



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Youth Forum
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CHASING TOMORROW



POETRY COLLECTION FROM
THE 9TH UNESCO YOUTH FORUM

The ideas and opinions expressed in this poetry collection are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

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CONTENTS

3 – FOREWORD

5 – PART 1: OUR VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

6 – Hymne à la nature

6 – Stranded

7 – Wandering hope

8 – Mercy

9 – Deux ils

10 – Out of glory

13 – They

13 – Clouds

15 – PART 2: STORIES FROM THE FUTURE

16 – What more can there be

18 – Wings of change

20 – Mirage

21 – Me dijeron que nací en el Sur

22 – Tickle

23 – Any Road

23 – Father said

24 – Moraa from my village

25 – Hispaniola 2030

ABOUT THE 9TH UNESCO YOUTH FORUM

The 9th UNESCO Youth Forum – Young Global Citizens for a Sustainable Planet – took place in Paris, France on the 26 to 28 October 2015. The Forum brought together around 500 young women and men from all over the world to focus on issues related to Climate Change and the post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda, to ensure that the voices of future generations remain front and centre of the new development agenda. Read more here.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This poetry collection was edited by Gioel Gioacchino, Research Director, and Sol Howard, Writer and Head of the Gender and Sexuality Research team, at [Recrear](#).

Recrear is a youth-led organization working with creative research methods to ensure that young people actively participate in the design and implementation of transformative community initiatives.

FOREWORD

During the 9th UNESCO Youth Forum around 500 young people from all over the world came together for three days to imagine the future in 2030. The participants discussed issues related to climate change and the post-2015 sustainable development agenda with the aim of drafting a series of recommended actions to be presented at UNESCO's General Conference.

This poetry collection was conceived as a way to capture some of the conversations that took place during the Forum that could not be expressed in the formal recommendations, and at a crucial time for the new development agenda when now, more than ever, young voices must be heard. The collection was developed entirely by youth forum participants and provides a creative space for them to express their hopes, fears and visions for the future.

Poetry breaks down patterns of thoughts and clichés; for our contributors it was often an exercise in letting go, a moment of play, a challenge they had not enjoyed since high school.

This collection is divided into two parts. Part 1 looks forward to, and grapples with, images of the future. Part 2 of the collection is set within the future.

In working with each poet, the authors were encouraged to discover their visions, to step inside tomorrow and bring back a fragment for the reader. The idea was to see, hear, taste their futures. In this space, the contributors faced their feelings, finding deep grief, cynicism, getting lost, stumbling upon outrage, and reached out for extraordinary futures.



PART 1
OUR VISIONS
OF THE FUTURE

HYMNE À LA NATURE

La nature est louange, chante-la
La nature est peinture, contemple-la
La nature est vivante, respecte-la
La nature est saveur, goûte-la
La nature est richesse, préserve-la
La nature est musique, écoute-la
La nature est caresse, jouis-en
La nature est expérience, recommence-la
La nature a ses limites, accepte-les
La nature te donne la vie, gratifie-la
La nature est amour, partage-le
La nature est toi, embrasse-la

(Denis Linckens, Belgium)

STRANDED

So where shall we go now?
Asked the kid who left a burning house
For they; our people, never wanted us to stay
For the others; behind the seas, never wanted us to
come

Stranded between here and there
I thought;
Is it ever a possibility to overcome
time
& space
and make fun
of all the bad days
We once lived?

(Salim Salama, Palestine/Syria)

WANDERING HOPE

She begins her day with a walk
wandering restless soul
reminiscing
around the tulips
beside a lake,
whispering hills
crowned in beams of sunrise.
Wet grass beneath her feet
fluttering hair
she touches the dewdrops on leaves.

She strolls
A moment of joy
A hymn
It's the humming birds.
Walking like the whole universe is hers
She promises to herself
to never yield to fear
echoes of wars, chaos and unrest.

She vows to make world
free from worries and woes.

She will see
kids holding hands
Running light
In streets of laughter

She will see
Serenity reign supreme.

