

Frères Migrants - The Poet's Declaration

By Patrick Chamoiseau

- 1- The poets declare: Neither orphaned nor ineffectual, pain has no borders!
- 2- The poets declare that the undefined universe holds the enigma of our world, that this enigma holds the mystery of all living things, that in this mystery throbs the poetry of mankind: not one could be dispossessed of the other!
- 3- The poets declare that the mutual accomplishment of the universe, of the planet, of the living world and of mankind can only be envisioned in the horizontal fullness of the living world—that way of being in the world through which humanity is no longer a threat to itself. And for what exists...
- 4- The poets declare that it is through the reign of the powers now in force, under the iron of their glory, that the challenges threatening our existence on this planet have emerged; that therefore everything sensitive and alive and human in existence under our sky has the right, and the duty, to turn away from them and to take part in a very human fashion, or in another even more human fashion, in its own disappearance.
- 5- The poets declare that coming and going and turning back along the shores of the world is a Poetic Right, that is: a decency that arises from all known Rights aiming to protect the most precious part of our humanity; that coming and going and turning back are a homage to those one is moving towards, to those whose spaces one passes through, and that it is a celebration of human history to honor the entire earth with one's drive and dreams. Anyone can decide to live out the celebration. Anyone can find themselves one day with no

choice but to live it, or to relive it. And everyone, in the strength to act, their power to exist, is bound to take the utmost care of it.

6- The poets declare that in terms of individual or collective migrations across countries, across nations, across the world, no penalty should be inflicted on anyone for anything, and that solidarity could not, in any decent nation, be a crime.

7- The poets declare the racism, xenophobia, indifference to the Other who comes and passes by and is suffering and calling out are indecencies that in the history of mankind have led the way solely to exterminations, and therefore that not taking in the one who comes and passes by and is suffering and calling out—even for good reasons—is a criminal act.

8- The poets declare that a security policy that allows people to die and suspends individual liberties in the name of Law and Order is contrary to the principle of Safety, which can only be guaranteed by the inalienable, indivisible exercise of Fundamental Rights.

9- The poets declare that a national or supranational Constitution that would not provide for procedures to welcome those who pass through and come and call out would likewise be contrary to the Safety of all.

10- The poets declare that no refugee, asylum seeker, migrant by necessity, voluntary ejected, poetic displaced person, could appear in any place in the world without having—not one face but all faces, not a heart but all hearts, not a soul but all souls. That he is an incarnation of the History of all our stories and thereby becomes the absolute symbol of human dignity.

11- The poets declare that never more shall a man on this planet have to walk on foreign soil—all lands will be his native land—nor stay on the margins of citizenship—he will be graced with every citizenship—and that citizenship, in accordance with the diversity of the world, could never decide what cultural baggage and tools it might please him to choose.

12- The poets declare that, no matter the circumstances, no child is born outside of childhood; that childhood is the salt of the earth, the soil of our soil, the blood of all bloods, that childhood is at home wherever it goes, like the breath of the wind, the purity of the storm, the fertility of thunder, a priority in all things, whole from the start, and citizen by default.

13- The poets declare that the entire Mediterranean shall from now on be the Site of an homage to those who have died there, that the bedrock of its shores shall support a celebratory arch open to winds and open to the faintest lights, spelling out for all the letters of the word welcome in every language, in every song, and that this word alone constitutes the ethic of our common world.

14- The poets declare that borders merely signal a partition of rhythms and flavors, that do not oppose but harmonize, that separate only to join together, and distinguish only to unite, and therefore that no guard dog, no people smuggler, shall have any reason to do his work there, no desire any reason to suffer there.

15- The poets declare that every Nation is a Nation-Relation, sovereign but in solidarity, offering care to all and responsible for all on the carpet of its borders.

16- Brother migrants, who live this world, who live it well before we do, the poets declare in your name that the common will against brute force will feed on the smallest of impulses. That this effort is within all of us, in the

ordinariness of every day. That the struggle of each person is the struggle of all. That the happiness of all twinkles in the struggle and grace of each of us, until it sketches out a world where that which pours over borders transforms at that very border, on every side of the walls and all the barriers, into *one hundred hundred hundred million fireflies!* — just one to maintain hope in everyone's grasp, and the others to guarantee the sweep of this beauty against hostile forces.

The Poets' Declaration is an excerpt from Patrick Chamoiseau's book Frères migrants: Contre la barbarie (Migrant brothers: Against barbarism, Seuil, May 2017). The declaration was first published on February 2 in French by the news website Mediapart.