible at the forefront.

At his young age, Mohamed Saleh Saeed Sidi Mohamed sent us a drawing which comes across as a vibrant political statement "WE ARE THE MIGRANTS". This declaration of existence is the precondition through which someone receives a story but is also a mirror which challenges our very identity and sense of humanity. In "Esy den Pernas", Katerina Mailinta Hysolliu asks us a startling question as she reminisces over a painful episode at the hands of Greek border police: "Τούτο μονάχα δεν μπορώ να καταλάβω, τι είναι αυτό που κάνει έναν άνθρωπο τόσο απάνθρωπο. Τούτο μονάχα δεν έχω καταλάβει" (one thing I don't get is: what makes a human so dishuman. I really don't get it). It is as if Katerina were warning us against the effects of dehumanization at the expense of migrant people. In fact, it hurts the dehumanizer and the dehumanized equally. This profound acknowledgement constantly requires us to draw a subtle line between humane and inhumane, memory and oblivion, and thus past and present. Consistently, Katerina portrays



what usually remains out of the picture by shedding light on two sides of her own story. She expands on the beloved figures and meaningful relationships that are left behind, alluding to her sick mother: “– αποτελεί την βυθισμένη μου άγκυρα που κατά κάποιον τρόπο ...γυρνάω να ανασύρω” (she represented my anchor still at sea, that I somehow had to come back and fish out). Needless to say, this leads us to the suffering that the absence entails, especially when unexpected loss occurs, and to the yearning hope to be reunited that Nada Douiri symbolizes altogether:

"في صيف 2021، أخبرنا أخي و هو في قمة الفرح، بأنه في شهر أكتوبر سوف يزورنا أخيرا بعد ستة أعوام من الغياب و الأشتياق"

(In the summer of 2021, my brother blissfully told us that he would come to visit in October after six long years of absence).

Through his work as a linguistic facilitator for migrant people, MD Shahidul Islam describes what handling all of the above looks like, trying to understand their character and circumstances: “cerco sempre di mettermi nei panni delle persone che ho di fronte e di comprendere appieno il loro carattere e la loro situazione” (I always try to put myself in the shoes of the people in front of me and to fully understand their character and situation).

Paradoxically enough, sometimes being a custodian like MD Shahidul, means not disclosing a story because the time is not right to fully share our “load” with others. And this is what we did with two stories, that of an Ethiopian female survivor from Libya and that of a Somali unaccompanied minor. Both describe the shattering experience of having the sacrality of your body violated and gracefully take us aback with undertones of hope and beauty. The survivor’s contribution bears the following caption “Let’s cooperate

to avoid this”, calling us to radical action to prevent other women from experiencing the same ordeal on their migratory routes. Also, the Somali young man indulged in a poetic description of Tripoli’s sky inundated with cellphone lights as Subsaharan migrants in Libya spend the night on rooftops in an attempt to keep themselves safe at night from abduction, forced slavery and theft. They eventually decided not to have their stories published but we hold on to them in our hearts and minds. This “double absence” reminds me of Vanisha Patel and her homonymous visual work on exile, displacement, and quest for belonging.

Looking back on our trajectory, reverting this concept and welcoming its circularity is key.

It was all about a double possibility: that of integrating the Self with the collective dimension, the donation of a story with its most ethical and respectful treatment, as has been the case for all research activities that have been carried out within ITHACA.

I hereby invite you to think of yourselves as custodians while reading these stories.

Paule Roberta Yao



EXILE

Basela Abou Hamed

# D'un exil à l'autre



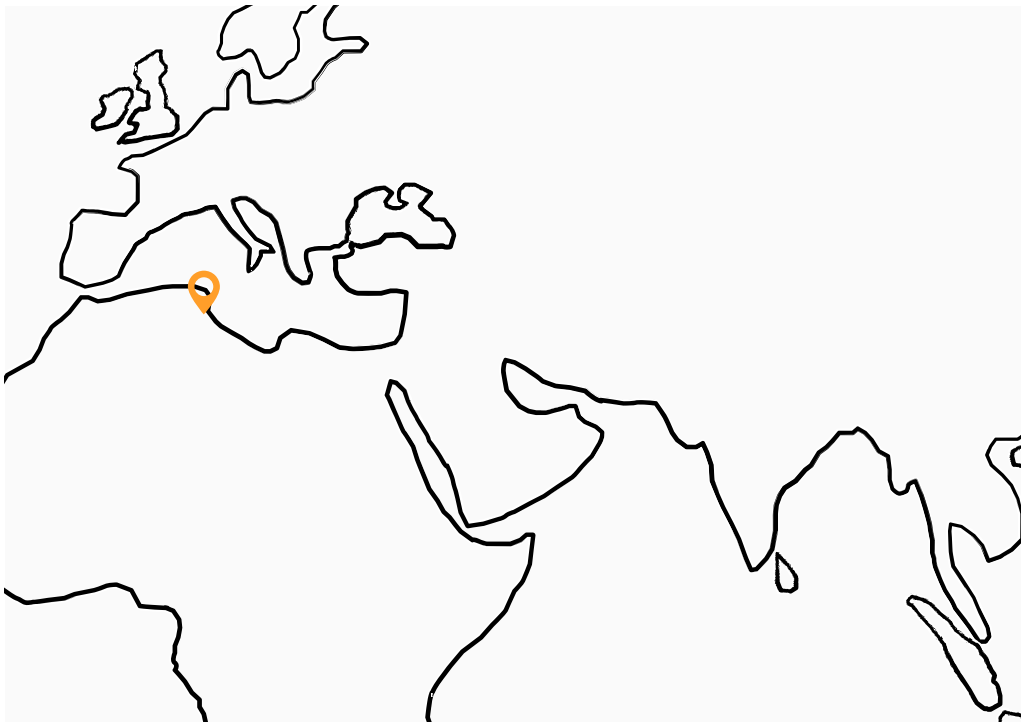
**"Dans ce film, je raconte l'histoire  
d'un réfugié parmi tant d'autres."**

— Basela Abou Hamed

EXILE

Amara Bouomrine

# Mémoires d'émigration



"L'émigration est  
une histoire à suivre."

— Amara Bouomrine

## NOTE D'INTENTION

Les premiers émigrants Tunisiens sont partis en France juste après l'indépendance pour chercher à améliorer leurs conditions de vie. Ils vont être confrontés à beaucoup des problèmes et surtout des problèmes d'intégration dans une société différente de leur pays d'origine. Avec la disparition de ces premiers émigrants tunisiens en France, vu leurs âges avancés, on perdra à jamais un témoignage important et essentiel pour la compréhension de cette émigration : ses causes, ses avantages et ses problèmes. On perdra des témoignages d'une histoire commune entre la France et ses anciennes colonies de la rive sud de la méditerranée. Donc ce documentaire portera l'enquête sur l'émigration tunisienne en France non seulement en tant que phénomène socialement constitué mais en tant que mouvement, en tant que processus, en tant qu'histoire, en tant que métamorphose de la dislocation lente mais massive et douloureuse d'une paysannerie qui a donné sa démission. Le film cherche à constituer et constater des séries d'images il s'agit tout d'abord de filmer, de montrer et faire voir comment le paysan tunisien des années cinquante \_ soixante, celui-là qui n'a jamais travailler chez les autres pour les autres, n'a jamais penser à émigrer. Ensuite, il s'agit de suivre ces individus fraîchement arrachés du rocher mère, déracinés, pris comme ils sont à aller travailler chez les autres pour élever un mur ou marier un enfant. Avec tous les problèmes d'intégration, ils sont devenus des proies faciles pour une mafia d'entrepreneurs de bâtiment et de travaux public en quête d'une main d'œuvre pas chère et surtout qui ne réclame rien malgré les conditions dangereuses, lamentables, à la limite inhumaines.

La France, à la sortie de la guerre et en manque de main d'œuvre l'état prend en main la politique migratoire. Des accords avec des pays voisins et les anciennes colonies fraîchement indépendantes dont la Tunisie pour fournir cette main d'œuvre.

A l'origine l'émigration était un acte de réconciliation entre les peuples et un échange culturel et civilisationnel comme stipule l'acte d'indépendance signé entre la France et la Tunisie. Mais l'office national français de l'émigration perd le contrôle de la situation et ces émigrés vont faire les frais.

Dans la perte de ces témoins, on perdra à jamais des témoignages importants d'une histoire commune entre les deux rives de la méditerranée, d'où à notre avis, l'urgence de la réalisation de ce documentaire.

NB : La vidéo ci-joint représente un teaser du projet de documentaire « Mémoire d'émigration » d'une durée prévu de 52 minute.

L'auteur réalisateur Bouomrine Amara

Email: bouomrineamara@gmail.com

Tél : +21692184570

## IDÉE

Les premiers émigrants originaires de la région du gouvernorat de tataouine partis en France juste après l'indépendance pour chercher à améliorer leurs conditions de vie. Ils vont être confrontés à beaucoup des problèmes surtout d'intégration dans la société d'accueil très différente de leur société d'origine, ajoutée à cela leur non-maitrise de la langue française ce qui rend l'intégration plus difficile.

Leurs enfants laissées au pays, quelques un vont les rejoindre en France.

La France connaît une grave crise de logement. Les émigrés s'entassent dans des logements vétustes, des abris de chantier ; des hôtels surpeuplés à la merci

des marchands de sommeil.

C'est l'explosion des bidonvilles à la périphérie des grandes villes industrielles ; Lyon, Marseille et surtout la région parisienne.

En juillet 1974 le gouvernement suspend l'entrée des travailleurs étrangers permanant, le chômage s'installe dans les grandes villes.

La xénophobie s'installe, les étrangers deviennent le bouc émissaires.

Au cours des années 80, la société française a pris connaissance que les émigrés vont rester. Les mesures sont prises pour faciliter l'intégration des étrangers déjà installés. Les émigrés et leurs enfants et familles sont devenus l'une des composantes de la France Arc en ciel, mais cela, pas sans discrimination ou montée du racisme.

L'antiracisme devient une valeur importante pour une partie de la jeunesse.

La discrimination qui s'enracine et l'exclusion sociale remettent en cause l'égalité valeur suprême de la république Depuis les années 80 la confrontation entre les traditions laïcs et l'islam entraînent polémiques et tensions, la passée coloniale est réinterrogée.

En même temps les frontières ne jouent plus le même rôle. la diaspora se développe dans un territoire mondialisé et des réseaux transnationaux s'organisent. Avec le développement de l'union européenne les frontières s'estompent mais les barrières continuent de se renforcer.