(Pashmina Abid, Pakistan)

MERCY

Nature, our beloved Mother Earth,
Who can stop her brutal wrath?

Her wailing erupts volcanoes of the North
Melting ice, and shedding her weight in the South

Oh! Her fury's upon us with a heavy-hand
fierce wildfire devours our land

Ceaseless shattering ice
swallows our inherited paradise

losing islands, bodies
afloat the sea like sacrifice

Rich soil turns to cracked rocks
Scorched harvest and seasons in locks

Jet fumes deform life's adventure,
Luxurious quest stealing the unborn's future,

Now I recall the words of the gnomes!
Warning us of the punishment to come

Alas! haunted by the irrefutable
motion of extinction

Now! this crossroad we must choose,
Our eyes open
in the blind night
Waving flags of truce
We whisper
"Mercy"

(Osamudiamwen Osaghae, Nigeria)

DEUX ILS

Deux ils,
Peau contre peau, je sens ta main glisser sur mon
torse,
Mon cœur jaune éclaire ma poitrine, au rythme de
ton souffle
Laisse moi plonger au travers de ce corps, je sais je
fais entorse,
Mais je m'en fous, je prie pour que la haine s'essouffle

Deux ils,
Pourquoi ne pouvons-nous donc pas nous lier,
Je m'enivre de ton regard, et comprends alors la
vérité,
Tu es comme moi, tu cherches seulement à aimer
N'aie pas peur, le temps tournant ils vont changer

Deux ils,
Comme un appel d'air, je veux crier que j'ai le droit
d'exister,
Je vais tailler les ronces qu'on a plantées à nos pieds,
Laisser les roses voluptueuses s'émanciper,

En mémoire de ces « ils » qui ont suivi les aurores
boréales,
A la recherche d'autres mondes plus dorés.

Deux ils,
Demain, les chemins sentiront le jasmin,
Mes papas pourront enfin se donner la main,
Sans craindre le regard mitrailleur de ces citoyens,
Joyeux d'aller à l'école chercher leurs gamins.

Deux ils,
A présent, mon cœur jaune peut illuminer le ciel,
Fier de ne plus craindre le poignard de l'injure,
Utilise la langue comme arme contre les arriérés,
Ainsi que pour embrasser l'être aimé.

(Denis Linckens, Belgium)

OUT OF GLORY

1.
Rrr..running out of time, out of glory,
Out of money, out of choices for our future.

It's not that there's none, it's that they lack.
Like our ability to see through our own cultures
Aren't we uncivilized anyway?

Rrr... No apocalypse,
Just a never-ending mythe de Sisyphe¹.
Building today to destroy tomorrow
Or the other way around
I forgot what Schumpeter had said
Rrr...Am I allowed not to be original?
Since when being unconventional
Has become the norm?
Si le sol te brûle les pieds c'est que tu ne cours pas
assez vite²

1 French: The Myth of Sisyphus – as told by Alfred Camus (1942): an absurd never-ending ordeal.

2 French: If the ground is burning your feet, you are not running fast enough (West African proverb).

Can I actually afford it? Aspiring at being somebody
great different from Ban Ki-Moon
Endelea kukimbia, ukimbie, ukimbie lakini muda
wenu umeshakwisha³
I am not complaining about the routine, the métro-
boulot-dodo⁴ of the commuting Parisian

Thinking about a world we have never tried, can I
afford it?
Being too ambitious, or not enough, can I afford it?
Who calls the shots?
Can I afford it? Can I afford it? CAN I AFFORD IT?
Am I worthy?

2.
The rulers have sought their peers to form their circle
I'm running in circles, apparently not theirs
Keep seeking.

3 Kiswahili: Keep on running, run, run but your time has already expired [before your very own birth].

4 French : Metro-job-sleep (Parisian expression).

Never consider as a present option being king.
Slave today, dreaming of tomorrow
As water is omnipresent in the morrow
When lives are fresh, eager, early, awake, at their
dawn
Before investing in the day, in the future via loans
Our appropriation of the world's legacy,
Our vision for the future is taken for granted
Even though the only grants we get are politically-
oriented
Never a big fish anyway
Kono michi shikanai⁵

3.

