

## Conceptualisation

Organised by Forced Migration and The Arts in collaboration with CivicLeicester and Regularise, the Africa Migration Report Poetry Anthology Series draws inspiration from the 2nd Edition of the *Africa Migration Report*<sup>1</sup>, jointly published by the African Union Commission (AUC) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in March 2024.

The poetry anthology series differs from the report in that, through poetry, the anthology series explores multifaceted narratives, capturing personal, familial, community, national and international histories, experiences, hopes, dreams and aspirations around African migration.

Because every day is Africa Day, our call for submissions<sup>2</sup> is open 365 days a year.

## About The Organisers

Forced Migration and The Arts is an international network that brings together people with lived experience of forced migration, refugee and non-refugee artists, academics and art spaces for conversation looking at work taking place at the intersection where forced migration and the arts meet. The network, initial stages of which were developed with support from the University of Manchester's Humanities Global Scholars Fund,

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<sup>1</sup> African Union (2024). Press Release. Africa Migration Report: Linking policy, practice and the welfare of the African migrant Internal: Africa Migration Report. African Union, 26 March. Available at: <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20240326/africa-migration-report-linking-policy-practice-and-welfare-african-migrant> [Accessed: 19 October 2024]

<sup>2</sup> Forced Migration and The Arts. (2024). Open Call for Submissions - The Africa Migration Report: An Anthology of Poems. Forced Migration and The Arts blog, 29 March. Available at: <https://forcedmigrationandthearts.blogspot.com/2024/03/call-for-submissions-africa-migration.html> [Accessed: 19 October 2024]

hosts monthly indabas<sup>3</sup> or conversations, usually on the last Thursday of each month, and encourages mutual support and collaboration.

Regularise<sup>4</sup> is a migrant-led collective founded in late 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. The collective aims to address the years of sustained hardship that undocumented migrants experience in the UK and continues to organise and campaign for justice and for the rights of undocumented migrants.

CivicLeicester<sup>5</sup> is a community publisher that uses print and digital technologies, social media platforms, the arts, and online and in-person events to highlight conversations of transnational interest and significance. Books CivicLeicester has published include *Black Lives Matter: Poems for a New World* (2023), *Poetry and Settled Status for All: An Anthology* (2022) and *Bollocks to Brexit: An Anthology of Poems and Short Fiction* (2019).

## Approach

We would like to publish the poems in the Africa Migration Report Poetry Anthology Series in ways that are slightly different from how poetry anthologies tend to be published and are very much looking forward to working with you as part of the process. The ideas we are working with are (and we look forward to your thoughts on these):

Starting in October 2024, we will be hosting a rolling series of online and in-person poetry events at which poets who have submitted material for possible inclusion in the anthology series will meet to read and talk about their work and share thoughts, experiences, reflections and hopes, dreams and aspirations around African migration.

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<sup>3</sup> A playlist of videos from some of the conversations held as part of Forced Migration and The Arts is available here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6o\\_ORTW55r0&list=PL-kiElc\\_8yhRIA2UBrwB8wgSTclZ5Q0Da&index=2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6o_ORTW55r0&list=PL-kiElc_8yhRIA2UBrwB8wgSTclZ5Q0Da&index=2) [Accessed: 19 October 2024]

<sup>4</sup> <https://regularise.org/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/CivicLeicester/>

Each session will be between an hour to two hours long, and will be free and open to all. Each session will be recorded and posted on the website we are building around the initiative.

Each recording will then be broken down, so that we post each poet reading and contextualising their poems as a block (e.g. if a poet talks about and reads three poems, this will be posted as a standalone segment). Where a poet has read more than one poem, each poem will also be presented as a standalone poem, maybe with a contextualisation, maybe without.

To each of the poems, we would also like to add audio-visual representations inspired by the poem. Examples of these include photographs, paintings, or multimedia installations, music or soundscapes inspired by the poems, and geospatial mapping where we would use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to map routes or places mentioned in the poems. We would also like to overlay these routes or places with historical data, population density, cultural landmarks and other details.

And where the poem mentions historical figures, we would like to add photos, biographical details and other audio-visual representations. After a sufficient number of poets have read and discussed their poems, and before or after they have been published on the website, we would then like to publish the paperback editions.