Après Schengen et les accords d'Amsterdam qui ont défini des règles très stricts de l'émigration et de l'asile. L'Europe continue d'attirer l'émigrant.

L'émigration est une histoire à suivre.

Il reste qu'en France l'émigration fait partie de son histoire. La diversité est moins nouvelle qu'on le pense, les difficultés des émigrés par le passé ont longtemps était exclu de la mémoire collective.

## SYNOPSIS

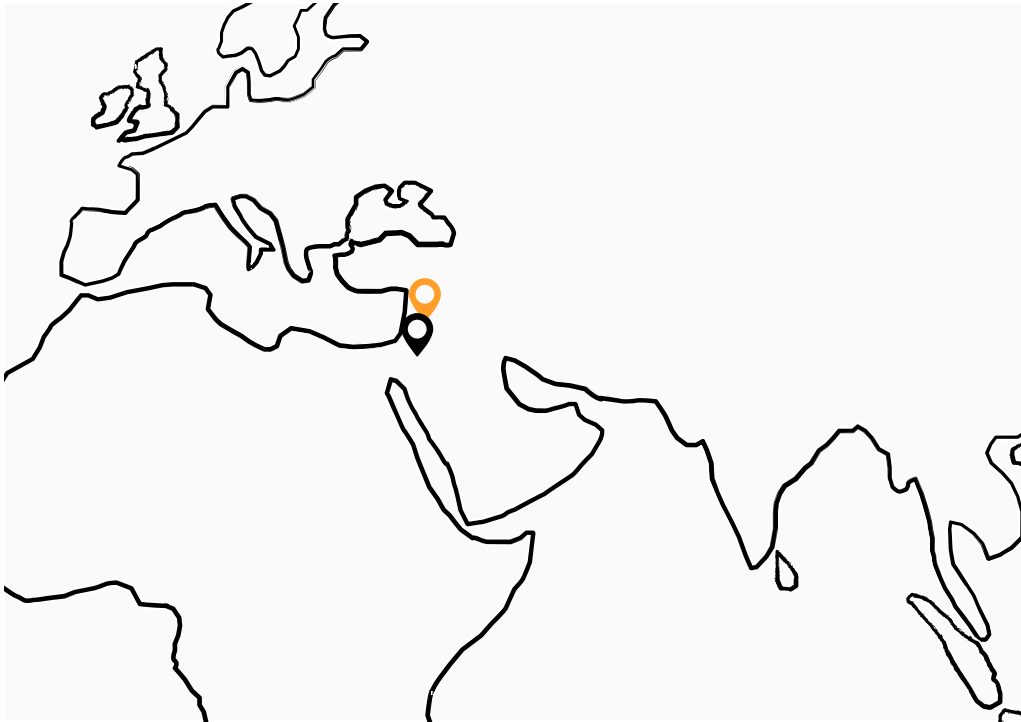
Ils s'appellent ; Salem, Hassen, Sadok, Mohammed... Ils ont quittés le bled; juste après l'indépendance pour aller travailler en France. Ils ont prévu de rentrer un jour au pays Les années se sont écoulés. Ils sont maintenant à la retraite. Ils ont migré d'une rive à une autre sans vraiment mesurer la rupture que cela allait provoquer. Pas complètement d'ici, pas vraiment de là bas, après une vie professionnelle décousue, une vie familiale déchiré, ils viennent finir leurs jours en France où au bled a travers leurs témoignages, on comprend que le retour au bled n'a pas pu se faire comme ils l'ont initialement prévu filmé avec douceur et tendresse. Les émigrés sont à la fois lumineux et beaux, droits et attachants ils ont travaillé toute leur vie en France dans la perspective d'un retour au bled. Pourtant à l'heure de la retraite le retour est difficile doivent ils rentrer chez eux ? faut-il vieillir en France ? retraites incomplètes, tracasserie administrative : choix personnel. Certains vivent ce passage comme un drame, d'autres le vivent comme une mission accomplie.

Toute cette histoire d'émigration est à vivre.

EXILE

Mohammad Almohur

# Water container



"ويدأنا ننفس أكثر فاكتر اذكر المياه وكيف كنا نحصل عليها تلك الطريقة التي كانت تعد احدى اكبر المخاوف لدي يأتي صهرج المياه ليملي خزان الشارع فتلتهم الناس بسرعة حتى يتسنى لهم ان يحصلوا على نصيبهم من تلك المياه وأنا انظر واسمع صراخ الناس وما كان مني إلا الخروج من ذلك الخوف المتزج به حاملا تلك المطرة التي كانت تتسع إلى عشرة لتار من المياه فيتساقط منها المياه لميتزج بالتراب فيلطخني الطين فاسرع إلى افراغها بأحدى مواعين الطبخ لكي استطيع أن املئها مرة أخرى، وكل ذلك يحدث في غضون دقائق فيتمثل فيها أشد لحظات الصراع."

— Mohammad Almohur



فرحتي في الذهاب إلى السوق رفقة والدي لاستعيد ذكرياتاً حُرمت منها منذ الطفولة بسبب تلك الحرب، لازلت اذكر تكمي لتميزي في المدرسة سنة تتلو سنة، لازلت اذكر اول مرة اسجل فيها بالملعب لكي اتدرب واللعب كرة القدم تلك الفرحة لن انساها ما حبيبت، لازلت اذكر فرحتنا في تمديد شبكة الصرف الصحي وشبكة المياه التي قضت على اكبر مخاوفي، ولازلت اذكر كيف اني تخرجت من الثانوي العامة (التوجيهي) وكيف اني استطعت التغلب على كل الظروف، فدفعتي شهدت إغلاق المدارس بسبب انتشار فيروس كورونا فلم يتسنى لي إلا أن ادرس وحدي وبمساعدة بعضا من اخوتي على تعلمي بعض المواد كانت حرباً لم تكن دراسة، ومع ذلك ومع كل ذلك التعب لم يمر كثيراً إلا وقد تلاشى كل ذلك الفرح بصدمتين فالأولى لازلت اعيش بؤسها وهي صدمتي بأنني لم استطع ان اكمل دراستي الجامعية لحقق ذلك الحلم الذي لطالما دفعني لكي اصل هذه المرحلة من الدراسة رغم كل الظروف ويعود السبب في ذلك إلى التكلفة المرتفعة للدراسة الجامعة في الأردن، والتي اعيش عكسها تماما حيث نعيش أسوأ اوضاعنا المادية وشح المنح الدراسية اذكر اني اعدت الثانوية العامة (التوجيهي) عدة مرات حتى يتسنى لي ان ارفع معدلي وان أحصل على أي منحة تتكفل بدراستي وتحقيق حلمي وبعد ان استطعت اخيراً بأن أحصل على نسبة عالية تقدر بجيد جدا صدمت بقرار يصدر بأنه لا تكفل المنح الا شخصاً واحد لكل أسرة حتى لو أن ذلك الشخص قد تخرج من الجامعة فقد استفذت هذه الأسرة نصيبها من المنح، ولأن أخي قد درس على نفقة إحدى المنح حرمت من تحقيق حلمي، والصدمة الأخرى حزنها يخنقني وهي صدمتي بخبر اصابتي بمرض الربو بسبب أجواء المخيم الغبارية فنحن نعيش في بيئة صحراوية حيث تتابع المرض حتى سارت بي الحياه إلى لعب اخر مباراة كرة قدم في حياتي، لازلت اذكرها بكل تفاصيل كما اذكر اول مرة لعبت فيها تلك اللعبة نعم اذكرها وأنا اختنق واحترق فلا زلت ذلك الطفل الذي يملك الأحلام ولكنه لا يملك إلا العجز عن تحقيقها، واحمد الله على نعمة الأمن والأمان واشكر الله دائماً اني لم أعد اكون مجبراً للخوف من تلك المطرة.

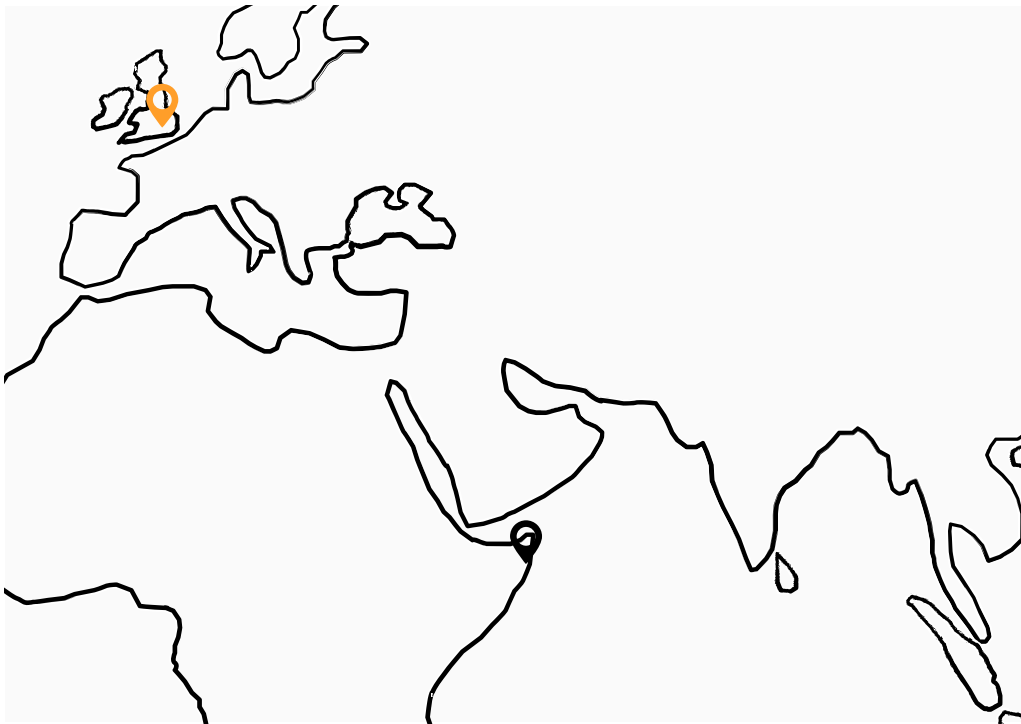
في عام 2013 ، اشتدت الحرب في بلدي في سوريا، وأنا لازلت طفلاً، مما دفعنا إلى اللجوء إلى الأردن فرأى من الموت ممثلين بالخوف الذريع، وبعد معاناة كبيرة وصلنا إلى الأردن، ووضعنا داخل مخيم لم استطع أن أحبه في اللحظات الأولى، ومع ذلك بادر والدي بالذهاب لإستلام لتلك الخيمة، وانطلقت اعاون والدي في شدها وأنا مندهش يمتلئ قلبي الفضول فلم يسبق لي أن شاهدت خيمة من قبل، ولطالما كان مربوطاً في ذهني أنها تكون فقط في رحلات المغامرات والاستكشاف للاستمتاع والتعلم فلم أكن أعلم جانبها المظلم فلا أستطيع نسيان تلك التجربة الباردة ليلاً وشديدة الحرارة نهاراً، اذكر اني مرضت في الفترة الأولى وقد أصابني مرض الإسهال الشديد ما يسمى ب(أبو صفار)، وأذكر أمني ونظراتها لي والعرق يملؤني وأذكر كيف انها لجئت للعلاج التقليدي القديم لتغلي لي بعضاً من الأرز لكي اشربه فيمسك الطعام في معدتي لازلت اذكر لوع ذلك المشهد في كل حواسي، وبدأنا نغمس اكثر فأكثر اذكر المياه وكيف كنا نحصل عليها تلك الطريقة التي كانت تعد احدى اكبر المخاوف لدي يأتي صهريج المياه ليملى خزان الشارع فتلتهم الناس بسرعة حتى يتسنى لهم ان يحصلوا على نصيبهم من تلك المياه وأنا انظر واسمع صراخ الناس وما كان مني إلا الخروج من ذلك الخوف لامتزج به حاملاً تلك المطرة التي كانت تتسع إلى عشرة التار من المياه فيتساقط منها المياه لميتزج بالتراب فيلطنني الطين فاسرع إلى افراغها بأحدى مواعين الطبخ لكي استطع أن املئها مرةً أخرى، وكل ذلك يحدث في غضون دقائق فيتمثل فيها أشد لحظات الصراع.