Time.

Never had so much
Never used it so despicably
Focused on dealing with pay-back time
A list of hardships we are paid to forget,

⁵ Japanese: There is just one way (Abe Shinzo's slogan for his 2015 campaign for the Prime Minister office in Japan), similar to Margaret Thatcher's TINA ("There is No Alternative) in the UK.

Forget, forget, as long as they pay you to, catch-up
Climate change, colonialism, structural adjustment
programs
Pensions' systems, inequalities, materialism, fastfood
ketchup..
I told you to forget already!, you're outmatched. Run,
don't fight.

Youth

What's its use?

What's its worth?

Running anyway

To reproduce what was doomed to play

Culture or when your legitimacy is based on others
As if your birth and living needed the senile
Wild -white- man at the backend of the village
When your own face has been stolen
And your use predefined

Eviscerated

Condensed

Gutted

Thin.

Nil.

C'mon,

Dare to be normal

That is real power, greater than

– Suits and ties.

Sweaty hands and cheap talk

Mediocrity is not an option for me

It lacks drive, goals and passion

Factice is the power fomented by our current
gerontocracy

Korocracy⁷, iyar yârä⁸ is key

⁷ Mix of Bambara & Greek: 'koro' = the elders in Bambara, 'cracy' = power. However, 'korê' = the youth in Greek.

⁸ Hausa: Power to/of the youth.

No clash of civilizations, just a clash of generations

Earn your ticket to the winning team:

Aux âmes bien nées, la valeur n'attend point le
nombre des années⁹.

No more catching up. Stop running.

If with your suit, seeking recognition, you lick a lion's
tongue

Never forget you'll be next in line to please his
appetite

Seek greatness and glory for the next three
civilizations to come.

(Kwamou Eva Feukeu, Cameroon)

⁹ French: «For souls nobly born, valor doesn't await the passing of years» from *The Cid* (1642) by Pierre Corneille.

THEY

When they are left
hopeless, helpless, sinking.

when their salt fills the oceans
and licks the reefs

pray we can stay silent no more:
pray we all rise up
speak and move as one, say
they
are not children of a lesser god.
say,
they too
are family.

pray we shake their sturdy hands
listen to the wounds in their eyes
pray we taste the coffee
they made-
very sweet, like back home.

(George S. Njoroge, Kenya)

CLOUDS

The future feels like a mirage.

Chasing fluffy clouds
Leaping, soaring,
Hands empty.

(George S. Njoroge, Kenya)



PART 2
STORIES FROM
THE FUTURE

WHAT MORE CAN THERE BE?

Do you remember that sense of wonder when you first looked up at the stars?

I do.

I remember a spark of delight in my eyes,
A kaleidoscope shifting, awakening.
I remember a flame of curiosity breathing in my heart,
My imagination flickering into the shadows of a cave.
I remember my guts churning in the openness of the vast unknown,
Like a hand digging through a pumpkin's twisted innards.

But I lost that somewhere along the way...

Being told to sit still.

To be quiet.

To answer others' questions first,

To explore my own later.

I lost it. I plummeted to the ground, the branch of my favourite tree cracked underneath my feet.

My tears splashed into the dust, alone, forgotten at school.

My heart crushed in on itself. I sobbed with the anguish of my first love.

I hurt.

I swathed myself in bandages.

I bound myself in layer upon layer of protection.

I would not hurt like that again. I would not let anyone hurt like that again.

I would change myself. I would change others.

I worked with sweating, raging intensity.

I worked with heavy, trudging despair.

I worked.

Eventually, I had stopped my hurt. I had stopped the hurt of those closest to me.

I now felt very little.

I got what I wanted...

But this was what I had wanted.

Not what I want now.

Empty and unsure,
Adrift from the fulfilment I expected.
I wandered.
Aimless and dazed.
Cold violence in the apathy.
A moment of eternity took hold.