## **The Paperback Editions**

Each paperback issue or edition in the poetry anthology series will feature 63 poets. Each poet will be encouraged to contribute three poems or more. In addition, each poet will be encouraged to contribute to three collaborative poems on the following themes: “Africa 2063”, “The Africa We Want” and “Africa 2100”.

In this, we are riffing off the African Union's *Agenda 2063: The Africa*

*We Want*<sup>6</sup>, so that, in this way, we draw attention to The Agenda. In this way, we also tie the experiences, concerns, expectations, hopes, dreams and aspirations that the poets and artists are sharing around African migration to that agenda as well.

In addition, with the collaborative poems, we invite poets and artists to be unfettered in imagining, envisaging and expressing possible and better futures for Africans on the continent, in the diaspora and on the move.

With each issue or edition, we would also like to ensure that the cover, like the anthologies themselves, features artwork from Africans on the continent, in the diaspora and on the move. We are also aiming to include those living in formal and informal refugee camps and settlements, in ghettos and in slums, on the streets, on-grid and off-grid, on the streets, and in prisons and detention centres, and in cities, towns and villages on the continent and around the world.

## **Aim and Purpose**

With each print edition, we would like to call for a world in which, contrary to what is happening at present, the rights of African migrants are respected and protected, and in which freedom of movement extends to and includes Africans on the continent, in the diaspora and on the move.

We are also hoping that each edition will include an introduction by a different, contemporary pan-African thinker. Examples we can think of include the former AU ambassador to the UN, Dr. Arikana Chihombori-Quoa, and people like PLO Lumumba, Joshua Maponga, Brian Kagoro, Julius Malema, and David Oliver Yambio. If you know of other contemporary pan-African thinkers we should be paying attention

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<sup>6</sup> <https://au.int/en/agenda2063/overview>

to and invite to introduce the poetry, please let us know and we will look them up and see if we can work with them and them with us.

The hope is that, this way, we keep the poetry, the conversations, the music, the art and the demands going for as long as it takes for change to happen. The hope is also that, in this way, we encourage more artists, on the continent, in the diaspora and on the move to engage with the theme and the issues, so that we get to hear their perspectives and views on the matter, both through the art they are making and through the poetry and the conversations.

In doing this, we would also like to centre the orality that marks poetry as has been practised on the continent and in the African diaspora for centuries and millennia. We would also like to centre and work with the potential and capacity that poetry and the arts have to keep memory and knowledge alive as well as their capacity to bring people together and how this coming together can lead to action and necessary change.

We would like to encourage Africans on the continent, in the diaspora and on the move to meet more and connect with each other more, and talk to each other more about issues that affect us, starting with questions around the regime that governs African migration and mobility.

As referenced in the AU/IOM's *Africa Migration Report: 2nd Edition*, the continent is currently working towards setting up a free movement infrastructure similar to or better than that which is in place in the European Union. Related to this, we hope that the poetry anthology series, in all the forms that it will take, will encourage Africans on the continent, in the diaspora and on the move to take part in the conversation that is taking place on the continent and in the diaspora on African migration and mobility.

We also hope that the anthology series will encourage the African Union and countries on the continent to pick up the pace on the plans, and ensure that freedom of movement is a right that Africans on the continent, in the diaspora and on the move can enjoy alongside all the

rights identified in the African Charter on Human and People's Rights<sup>7</sup>, including the right to freedom from discrimination (Articles 2 and 18(3)), freedom from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment and punishment (Article 5), the right to life and personal integrity (Article 4), and the right to dignity (Article 5).

## **Funding**

Currently, the Africa Migration Report Poetry Anthology Series is unfunded and is being fuelled by volunteer energy and individual and collective resources at our disposal. We have set up a crowdfunding appeal<sup>8</sup> and welcome and are open to suggestions on how we can fund the initiative.

## **Editorial Board**

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<sup>7</sup> [African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights](#)

<sup>8</sup> <https://gofund.me/294ad2b>

## **Advisory Board**

Leah Bassel (French Edition)

Alex Otieno (Chair)