لازلت اذكر أول مره اتذوق فيها الحلوى داخل المخيم، ولازلت اذكر طعم اللذة في أول مرة أكل لحمًا غير معلب، ولازلت اذكر فرحتنا عند استلامنا الكرفانة اذكر اني غفيت في تلك الليلة وانا أشعر بأنني أملك قصور الدنيا، لازلت اذكر اول مرة اذهب فيها إلى المدرسة حاملاً على اكتافي حلمي ولازلت اذكر لحظات الفرح في أول حمام خاص قد استطعنا إنشائه في بيتنا، اذكر طعم

EXILE

Mikal Semerere

# Kill the cake



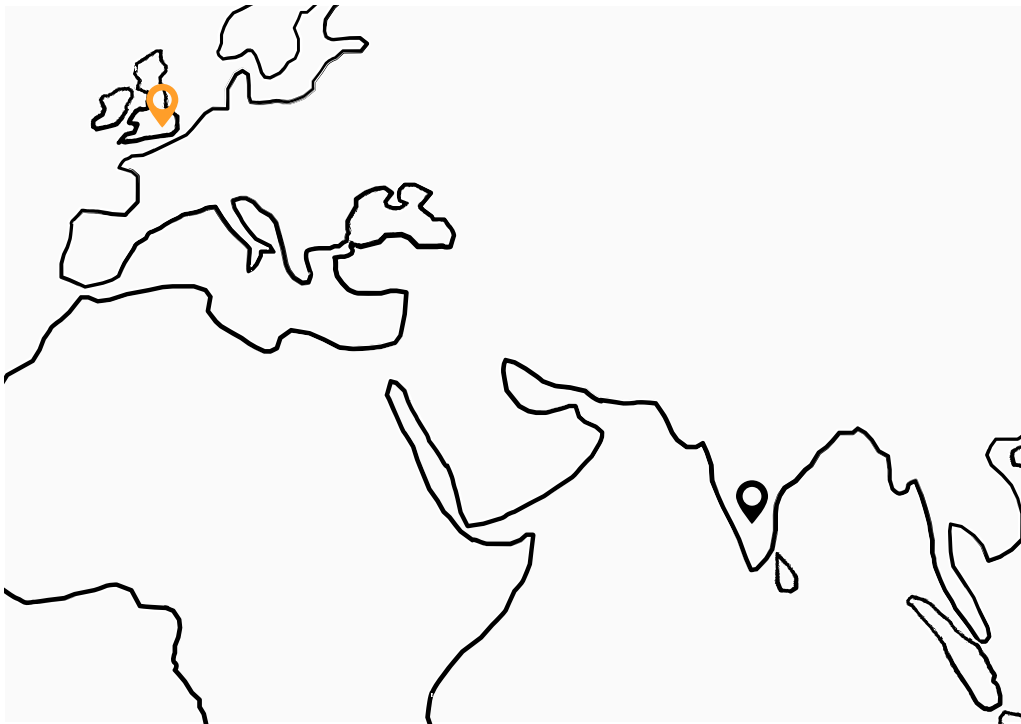
**"I will be telling you my mother's story, what she told me"**

— Mikal Semerere

## EXILE

Vanisha Patel

# La double absence

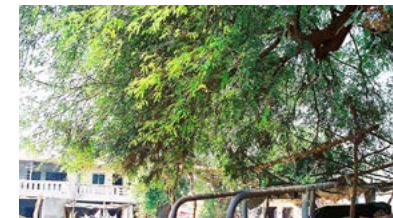


## LIFE IN AN INDIAN VILLAGE

A self-reflective piece of my first time visiting family in India as part of the Indian diaspora.



Summer in the Gaam. It was not the whirring of the ceiling fan or the stifling heat that persisted regardless. It was not the smells of breakfast being cooked or the cows greeting the day somewhere outside. It was a rhythmic thudding, the thorough beating of laundry with a wooden washing paddle a few houses down that woke me, puzzled, that first morning and served as my alarm every morning thereafter.







Each day, by around 7am, the cows of the farming village, Delwada, had been milked, the milk collected in large stainless-steel churns. Some of which is taken off to be sold and the rest shared out amongst the village in time for a morning chai. As my uncle continued, however, I came to learn that there was much more to India's sacred animal. It was not just the optional addition to chai they provided, but also the electricity used to boil the water for it in the first place, with generators converting their methane to help power the village. With it being a farming village, their manure too came in very handy, he told me.



Much of the harvesting is done early in the day too, before it gets too hot out. Already starting to sweat but wanting to keep up with the busyness, I rallied my mum as my translator and went for a wander. We greeted an elderly neighbour who was sat, legs dangling on the shaded swinging bench in our front porch reading the morning paper, I saw scooters whip by, wild dogs sniff around, children on their school holidays throwing water over the concrete to cool things down for them to play, tractors being taken out from garages and trucks returning with that morning's harvest.

Peeking over our wall, I saw our neighbour and her maid surrounded by huge piles of deep green and a number of full-to-the-top boxes yet to be added to said pile. Language was a barrier that persisted, but I could still feel their affection, and amusement, for my curiosity, as they sorted the sellable bhinda from those slightly too short or curved.



It was mango season! The morning haul had taken a hit from some monkeys, but there were still plenty of boxes slowly filled, as we took long wooden sticks with baskets fashioned at the ends, and carefully picked the ripest. It was mango all day, everyday. But it was not just the sweet orange flesh we were stuffing our faces with. All parts of the mango is used in some way or another.

Upon hearing the noise, our neighbour, unmasked, gladly came over to help break open the mango shells that had been drying in the sun. We were retrieving the seed inside – one of which supposedly has the same nutritional benefits as 2kg of mango pulp. The seed is boiled, grated and dried to be eaten as a snack – also doubling as an organic digestive aid, or can be powdered and added to dishes and drinks. The mango flesh can also be pickled or made into lassi, cows are fed the skin and the seed shells burned for fuel.

I was starting to notice a pattern, but I could only wander, and wonder, for so long until the drops of sweat were too frequent to ignore.

I didn't think I'd be able to eat, with the sun at its highest by lunchtime, but the smells were always too good to resist. I waited for my aunt to send a photo to the village's WhatsApp group, some of the wonky bhinda she had already put to very good use, before tucking in. Thirty minutes and almost a whole bowlful of mango later, I pushed my plates away, brought the leftovers outside for some wild dogs, and ambled over to help with the washing up, whilst sluggishness started to wash over me. I resisted the allure of an afternoon nap, and joined my cousin pushing counters around a board game with her neighbourhood friends who had stuck their head around the door in search of afternoon entertainment, daytime soaps playing in the background.

There was some shouting coming from outside, my translator was also taking a nap so I couldn't tell what was happening. I was starting to notice a different pattern.

**“Patterns upon patterns~  
but of course, patterns are  
only patterns to an outsider  
looking in”**

— Vanisha Patel

My aunt was woken, and hurried outside.

She returned minutes later, smiling, with bags of spiced nuts, bhusu and jalebi.

With the heat keeping most at home, this is prime time for mobile street vendors. Twice a week the stall with dry snack foods and sweets makes its way around



the village, biscuits every Friday and in the height of summer, a farmer selling fresh sugar cane juice made there and then with his mobile juicer, comes every day. It was not just food or drink though, once a week respectively, there were stalls selling flip-flops, toiletries, like mops and buckets, jewellery, hair accessories and house clothes all brought straight outside your door. We dipped our hands in and passed the bags around.

Slowly, as the temperature cooled, the pace picked up again. A forty-minute drive took us to Bardoli, the closest city and the birthplace of the 1920s no-tax movement that protested British rule. Agriculture is the main industry and clearly seen with stalls upon stalls selling farm fresh fruit and vegetables and street food you could easily eat your weight. We passed by shopping malls, browsed Ayurvedic beauty stores, I stocked up on the Moringa powder I could usually only find online. I smiled at the circle of men sat on a blanket they'd laid outside a street food stall to play cards. I laughed with a child enjoying the attention as he helped his parents sell jackfruit. And I found comfort in the crowd of faces that for once, looked like mine.

Until I realised they were staring. It wasn't exactly the height of tourist season.

The sun set but warmth lingered - both literally, and metaphorically, as we came back to a village still humming. Neighbours chatting on porches or gathered in a circle with chairs they'd brought outside, playing cards, playing music or making the most of the full moon light to take an evening stroll. Patterns upon patterns.

~but of course, patterns are only patterns to an outsider looking in.