And then I looked up.
I saw a child staring up at the sky.
Up at a star.
A distant taste of something, almost forgotten,
stirred in my mouth.
A slight twinkle crept into the corner of my eye.

Lightning shattered through my polluted haze,
Echoing pieces of my reflection back to me...
I saw what I had become.
A zombie. A corpse of my younger self. Wrapped in
stale, bandaged armour.
Striving to avoid the pain of the past.

Blinders on, sure of my course.

I saw the things I had missed.
Each shard of light showing the life of choices not
taken,
Glimpses into lost paths, smells of lost adventures.
Torment swept through me.
I realized what I had lost.

I gasped for breath.

I began to realize what I was finding.

I fanned the embers of curiosity, still faintly glowing
in my heart.
I peeled off the wretched bandages. I exposed my
guts again.
I wiped my eyes clear.
And I asked myself, what more could there be?

No longer would I allow the pain of my past to be my
compass.

WINGS OF CHANGE

No longer would I blind myself to the present
potentials around me.
No longer would I run from a haunted future.
No longer.

I took a breath.

And now,
Here I stand,
With my students around me.
We gaze up at the stars together each day.
Standing full in our uncertain future.
Standing full in the face of hurt.
Standing full in imagination.
Standing full in wonder...
What more could there be?

(Mackenzie Dickson, USA)

I open my eyes,
I observe.
The damp grass beneath my feet
confirms it.

It's the time of the butterflies,
a ballet of bright blue wings.
It's the time of "las mariposas",
those who danced to eternity,
and planted the seeds
to fight for our equal rights.

There used to be days
when the suffocating air
clouded our eyes
and our minds.

Wasting the planet in a blink of an eye;
blindly devouring our life.

I open my eyes and I realize
those days are behind.

A dazzling peel.
Heavy, tropical scent. A fruit
grown by my hands.
I taste its fresh yellow pulp.

The gurgle of running water,
like a polished mirror
exalts the rejuvenated landscape.

The elixir of a healthy city
with leafy green lungs.
A peaceful home,
where all fears are gone.

I open my eyes and I see her.
Sitting next to me,
her tousled hair in the wind.
Daydreaming.

She knows she can go
as far as she wants,
even beyond the stars.

A free spirit she is,
no one to hold her back.
It is the legacy of the butterflies,
those who inspired until the last breath of their life.

(Cecilia Garcia, Mexico)

MIRAGE

Plagued with hope
we travelled
our vein-like city streets
looking for the road less travelled
hoping
it'll take us
to tomorrow.

But
our dry
inhales
and
exhales
have started to burden
our lungs
and chafe
our insides.

Our hearts
sick of repetition
started
skipping beats

just for something to do.

Our travels
have led us
nowhere.
We went only
in circles.
Our hearts giving our feet
a beat to dance to

Maybe tomorrow is a land promised for people who
aren't us
but we have spent too long
chasing after a mirage,
our feet
no longer
know
how to
stop
twirling.

(Manar AlSagob, South Arabia)

ME DIJERON QUE NACÍ EN EL SUR

Me dijeron que nací en el Sur
Me enseñaron que el Sur está debajo del Norte,
y que el Norte está encima del Sur.
Me dijeron que los del Sur eran pobres, y que los del
Norte ricos.
Me dijeron que venía de un país sub desarrollado,
luego, en vía de desarrollo.

Crecí en el sur del Sur.
En un sur incomprendido e ignorado.
Allí, en donde son pocos los elegidos y muchos los no
educados.
Crecí entre ideas y modelos
Creyendo que el mundo estaba dividido en dos.

Crecí soñando, sobre todo seguí soñando
¡Voy a estudiar en esa Universidad!, grité a viva voz.
Miraron firmemente, desconfiaron y dijeron: no es
posible.
¿Acaso estaba condenada a seguir el mismo orden?
¿Pasar por el mismo ciclo de otras generaciones?
No.

Resistí y creí.
Fui del Sur al Norte y del Norte al Sur
Sí, como el buey aré. Y llegué a la Universidad.
Aprendí, leí, discutí, viajé, defendí, descubrí, lloré,
creí, hablé, observé.