Back from our walk, I was snapped from my reverie as my uncle told me of how the swinging bench I had greeted a neighbour on that morning, he had made himself from repurposed wood and metal.

He was beaming with pride, sparkles in his eyes.

Another pattern.







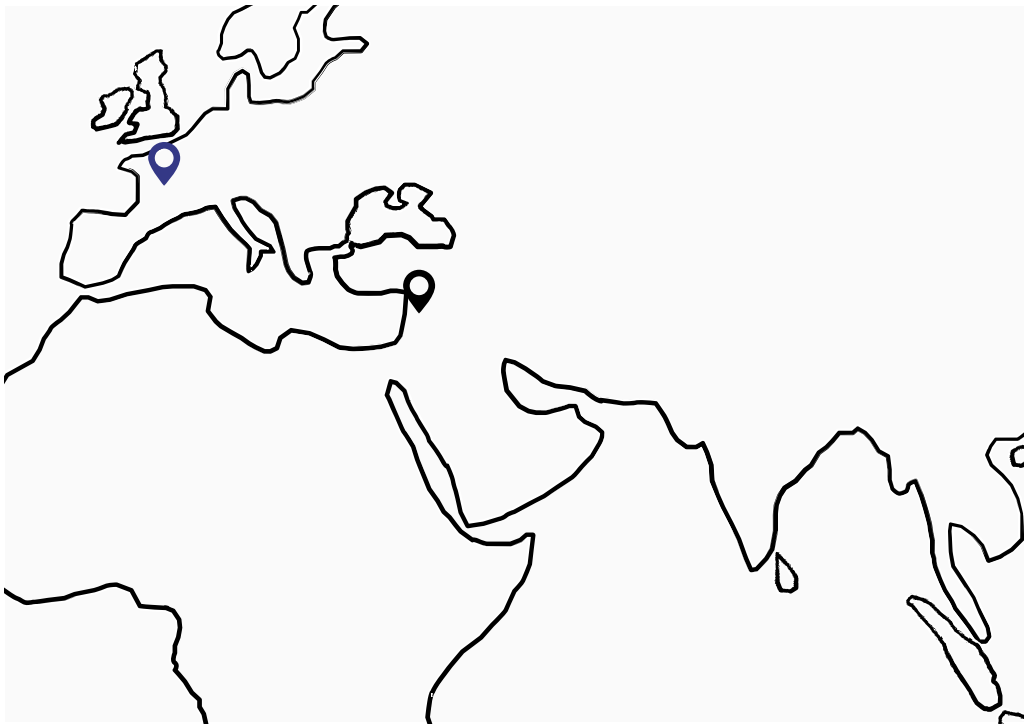




## VIOLENCE

Ismail Alkhateeb

# Doomsday\_ Preserving sanity in the time of insanity



## LOST IN STRASBOURG

When I first realized that I might be nothing but a mythical being, I used to spend my hollow days in the streets of a lavish city. I had to have my lunch on the Rihn River banks with the drunkards, the homeless, and the tourists. Yet, I constantly failed to distinguish myself from the aimless multitude, and no one helped me uncover my identity and destiny.

Even shallow and banal conversations with passing faces did not help me declare my identity to myself or others. It was then that I decided to take part in the crafting, scripting, and direction of this persona from inception to conclusion, traversing tales of strife, extraordinary childhood, idealistic emotional adventures, and spiritual odysseys.

At the stairs of an ancient cathedral, hundreds of voices overlapped until speech became nothing but the rustle of leaves amid a cosmic storm. I sat, enjoying a cup of cold tea and a piece of cake, contemplating my personal space as the protagonist of a Samsonian legend, defeating monsters and demons, surviving the hell of war, imprisonment, and homelessness. This narrow space can be filled by any creature resembling me, regardless of heroism or deeds. This distinctive space in my eyes could be filled by a beggar, a courtesan, a psychiatrist, an Asian immigrant, a drowning survivor, a tango dancer, a deceived spouse, or a serial killer. Yet, this space is now occupied by the offspring of oppression, the victim of constant defeat, a container of psychological wounds and waking nightmares.

This is a space of displacement, affliction, and breathless race towards the highest pyramid of patriarchal power, amidst fields planted with thorns, wild thyme, and chamomile.

How I yearned for this to be the dawn of the dooms-

day, to flee from my wretchedness and the disdainful gazes of the Whites unto me, my features, and my unmistakable weariness.

I wished for the apocalypse to bring about justice...

I am the most miserable of the miserable.

I longed for the doomsday to end the chill, the hunger, the confusion, and the rootlessness.

I prayed for doomsday to drop my bag without the fear of missing the train and being trapped in this foreign land.

### IMPRISONED IN THE HEART OF THE CAPITAL

The first time I longed for doomsday was in Damascus in 2011.

My terrifying nightmare began when Razan called me one morning. She didn't wait for me to fully awaken from my suspended daze or to comprehend what was happening or what might happen. Yet, the idea of protesting appealed to me, despite the impossibility of taking such an action without risking beatings, arrest, or perhaps death. The Syrian regime had a bloody history of suppressing protests and eliminating anything that dared to challenge the sanctity of the ruler or threatened the authority of the thick security stick safeguarding the royal family and the nation.

However, this reality didn't curb my eagerness to rush to the square opposite the protest location.

We walked together hastily through alleys leading to the designated location. Razan's white face was tinged with red out of excitement and anxiety. She didn't stop warning and alerting me about the tear gas the batons of the security forces and the regime's lackeys scattered everywhere. But I reassured her and hinted that everything would pass peacefully and without injuries while expecting to be subjected to arrest.

Upon reaching the protest location, we were met

with a chilling noise and deafening screams. Hastening closer to the crowd, we saw men and women being mercilessly beaten by civil-clothed security forces, alongside police officers with their white uniforms. Amidst the chaos of screams and blows, a group chanted slogans against the dictator's reign and condemned the collusion of thugs in their brutality, using the pictures of the dictator to viciously assault the protesters strewn on the roadside under a hail of brutal footsteps.

Blindness enveloped me, a white shroud preventing me from turning my gaze around, as suddenly, hefty bodies propelled me into a nearby shop. Inside, I observed young men and women bound and cramped into a space barely fit for more than two individuals. I didn't know how I could keep my calm composure, responding to the blows of the savage men, lying on my stomach as one of them, short in stature, fell on top of me and slapped the back of my head without feeling any pain. The voice of a girl obscured from my view due to a foot pressed against my neck cried out in pain: "You dogs, let me go..." to which they retorted in their mocking military tone: "Quiet, you slut... we'll teach you how to challenge the strong state...". One of them seized me by the collar of my vest and hoisted me up.

Before I could steady myself, he struck my face with his fist, yet I managed to maintain my balance. Time seemed to drag on heavily as I beheld his face, betraying his barbarity and savagery.

"You dog, give me your ID card... we've caught you, you coward... did you think you could escape the security forces, you imbecile?"

He proclaimed triumphantly, snatching my ID card. However, his expression shifted to one of surprise as he continued: "You fool... you come from the coast region and dare to rise against the regime? Know this, you will rot in our prisons, for your crime surpasses all others..."

With that, he erupted into laughter, full of foolishness.

I didn't respond and comment on what this aberrant creature said. I was not surprised by what he mentioned upon checking my ID card, I expected a comment with deeper sectarian implications. For so long, the regime regarded minorities as a prop and a trench, even though the backbone of the opposition, especially the leftists, consists largely of members from minority groups. I was pushed inside a taxi, where a security officer sat next to me to keep me in place. I didn't resist; instead, I complied calmly. Through the car window, I saw the streets of Damascus crowded with faces indifferent to what was happening in front of the Ministry of Interior. At that moment, the image of my beloved as she emerged from the waves with all her femininity flashed in my mind. I was hit by a headache of reminiscence and anticipation. Would I be able to escape my captivity before my beloved's arrival? Everything was now postponed. My poetic life at that moment was postponed in favor of my personal dream: I longed for this confrontation and wouldn't allow myself to fall into the swamp of despair. I have to continue what I have just started.

The taxi took me to a square in the heart of the capital, and then I entered a gate guarded by armed men. Only then did I realize that I was in the custody of a security branch headed by a high-ranking officer known for his criminal record of assassinations against figures inside Syria and in neighboring countries. I was pulled violently and dragged into a building, where I received dozens of punches and slaps from lunatics standing in the corridors as if they were tired of waiting for me, and here I was ready to receive the blows of their rusty fists. They led me into a room that ended in a corridor leading downwards, I didn't know where to, perhaps to a lower inferno where

they believed the voice of truth would be silenced and the people would bury their pain in underground dungeons. One of them approached me and asked for my information. When I told him my profession, he spoke with a somewhat gentle tone, and he seemed to be from the Hauran area: "Are you a translator? Sir, you didn't need to get involved in trouble. But don't worry; most likely, you'll be released today or tomorrow." I wasn't worried at all, and I don't think my face betrayed any expression of such feeling. I even noticed a well-known Syrian writer among the detainees they attached to me. I approached him and greeted him with a smile. He joked: "I haven't seen you in a long time, but fate has reunited us again in this lovely place."

I was glad to find such high morale in the first protest movement, and it filled with me more determination and drove away any possibility of falling into the abyss of despair.

"I won't deny that it's a nice place, but I promise to visit you at your home and drink some homemade liquor that I recently brought from the village," I responded confidently, ignoring that we were within the fortified walls of a security enclosure, where names of dissidents and innocent people were lost. I admired our courage and sudden composure. The elements distributed us in solitary cells, but they crowded the prisoners two by two in each cabin. By chance, the writer became my cellmate. We sat together, each leaning against the wall, and smiles adorned our faces. I still don't know what led us to smile, or what foolish inspiration prompted us to do so. Perhaps anticipating madness had become inevitable. Fortunately, my new companion shared my state at that moment.

"How are you, my friend? Sit down and relax. Home is home."

He chuckled as he glanced around the dwarfish cell that had brought us together after a long hiatus.

"Hey man, how have you been? What about your literary production?"

I asked about his condition as if we were sitting in the "Al-Nawfara" café...

It was only half an hour until a short, stern-faced creature, clad in the uniform of a tank, opened the reinforced door of the cell. In a mountainous accent, he shouted: "You dogs, stop chattering. And you (pointing to me), prepare yourself for interrogation. The investigator will come in fifteen minutes."

He closed the door tightly, and I returned to my seat on the floor, anticipating the investigator calling for me, and then I would see what I would say. I didn't want to think about it at all. Indeed, one of the officers came and dragged me to the interrogation room.

There, sitting, was an officer with a tidy appearance and carefully arranged hair. He approached and said mockingly: "Come in and sit on the ground."

I sat down, and he began questioning me, extracting answers from me. I was extremely careful not to provide any information that would lead them to Razan. Considering she managed to save herself, or so I had convinced myself at the time.

The brightly lit central square of Damascus unfolded before me after the darkness had subsided in the underground cells of the security branch and its corridors, soaked with dampness and stench.

I tried to inhale the air of freedom, but my chest felt half-closed as if it had become accustomed to shallow breathing and conserving oxygen intake. I carried my body lightly on the pavement along the square, contemplating my next destination. Fatigue and headache overwhelmed me, so I decided to take a taxi to my cozy room. In those moments, as I boarded the car, my head was filled with half-images, half-questions, and remnants of recent memories. A bell rang inside

my skull, coming from somewhere, sternly and proudly telling me: "You're who you are now, and what's gone is gone!"

I arrived at my room, filled with an unknown vitality, and began to wander within the space defined by the four walls, feeling a bird inside me attempting to break free. It was only moments later that I heard a knock on the door of my room. I opened the door to find Razan standing there, her eyes filled with tears. She threw herself into my arms, embracing me tightly as she cried, saying: "Are you alright? I was so worried about you."

I reassured her, saying: "Yes, my dear, what a coward you are. Is this your first experience? Enough of crying... I'm fine and in good health."

"Did they hit you? Did they harm you?"

"No, my friend, nothing happened..."

But everything happened...

I wished for doomsday to come so I could forget the face of the interrogator and the smell of death that lingered in my lungs. I feel like I've forgotten my body, hanging on the wall of the cell. I feel like I'm still crucified... thrown onto the cold ground.

I wished for doomsday to see the executioners and the interrogators in front of their victims...

## SUFFOCATED IN THE WAKE OF THE MASSCARE

Navigating through the chaos named "Damascus", I reached the central bus station after a grueling journey and grim images relentlessly haunting my poor head. My strength waned as soon as I arrived, feeling like an old man who had reached the end of his life's nightmare. But the tragedy of humanity in Damascus does not end with such logic but with absurdity. A young man approached me, asking if I could help him carry

his belongings to the bus, and I answered him with full compliance, positively...

Moments later, the sky erupted, raining mortar shells on the waiting multitude, crushing them and shattering their hopes of reaching their families safely. That man turned into a pile of limbs.

All the oppressed, poor waiting people turned into fragments. And I survived to bear witness and preserve these images, testifying to the absurdity of God.

I wished for doomsday to apologize to the waiting ones because I survived...

## FORGOTTEN IN NORWAY

It seemed to me that I had escaped from a country ruled by misery and that I had arrived in Norway to embark on a journey in quest of peace in isolation and tranquility in the stunning wilderness.

Here I am, unleashing my hopes for healing for my heart wounded from oppression, torture, and deprivation.

I thought fate brought me to this northern land to gather all the misery and constant turmoil I've experienced, lock it in a soundproof box, and bury it in a hole that no one can dig up.

With naive optimism, I gambled everything on a fresh start in Scandinavia, aspiring to become the person I've always longed to be. Yet, it was disappointment once more...

A letter arrived, informing me of my imminent departure, branding my stay in this land as illegal.

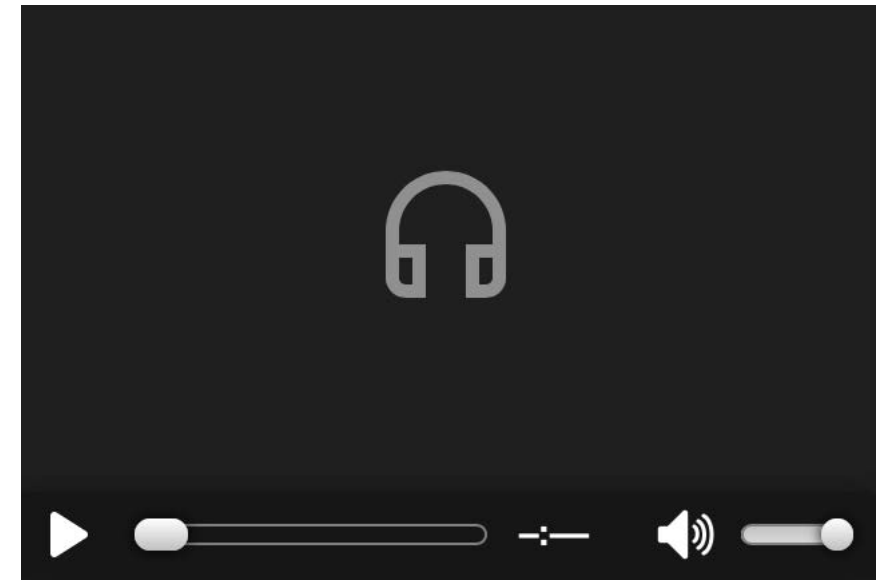
Little did I know, Norway became another stop to pour more sorrow and despair into my already burdened body and soul. This reinforced my belief that this Kafkaesque journey was merely a futile distraction. Yearning for doomsday to bring an end to my weary journey...



VIOLENCE

Marcel Kazadi

# le sacrifice d'un père pour ces enfants



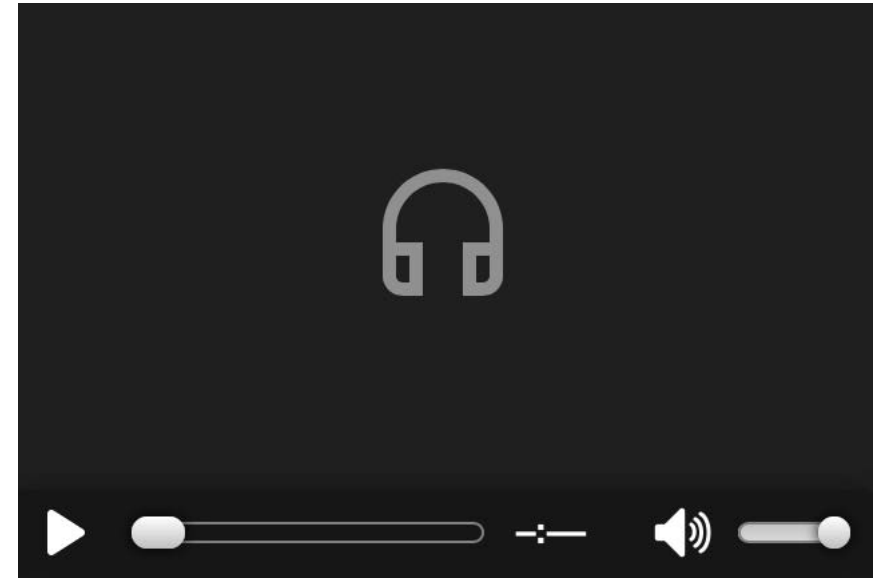
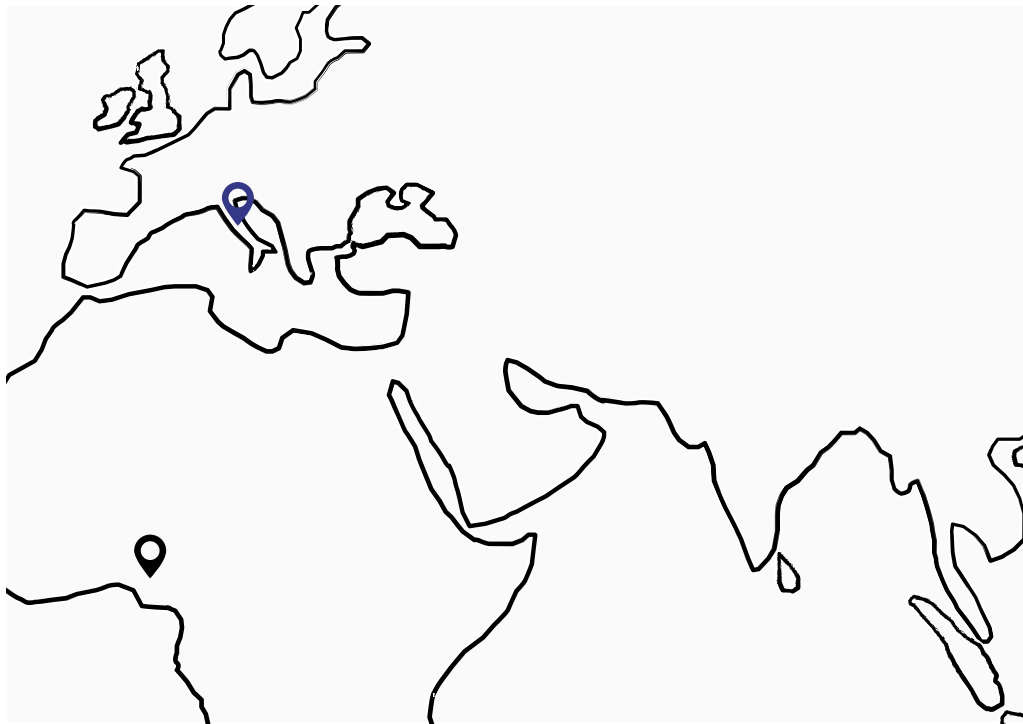
"Au Congo, j'étais poursuivi  
mais j'ai suivi le conseil  
d'une personne que je tenais  
vraiment...c'était mon pasteur.  
Il m'a dit: voilà à ce niveau  
de ton problème, tu dois fuir,  
tu dois t'enfuir toi et ta famille  
parce que tu es en danger."

— Marcel Kazadi

VIOLENCE

Doris Emmanuel

# How I left to live



**"I'm here to tell you my story, how I came to Italy, and what brought me to Italy, and the reason why I passed through the Mediterranean sea."**

— Doris Emmanuel



Katerina Mailinta Hysolliu

# Esy den pernas



Αγαπητή αναγνώστρια, Αγαπητέ αναγνώστη, Λέγομαι Μαϊλίντα-Κατερίνα, κατάγομαι από την Αλβανία, και παρακάτω θα ακολουθήσει μια προσπάθεια που κάνω να αποτυπώσω κάποια προσωπικά μου βιώματα ερχόμενη στην Ελλάδα.