Resiste,
Cree,
Lee,
Conoce.

Encuentra el punto en donde converge el Norte y el
Sur,
allí donde se traspasa la frontera del miedo
¡Pregunta!

Descubrirás la riqueza que es contenida en cada uno.
No hay un solo modelo, ni un camino perfecto.
Norte y Sur están llamados a actuar juntos.

(Sofía Villalba, Colombia)

TICKLE

I hold their hands
and we walk together
into the musky wood.

I swell.

Rio and Fiore's
first walk
with SelvaSuits*
Our hearts expand
to hear the breath of the soil,
to caress the trunks.

'Mamma...'
Rio cries
joy,
and I do too.
Fiore hugs a tree
in silence.

Alongside a million ants
we tickle the earth.

We blend in
Riding
a chorus
of chirps
and squaks.
We stroke the ground,
hissing.

We belong
To a body
In celebration.

Selva is just a material –
An organic consciousness magnifier
Just a piece
of this revolution.

Back home
Rio and I play bicycle,
Tiny cold feet
moving with mine.
Fiore pensive:

'Mamma,
today I felt shooting stars
in my chest...
Could it be that
the tree spoke to me?'

I smile

Rio keeps pedaling:
I think it's possible:
The wind
also
told me stories.

(Gioel Gioacchino, Italy)

ANY ROAD

I love my commute,
On a hot sunny African day
Driving my car down the meadow,
Past the hill that reveals the sun,
Along the small lake
Along the peaceful winding road up the mountain.
Alas, I am there.

I take off my simulator.
And begin my day.

(George S. Njoroge, Kenya)

FATHER SAID

"Since my youth," father said,
"I went back to what my forefathers ate
Arrow roots, bananas and millet porridge."

(George S. Njoroge, Kenya)

MORAA FROM MY VILLAGE

Angry drops of rain hit the ground
Splashing patterns into the atmosphere
The rain gods must be displeased with my village,
to cry this heavy.
In the middle of the handful of shops
Lies a tiny trading stall
Rugged green walls
Stack sacks full of cereals fill up the room
A light blue plastic chair faces outside
Moraa sits on it.
Her big brown eyes staring blankly to the events
outside
She looks up
On her chapped lips a random knowing smile
Over the years, the clouds have conspired to pour
and fill the earth
They keep coming with a better plan each year
Relentless rainfall.
Still her house and livestock remain rooted unlike
ago - when they would follow
the smell of destruction, downstream.
The rainbow tarmac remains clear

But the roadside roars with runoff
That's clearly in a hurry.
Moraa is welcomed home
A singing game
Her three children in dirty school uniforms
the girl in a baggy midi dress with white collars
the boys in their blue and white checked shirts
The youngest sprints up
clings to his mother's long skirt.
The others take the full cotton bag from their
mother's hands
Grins flower on their faces
They know mama will cook their favourite.
They wish daddy didn't go be with maker too soon
It was his favourite too-
But with one look, they remember
they are not alone
mama like a roof has them covered.
Excited, they compete to share the day's stories
Laughter bounces in the kitchen.

(Daniella Maroma, Kenya)

HISPANIOLA 2030

Las Hijas del Caribe juegan frente a ti
Sientes la miel de sus risas
La luz de sus rostros mestizos
Envidias la libertad de sus saltos
De sus intercambios sin barreras imaginarias.

¿Viste cómo se abrazan,
cómo se buscan en hermandad,
sin dejar de ser cada una, ellas mismas?
Son ellas mismas, libres, líderes.
Sabén que es mejor andar de a dos.

El canto de las ciguás trae la mañana
Respiras la alegría del azúcar con café
Una infancia abierta a la interculturalidad
!Piensa y estremece tu ser!
Está ahí, a tu derecha
Caminando
Respirando
Amando
!Viviendo!

Un nuevo capítulo se escribe en La Hispaniola.
De nuevo se eleva el estandarte de libertad
Pero no frente a los demás
Sino frente a nosotros mismos.

(Elina Castillo, Dominican Republic)





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