Το όχι και τόσο μακρινό 1996, κάνω την πρώτη μου προσπάθεια να «εισβάλλω» στην χώρα παντρεμένη τότε – και έχοντας και ένα παιδάκι περίπου δύο ετών. Ήταν μια συνθήκη όπως θα μαρτυράνε οι αυτοβιογραφίες και άλλων μεταναστών που πιθανά να έχετε αναγνώσει ιδιαίτερα δύσκολη και αντίξοχη. Ο σύζυγος μου τότε «πέφτει» πρώτος στο «κυνήγι του μεροκάματου». Βρήκαμε όπως όπως ένα σπίτι, το νοικιάσαμε. Ένα σπίτι που δε θύμιζε ιδιαίτερα σπίτι, μην έχοντας όλα αυτά που το καθιστούν βιώσιμο για μία οικογένεια. Έλειπαν από αυτό τα βασικά – χωρίς κρεβάτια, τηλεόραση, κουζίνα για να καταφέρουμε έστω να μαγειρέψουμε ένα φαγητό.

Πρέπει να ήταν δέκα ημέρες που το πάτωμα είχε γίνει το κρεβάτι μας – ενώ το ευτύχημα ήταν ότι καταφέραμε να αποκτήσουμε ένα κρεβατάκι για τον μικρό μου γιο. Πάνω που τα πράγματα είχαν μπει σε μια σειρά δυστυχώς θα πρέπει να ξαναγυρίσω στην Πατρίδα μου την Αλβανία – διότι η μητέρα μου όντας βαριά άρρωστη – αποτελεί την βυθισμένη μου άγκυρα που κατά κάποιο τρόπο ...γυρνάω να ανασύρω. Κάθομαι κοντά της λοιπόν, ώσπου «την χάνω» για πάντα.

Έρχεται λοιπόν η στιγμή που βαδίζω στα ίδια χνάρια και ξεκινώ και πάλι το ταξίδι στην Ελλάδα. Άντε πάλι Μαϊλίντα! Βγάλε εκ νέου βίζα! Ούσα έγκυος επτά μηνών αυτή τη φορά...βρίσκομαι στα σύνορα. Σε μια χαώδης κατάσταση που παντού έβλεπες τρομαγμένα

βλέμματα, κουρασμένα, «αναμειγμένα» πιθανά με αυτήν την γνώριμη ελπίδα. Ελπίδα που μόνο όποιος εγκαταλείπει χωρίς να το θέλει βαθιά το γνώριμο για το «ξένο» μπορεί να δει. Δεν μου επιτρέπουν να εισέλθω στην χώρα! Ο λόγος η εγκυμοσύνη...και όμως! Απαγορεύεται να γεννήσω στην Ελλάδα! Επιμένω και παραμένω εκεί όλη την ημέρα, περιμένοντας να αλλάξει η βάρδια – ευχόμενη οι επόμενοι συνοριοφύλακες να μοιάζουν περισσότερο στην ανθρώπινη τους μορφή και υπόσταση. Όπως και έγινε αφού με αφήνουν επιτέλους να εισέλθω στην χώρα. Κουρασμένη, άπνη, χωρίς φαγητό και νερό για ώρες. Έχοντας χάσει την μάνα μου μόλις στα 47 της έτη – και χωρίς να μπορώ να την κλάψω και να στεναχωρηθώ όπως κάθε άνθρωπος έχει δικαίωμα μπροστά σε έναν χαμό δικού του. Έχει σημασία να αποτυπωθεί το εξής, την δεύτερη φορά που βρέθηκα στα σύνορα αυτά, δεν ήμουν μόνη μου. Ήταν μαζί ο σύζυγος μου, ο μικρός μου γιος, και ένα παιδί που κυοφορούσα. «Να περάσουν ο άντρας και το παιδί! Εσύ όχι!» Αυτή ήταν η απάντησή τους! Αυτή η απάντηση είναι που ενώ εκεί ήμουν μαζί με την οικογένεια μου – με έκανε τόσο φοβισμένη – λες και ήμουν μόνη απέναντι σε έναν ολόκληρο στρατό! Το επαναφέρω στην μνήμη μου, ξανά, όσες φορές και να το σκεφτώ...Τούτο μονάχα δεν μπορώ να καταλάβω, τι είναι αυτό που κάνει έναν άνθρωπο τόσο απάνθρωπο. Τούτο μονάχα δεν έχω καταλάβει, πόσες μορφές έχει ο ρατσισμός; Πόσα πρόσωπα αλλάζει και πόσο ο πόνος που σε μας τους μετανάστες προκαλεί τελικά καταλήγει να είναι τόσο ίδιος σε όλους

μας. Αυτός ο πόνος μας είναι κοινός, γι' αυτό και δεν

είμαστε μόνοι...έχουμε ο ένας τον άλλον.

Είμαι πλέον στην Ελλάδα 30 χρόνια, και μπορώ να πω και τούτο, έχω γνωρίσει και ανθρώπους που μοιάζουν με τους «δικούς μου» ανθρώπους! Ένα μεγάλο ευχαριστώ σε όλους αυτούς!

Με βαθιά εκτίμηση,  
Μαϊλίντα,

# حكاية



## هي قصة جمعت الأمل و الوجد معا

في ربيع 2015\03\7....أصر أخي على السفر بعد ما جمع المال من اشتغاله في السوق لسنوات اتقني مع صديق ليهاجروا عن طريق صربيا بعدها يتمكنوا من الدخول إلى أوروبا و كانت الرحلة مثل ما خططوا لها تم حجز الفندق و عزموا السفر قضاة قرابة أسبوع هناك...بعدها قرروا الدخول إلى المجال السويسري برا

كانت الرحلة من روما إلى صربيا بعدها إلى هنغاريا عبر القطار إلى النمسا مع المبيت في الشارع في ظروف غير ملائمة... متجهين إلى حدود السويسرية هنا كان الدخول إلى الحدود السويسرية على الأرجل مشيا مسافة طويلة... مع الكثير من الخوف و التعب وصلوا إلى سويسرا حيث أختي استقبلتهم مكثوا هناك ليضع أيام ثم غادروا إلى فرنسا لأن سويسرا فيها مراقبة كثيرة و هناك من شاهدتهم و بلغ عنهم...واصلو الرحلة إلى فرنسا حيث اتجه أخي إلى بورجو تحديدًا عند أختي الأخرى في أمل وجود عملا هناك و تستقر الحالة لكن بعد بحث طويل عن عمل تمكن أخي من عمل في محل مخبوزات بالليل لأن المهاجرون لا يشتغلون بالنهار حسب قول صاحب المحل و الأجر كان متدني لقد تم استغلاله...كان أخي عزيز النفس أراد أن يبحث عن عمل ليتمكن من استئجار منزل و الاستقرار فيه لوحده لتخفيف العبئ على زوج أختي لأن الراتب لم يكن يكفي...اتصل بيه صديقه قال له لأنه يمكنه القدوم إلى ألمانيا أين هو وجد عمل... اتجه أخي إلى ألمانيا و التقى بصديقه و هناك بدأت رحلة أخرى لقد وجد عمل في البناء بالنهار و كمساعد مطبخ في الليل و قدم على دورات لتعلم اللغة الألمانية...لقد كان سعيدا بعض الشيء لأنه أحس بالاستقرار المادي نوع ما.... و لأكن الاستقرار النفسي لم يكن مستقرا حيث يتعرض إلى المضايقات في كل مرة من الألمان كان هناك تعسف و ضرب و عنف لفضي في كل مرة كان يخبرني بذلك في كل محادثة ويقول لي لا تخبر أُمي بذلك... كانوا يتكلمون عليه جماعة لضربه يصل العنف حتى فقد الوعي و مرات الكسر.... في دول يقال أنها متقدمة تمارس فيها العنصرية بكل أشكالها....تحمّل أخي الوضع ذلك لأن ينهي دورته التكوينية في اللغة الألمانية مرت السنوات بمرها أكثر من حلوها تعرف إلى فتاه ألمانية و أحبها لأنه صادف مرة و أنقذته من إحدى المعارك و تم الزواج على أمل الاستقرار أن تخفف عليه ألم الغربة و أمل الغريب في بلاد ليست بوطن له

مرت السنوات و أنجب أخي بفتاه كان فرحا بها ومن اجلها قويت عزيمته و كبر أمله في التغيير..... كنت كل مرة اخبره بان يغير مكان سكناه... اخبرني انه جميع أوراقه و محاميه موجود في تلك المقاطعة و أنها أشهر قليلة و يتحصل على أوراقه الرسمية ليتمكن من زيارتنا....مع ابنته البالغة ثلاثة سنوات

في صيف 2021 اخبرنا أخي و هو قمة الفرح بأنه في شهر أكتوبر سوف يزورنا أخيرا بعد ستة أعوام من الغياب و الاشتياق

كنا جميعا مستعدين لان نقيم لهم حفل زفاف هنا على عادتنا و أن نفرح بينهما فرحة تليق بغيايية..... ذهبتنا أنا و أمي إلى تونس العاصمة لشراء إغراض الزفاف و لكن... في 19 من سبتمبر 2021 جانا خبر وفاته كالصاعقة لقد توفي في سبيل إنقاذ جاره الذي كان هو أيضا يعاني من العنف من جماعة ذاتها لقد أحس عليه و طرق بابيه و استنجد بيه بان ينفذه لان الجماعة هدده بالقتل...اتصل أخي بالشرطة و لكن الجماعة قاموا بهجوم مسلح عليه في البناية لقد تفاجأ أخي بالسلاح و خاف على زوجته و ابنته ففكر بابعادهم عن البيت و هرب إلى السطح و كان الجو ممطر و أخي لم يكن لابس حذاء فانزلت ساقه و سقط من ارتفاع <>أربع طابع و توفي في الحال.....<>تفاصيل أخرى مؤلمة الذكر و الكتابة

لقد كنا ننتظر قدومه في شهر أكتوبر حيا يرزق لكن شاء الله و زارنا جثة هامدة في صندوق.... كل الم العالم لا يصف الشعور ولكن تبقى الغصة ترافقتنا طول حياتنا...و لن ننساه

Agos Bereket Tamene

# The red way



*The red way* ἄρ σπῆρ, canvas, acrylic, 250 × 700 mm, 2023.

This painting is inspired by the experience I had while I was crossing the Turkish-Greek border with other people. That day the sea was raging, however my friend, his family and I managed to reach the Greek coast. It had taken me almost one year to get to Greece and I had already been through a lot of difficult situations. Thus, what I witnessed that day has stuck in my mind and I am still haunted by this scene: my friend's face covered with blood while trying to break the barbed wire.





## IDENTITY

Jasemina Zeqiraj

# Italia, ti amo!



“Italia , ti amo!”

Non so come suona detto da una donna albanese, ma io cara Italia ti ho sempre amata!

Ti ho amata quando il nonno scherzava con quelle parole strane “Italiani sono buoni per mangiare maccheroni ” e ti ho amata ogni volta che si parlava di arte, di nascosto a tutti, come per paura di dire la verità di una terra libera e bella, ricca di statue nude e strade larghe e vissute. Ecco, ti ho amata così, e per questo che ho sofferto di più!

Quando in tv dopo gli anni novanta riuscimmo a vedere la Carrà che ballava mezza nuda, io amai pure la danza, volevo essere qualsiasi cosa che assomigliasse a quel dolce suono della famosissima “Da Trieste e in giù !”

Avrei desiderato un corso di chitarra per imitare Toto Cutugno, mi sentivo così libera e così bene di cantare e ballare come se quei palchi, quella lingua e quei sorrisi fossero proprio i miei.

La lingua che si percepisce dall'estero è ben più invitante in confronto all'arrivo in questa terra promessa, per esempio Toto Cutugno entrò nelle nostre case come un membro della famiglia, tra i vestiti lunghi delle donne che mentre lavavano i vestiti, prevalente a mano con sapone duro, cantavano interrottamente tanto quanto il loro velo sventolava sui capi come una piuma al vento, leggero e invitante.

Ricordo questo ed altri motivi che ci spingevano a trascrivere le parole di una canzone, con mia sorella Soni e la videocassetta registrata degli articolo 31, avanti e indietro fino a consumare il nastro, talmente era importante non perdere neanche una virgola.

Dalla tv spesso riusciamo a captare soltanto ciò che vogliamo, in fondo, chi di noi stranieri seguiva il tg1 o notizie di puro giornalismo o cronaca da farsi i conti con le formule razziste o gli svantaggi di essere albanesi o semplicemente diversi?!

Così nasce l'immigrato, un ingenuo sognatore, un

vagabondo in cerca della nuova anima per colmare di serenità la nuova e torbida realtà, un ricercatore di polmoni puliti che rivolga quelle sane parole che costruiscono, arieggiando le camere della mente, orientando e fortificando le fragili speranze, e quel tempo sacro, il tempo che lo straniero non ha, per capire e per non abbandonarsi alla prima periferia ed un sacco a pelo immaginario.

Ci sono voluti 3 mesi e 17 giorni, prima che la mia bocca pronunciasse la prima parola in italiano e soprattutto davanti ad un italiano, tutto questo per non sbagliare, questo per essere impeccabile nel rispetto di chi questa lingua le fu donata in eredità.

Non so se questa consapevolezza ci sia, ma un immigrato, attende, guarda e osserva bene, prima di parlare, spesso per questo motivo!

Vi è un processo che accomuna tutti gli esseri umani ed è la nascita e poi la morte, sono i due eventi che in autonomia non puoi decidere, né come e né dove, ma tutto il resto sì!

Puoi decidere se la tua vita avrà una chiave felice già dal primo sogno che ti sfiora le mani nello scriverlo, la tua felicità nell'immaginarlo, il tuo corpo nel ricercarlo in ogni angolo del mondo per realizzarlo, questo è stato il motivo per cui la mia triste storia di vita si fonda facilmente in dolci momenti, la mia tristezza si trasformò sin da piccola in poesia e il mio corpo seguì ogni scelta della donna più forte e determinata che ho mai conosciuto, mia madre Nezi!

Se dovessi pensare con visione critica, ancora non sento, dopo 24 anni di vita ad Alcamo, di essermi integrata, perché in fondo la mia anima non cerca nessuna integrazione.

Ma mi sento sostenuta e riconosciuta come una persona capace e dedica all'attivismo sociale e civico, una scrittrice e lettrice che vive tra i libri e tra la gente di questo luogo, ma non ho mai voluto essere integrata ad un sistema, integrata all'italianismo giurato tanto

quanto al patriottismo albanese.

Io sono immigrata grazie ad una donna che non ha mai smesso un giorno della sua vita di piangere e lavorare, di amare e contribuire alla crescita non solo dei figli ma di una parte di società e lo farebbe in egual modo, in ogni angolo del mondo dove risiede poiché è la persona che decide quale sia il suo obiettivo e da che parte della vita estendere le sue priorità, quindi, ho solo da apprendere e ringraziare per l'educazione e l'amore profondo che mi ha trasmesso e dalla quale trovo massima ispirazione e motivo di fraterna convivenza con ogni cultura e nazionalità.

**"Se dovessi pensare con visione critica, ancora non sento, dopo 24 anni di vita ad Alcamo, di essermi integrata, perché in fondo la mia anima non cerca nessuna integrazione."**

— Jasemina Zeqiraj

Sì, siamo immigrati in Italia e sono cittadina di due nazioni adesso, di un linguaggio conteso tra entrambe come i sogni, come i miei scritti, come i miei figli consapevoli di una mamma per metà straniera e metà italiana, per un marito che orgogliosamente racconta della mia nazione più di quanto lo faccia io, per gli amici che vedono in me l'anima e il carattere all'infuori di classificazioni ed etichette, e per tutto ciò e per quello che ancora vorrei contribuire a fare ovunque risiedo io e i miei sogni, ti amo Italia, ti amo per come ti ho sempre amata!

## IDENTITY

MD Shahidul Islam

# Déjà vu



Nel 2010, ho varcato per la prima volta la soglia dell'Italia. Era l'inizio di un'avventura straordinaria: una nuova lingua da imparare, una cultura da scoprire, uno stile di vita completamente diverso. L'adattamento non è stato semplice; il cambiamento repentino porta con sé un carico di stress e richiede una rapida capacità di adattamento. Tuttavia, il lato positivo è arrivato presto: ogni giorno ho affrontato la sfida con determinazione, cercando di costruire la mia identità, stringere nuove amicizie e trovare un lavoro che desse senso alle mie giornate. Nei fine settimana, con gli amici, ho condiviso aperitivi e gustato prelibati piatti... questo, per me, è vivere. Dall'alto della mia esperienza, posso dire che gli stranieri spesso si trovano di fronte a questa stessa strada. Mi chiamo Md Shahidul Islam e provengo dal Bangladesh. Da più di dieci anni ormai, ho fatto dell'Italia la mia casa. Arrivai qui a 28 anni, carico di curiosità per immergermi nella cultura italiana.

A casa mia, non ci veniva insegnata la lingua e la cultura italiane a scuola, quindi ho dovuto apprenderle qui. Nonostante avessi una buona padronanza dell'inglese grazie all'istruzione ricevuta in Bangladesh, sentivo il bisogno di vivere appieno la cultura italiana. Non era facile trovare il tempo per seguire le lezioni di italiano tra lavoro e vita quotidiana, quindi ho deciso di imparare da solo: guardavo film in italiano, leggevo giornali e conversavo con i colleghi di lavoro, sempre con un piccolo dizionario a portata di mano. Dopo giorni, mesi e persino anni, il mio desiderio di integrazione e apprendimento ha finalmente dato frutti: ho trovato lavoro in una camiceria artigianale, scoprendo così la bellezza del Made in Italy. Ho amato il mio lavoro e il lavoro mi ha ricambiato, trascorrendo otto anni di soddisfazione professionale. La mia vita sembrava un vero e proprio racconto di fiabe, sempre felice. Poi è arrivata la pandemia. Come molti altri, ho subito un duro colpo: l'azienda ha chiuso e ho perso il mio amato lavoro. Ero psicologicamente distrutto, senza

una via d'uscita. Ho capito che avevo bisogno di una pausa e sono tornato in Bangladesh per ritrovare la forza e la volontà che mi avevano caratterizzato all'inizio. Anche lì, ho continuato a studiare italiano, mantenendo sempre vivo il legame con l'Italia. Nel 2023, ho deciso che era giunto il momento di tornare in Italia e perseguire un corso di studi universitario. Dopo una lunga ricerca, ho trovato il corso che desideravo all'Università per Stranieri di Siena, dove attualmente sto frequentando il corso di laurea triennale in Lingua, Letteratura e Arte Italiane in prospettiva internazionale. Durante questo percorso accademico, ho sentito crescere in me una nuova responsabilità: condividere le mie conoscenze.

**"È un'attività che mi gratifica profondamente; cerco sempre di mettermi nei panni delle persone che ho di fronte, cercando di comprendere appieno il loro carattere e la loro situazione."**

— MD Shahidul Islam

Ho deciso di aiutare gli immigrati del Bangladesh che si trovano in Italia e affrontano le stesse difficoltà linguistiche che ho incontrato io all'inizio del mio viaggio. Ho contattato diverse associazioni che collaborano con il comune, gli ospedali, le scuole e altre strutture dove la mediazione linguistica è essenziale. Il mio lavoro è quello di facilitare la comunicazione e

costruire un ponte tra l'Italia e il Bangladesh. È un'attività che mi gratifica profondamente; cerco sempre di mettermi nei panni delle persone che ho di fronte, cercando di comprendere appieno il loro carattere e la loro situazione. A volte, mi ritrovo a riflettere sui miei primi giorni in Italia e mi sembra di rivivere quelle emozioni. È un déjà vu, ma con la consapevolezza che ho acquisito nel corso degli anni, so che posso superare qualsiasi sfida che la vita mi riservi."

IDENTITY

Doreida Xhogu



## IDENTITY

Sofia Polou Cambiri

# Machi



Αρ, αλακλήζεο, πνιέο αλακλήζεο θαη εηθόλοο γξακκέλοο κε θαηηηγξαθηθή γξαθή ζε έλα εκεξνιόγηλ κε θόθηηλνλ εκώθηπνλ.

Ήκνπλ 10 ρζόλοο όηαλ έγξαζα ηελ πξώηε ζειίδα ηνπ εκεξνιόγηλ.

Με ιέλε Σνθία. Ήκνπλ έλα ληξνπαιό θνξίηηο γεκάηλνλ ελέγεηα θαη δνιήάηα πνπ ηεο άξεζε λα θάζεηαη κόλε ηεο δίπια ζε ζάιαζζα θαη λα θνηηάεηαη θαζεηά εθεί πνπ ζπλαηηέηαη ε ζάιαζζα κε ηνλ νπξαλό, ζαλ λα ήζειε λα ζπλαηηέηαη κε θάηη πνπ ήηαλ ηαπηόξηνλα ηόζν θαζεηά αηά θαη ηόζν θνιηά, κε ηνλ εαηηό ηεο.

Φπζηθά θαη ηόηε δελ κπνύζα λα θαηαλάβν απηή ηε ζπλαηηέηα, απιά ηώξα κε πνιή ζπγθίλεζε ζπκάκαηα θαη λνζηαίω απηέο ηεο κνιαιηέο ζηηηέο.

Τν εκεξνιόγηλ ήηαλ ε θαηηέηεο κπθίηε ζε παηηηθά κπ ρζόηηα κε ηελ νπνία κπνύζα λα κηήζν, λα κηηάδνκαη, λα εθπζηεξεύνκαη γεγνλόηα θαη ζπλαηηέηαη.

Ήηαλ απηό ην εκεξνιόγηλ πνπ σο θνηηήηεηα αθόκα, κηηάζεηα ηελ κεηαίηεηε απόθαζε πνπ είπα πάηεη ηόηε, λα κεηαηηέηε. Ζνύζα ζε κηα παλέκνξε παξαζαηάζεηα πνιε, ζηελ λόηηα Αηβαλία.

Ήηαλ αξέο ηεο δεθαεηίαο ηνπ 0 θαη ε Αηβαλία είρε αλνίκεηα ηα ζύλδα ηεο.

Ο ζείνο κπ, ν αδεηθόο ηνπ παηέηα κπ έηπγε ζηελ Αζήλα. Έπηζε δνπλεηά ζαλ θεπνπξόο ζε κηα βία εθνπηηηώλ. Τόηε απηή ε νηηνγέηεηα είρε αλάγε από κηηέηεηα θαη έωηεζαλ ηνλ ζείνο κπ, κηηηο κπνύζε λα βνεηέηε. Εθείλν ηνπο κίεζε γηα κέλα θαη όηαλ ήζεε λα πάηεη ηελ νηηογέηεηα ηνπ ζηελ Αηβαλία, ζπδήηεζε κε εκέλα θαη κε ηνπο γνιείο κπ θαη ζπκθνιήζακε όηη λα θύγο ηε εγώ.

Η πξώηε κέηα ζηελ Αζήλα, ζηνλ εκνρθηό ηεο νηηογέηεηαο πνπ ζα εγξαδόκπλ.

Έλα ππέξνλ ζπηηηηηά από ηελ ζάιαζζα, κε απηείηεηα γθαδόλ θαη κηα πηζίια δίπια ζε ζηηά δέηεηα πνπ ηελ ζέπαδαλ κε ηελ ζηηά ηνπο!

Απὸ ἡν πεξηβάνινλ ἡῆαλ καγηθὸ γηα κέλα θαη ε  
πεῶηε αἰζζεζε ἡῆαλ ελζνπζηαζκόο. Ὀκσο ζύληηκα  
θαηάιαβα ὄηη ε κεγαίηεξε δπζθνῖα κνπ ἡῆαλ ε  
επηθνηηολῖα ζηελ εηεληθὴ γιώζζα. Εἶρα πνιῖα  
αθνύζκαηα, θαηαἰάβαηηα ὀκσο δπζθνῖεπὸκνπια  
πάξα πνιὺ λα εθθῶαζῆ. Ἀπὸ ηελ αξρὴ κε  
αγθάηηαζαλ θαη κνπ δεῖμαλε πνιὺ αγάπε. Μνπ  
κάζαλε βήκα- βήκα ηελ ἡέρλε ηεο καγεηηθὸ θαη  
εμειρζεθα ζε κηα θαηὴ καγεηηζζα.  
Πνιέο θνῦξέο ζεθεθὸκνπλ πσο ζα ἡῆαλ αλ εἶρα  
παξακείιεη ζηελ Αἰβαλῖα, ζα ἡκνπλ θαζεγῆηηα  
ηεο αἰβαλῆθὸ γιώζζαο. Μέζα κνπ γηλὸηαλ κῖα  
ζύγθνπζε κεηαμὺ ηεο επηζπκῖαο λα δνπνῖεπ ζαλ  
θαζεγῆηηα θαη ἀπὸ ηελ ἄηε ηεο ἀλάγθεο κνπ λα  
δνπνῖεπ ζαλ καγεηηζζα.  
Με απηὴ ηελ ζύγθνπζε θαη κῖα αἰζζεζε  
θαηηεξόηεηαο πεξινύζαλ ἡα ρῶληα.  
Μετὰ ἀπὸ πέιηε ρῶληα ζηελ Εὐιάδα παηηεξέπνκαη.  
Ὁ ἄιηεο κνπ εἶιαη κνλαρνηγὸο θαη ἡν ἔζηκν  
ἰέηη ὄηη πεῖπεη λα θενηηῖε ηνπο γνιέηο ηνπ.  
Απὸ ἡῆαλ δύζθνῖν γηα κέλα γηαηὶ θαηαπῖεζα  
ἡα ζπλαηζζῆκατὰ κνπ. Τν ζεηηθὸ ὀκσο ἡῆαλε  
ζηα νηθνηκῆα, δνπνῖεακε ἡῆεξε ἀηηκα θαη  
ἡῆαλ πην εὐθνῖν λα καδέσνπε ρῶληα γηα λα  
αγνῶαζνπκε ἡν δεθὸ καο ζπῖηη.  
Μεγῖοζε ε νηθνηγέιεηα καο κε ἡνλ εἰρκό ηοι  
παηηῶλ καο. Με δεαθνῶ πέιηε ρῶληα ν ἔιαο  
απ' ἡνλ ἄηνλ, καο θέεαλ πνιὺ ραζὰ θαη επηπρία.  
Ἡ βνῆεηα ηεο γηαγῆαο θαη ηνπ παππνῦ ἡῆαλ  
αηζζετὴ ζῆν κεγῖοκα ηοι παηηῶλ γηαηὶ ἐκεῖο  
νῆ γνιέηο ἰεῖπακε πνιέο ὤεο, γηαηὶ δνπνῖεακε  
ζε δύν δνπνῖεο. Τεηηθὰ κετὰ ἀπὸ πνιὺ θόπν θαη  
πενηζπάζεηα κνπῆεζακε λα αγνῶαζνπκε ἡν δεθὸ καο  
ζπῖηη θαη λα λῶζνπκε αζθῖεηα ὄηη δελ ζα κνπῆε  
θάπνηηο λα καο βγῖεη ἀπὸ ἡν ζπῖηη.  
Τα παηηῶλ κεγῖοκαλ θαη ἔηη ἡῆεξε ε ὤεα ν κεγῖο  
γῆνο λα πάεη ζῆν ζρνηεῖν.  
Ἡ δαζθῖα ἀλῆηηθῶζεθε θάπνηηο καζεηηαθὸο

δπζθνῖεο θαη καο πενηεῖιεη λα ζπκβνπῖεπνῦκε  
ἔιαλ ρρνηόγν. Απῆη ἡῆαλ ε πεῶηε επαθὴ κνπ  
κε ρρνηόγν ε νπνῖα ἡῆαλ ἡν ζεκέηηο ἰῖο ηεο  
αἰαγῆο πνπ ζα εἰρὸηαλε ζῆε δσὴ κνπ. Πῆγαια  
λα θαηαῖεζο ἡνλ πόλν κνπ θαη ηελ ἀπνῖα κνπ.  
Πενηαλῶο ζῆεεα κνπῆε λα πσο, ὄηη ἡα παηηῶλ  
δε ρεηῶδνληαη ρρνηόγν, γνιέηο ρεηῶδνληαη.  
Αλαπὸθεπθηα ζπλαηηεζα δπζθνῖεο, ἀπνῖεο,  
πενηεῖκαηα ζηελ ζρέζε κνπ κε ἡα παηηῶλ κνπ.  
Ἡ ἀπὸθαζε λα δνπνῖεπ κε ἡνλ εαπὸ κνπ θαη λα κπσο  
ζε κῖα ζεξαπεπῆηη ζρέζε ἡῆαλ ἡν κνπῆεηα ηεο  
δσὴο κνπ πνπ κε ἔβγαιε ζε θηεηηλῶο θαη κεγῖοππο  
ἰεσθῶππο.  
Ἐκαζα ἡη ζεκαῖιεη ε ζρέζε γνιηνῦ παηηῶλ, πσο  
κνπῆεη λα ζῆεηεηα ν γνιηόο ζῆε ζῆε ηνπ, πῶο λα  
αλῆηεηηεη ἡα πενηεῖκαηα πνπ εθδωῶνληαη  
εκπῖεθνηαο ζε απηὴ ἡν παηηῶλ

Ξεθῶληαο ἀπὸ κῖα (•) θνπθῖδα θαη  
δεαζρῖδνληαο ὀηε ηε δσὴ κνπ κέρηη ἡῶεα ζε ἔια  
θόζκν πνπ ἡα ζύιιεθα βεῖρνπλ βεῖρῆ θαη ε ζῖαζζα  
εἶιαη ἡαξαγκέλε ἀπὸ ἡα κεγῖα θύκαηα!!!!  
Τν δέιηε κνπ ἔρεη δπλαηὸ θνῦξὸ, βαζῆεο θαη  
δπλαηέο ἰῖεο!  
Εἶιαη νῆ βάζεηο κνπ, ζῆε δσὴ κνπ. Ἀπὸ εθῖ ἀλῖῶ  
δύλακε θαη ελέγεηα λα θενηηῖο απηὸ ἡν κηθῶ  
ζπῶπ, πνπ ἡῶεα ἔρεη γίιεη ἔια θνππῆεο δπλαηὸ  
θαη ὀκνῆθν δέιηε πνπ ηελ θαηηῶλ ηνπ, ηελ  
δεζηῖεη ἔιαο ἡῆηο ἰακπεξόο θαη θηεηηλῶο!!!  
Πῶο απ' ἡε ζῖαζζα πεηῶλε δύν εἰεῖεεα πνπῆε, ε  
ζπλαηεηα κνπ!





"Η απόφαση να δουλέψω με τον εαυτό μου και να μπω σε μια θεραπευτική σχέση ήταν το μονοπάτι της ζωής μου που με έβγαλε σε φωτεινούς και μεγάλους λεωφόρους."

— MD Shahidul Islam

## IDENTITY

Mohamed Saleh Saeed Sidi Mohamed

# We are the migrants



