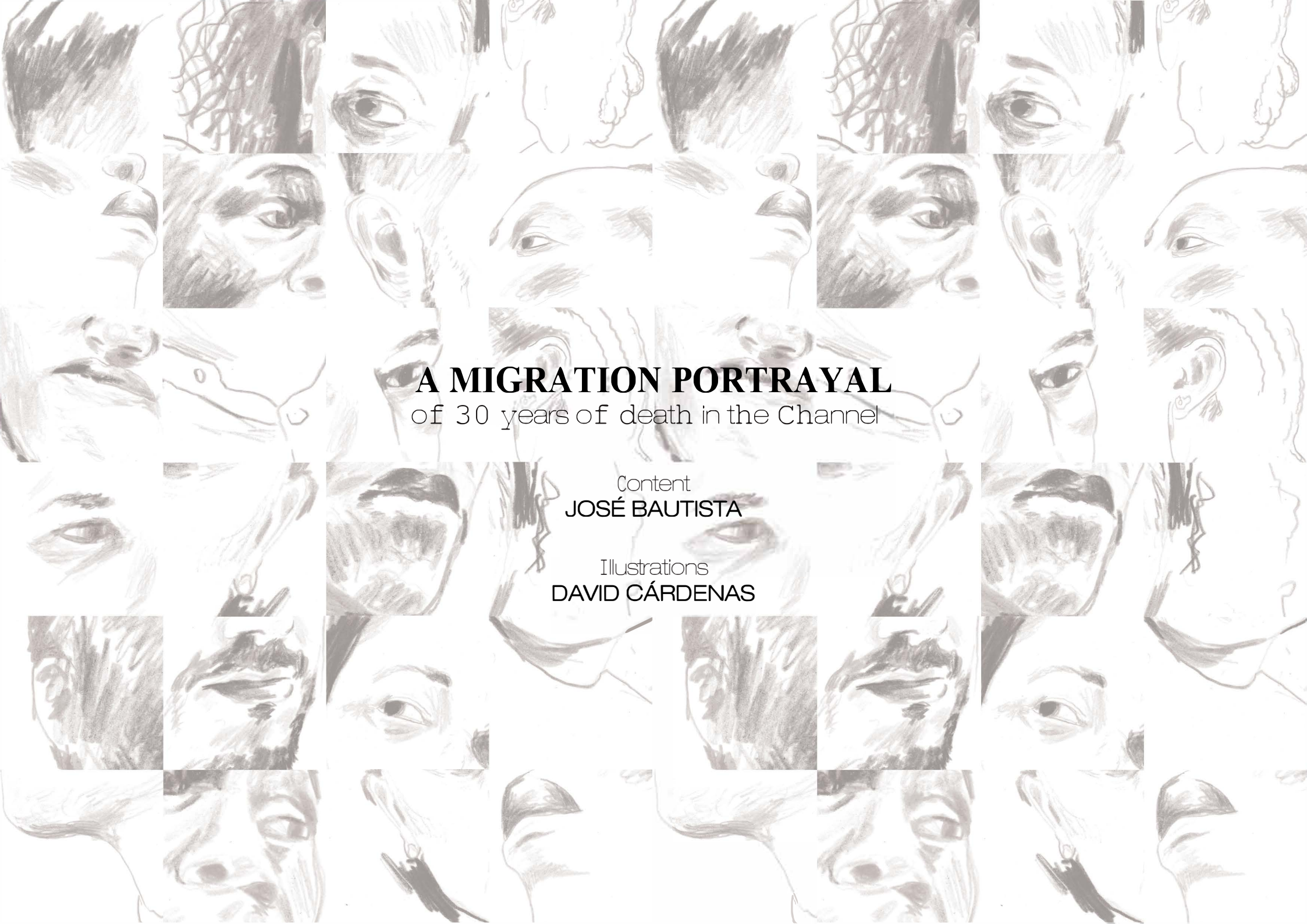

A MIGRATION PORTRAYAL

of 30 years of death in the Channel

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THE ENCOUNTER, THE MAGIC

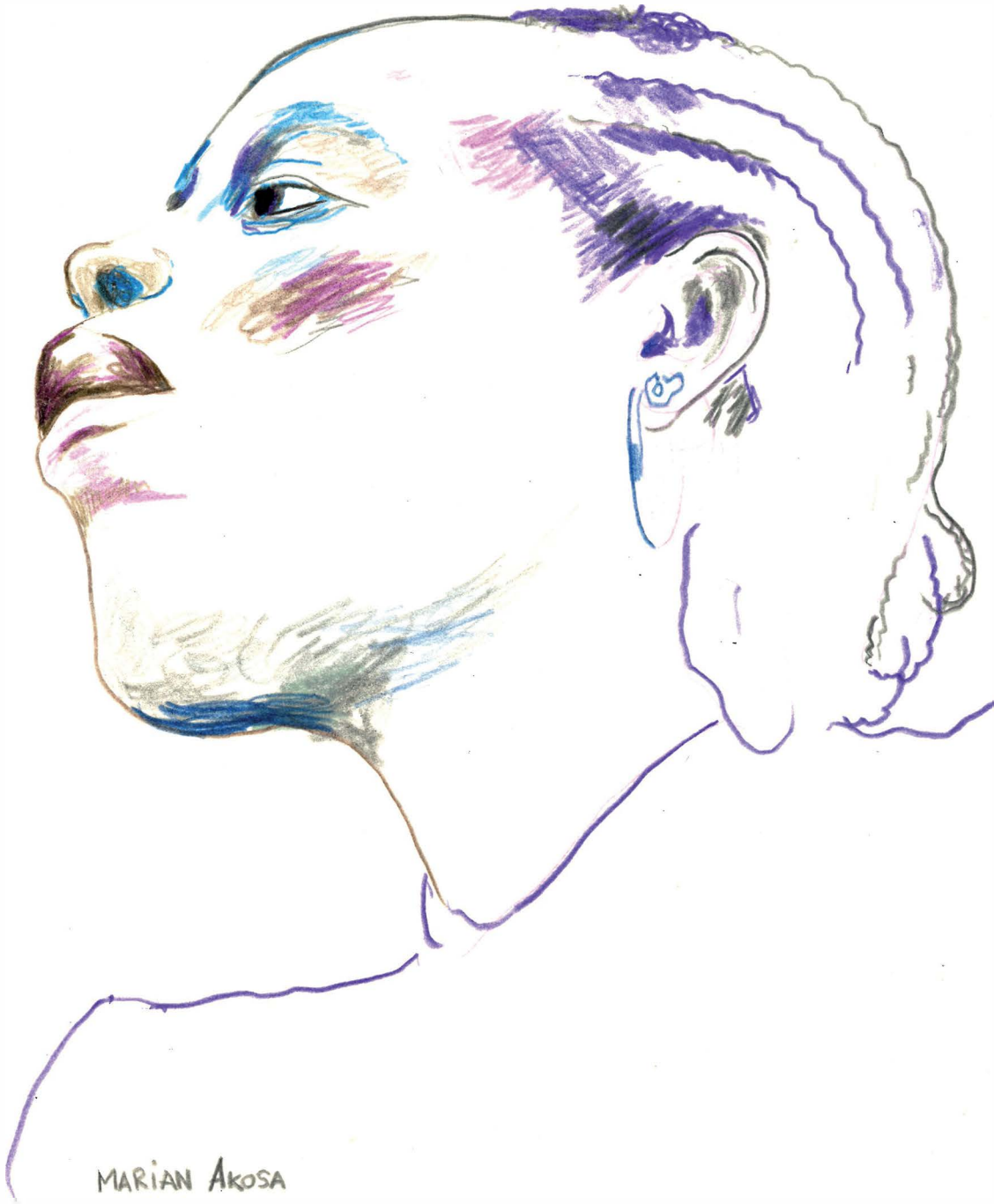
It happened on cold, autumn Monday after dark in Madrid. Four people who survived the Channel climbed the stage and allowed four journalist to dive into their memories, their present, and their pasts, including the darkest and most brilliant corners of their
trip to the North that has yet to end. Living their memories and shouting to remember, to respect, to condemn the 30 years of deaths on the Channel. It has been 30 years since that first of November of 1988 when the ocean spewed up a nameless man onto the Cádiz beach. That was the first documented death of a migrant on the Spanish coast, immortalized by Ildefonso Sena.

The porCausa Foundation and Andalucía Acoge collaborated and worked together until achieving that a fraction of the Southern Border is seen in the distant capital. It was about the invisible, silent pain, inaudible and ignored, of those who left their life there, and those who continue exposing it before the audience, numerous, contemplative, and prudent to commemorate the tragic anniversary. We celebrate the support of our host institution, the Comillas Pontifical University, for your support and space. And just like that, between breaths, smiles, sorrows, and applause, those four survivors began their story.

MARIAN AKOSA

Marian Akosa began with a confession, from the hand of Lula Gómez, the journalist who moderated the stage: that afternoon, I was smiling. In Marian's past, which she did not go into deeply, there were abuses, ruined buildings, knives. When she recalled it out loud, everything turned dark and cold, and it hurt so much that it would be an injustice to remember her for that and not for the heroism in her decisions or her stubborn perseverance. There have been too many injustices in Marian's life. She is a relentless worker that is now fighting to survive. While she continues studying, to th point of being evicted, she wishes to finally have a present, dignity, and the freedom that was taken from her.

She fled from Biafra (Nigeria) in 2007. She escaped rape, kidnappings, mutilation, and religious violence with the help of some priests and a fake passport. "I remember arriving on a shore, and it was Ceuta." Now she faces other demons, but she says loud and clear, "I am alive, and I am happy to be alive." Woman, black, survivor of a hundred channels, economically poor, individually empowered. Later that day, she met people who are now helping her to continue her studies, find a place to live and a job.



ABDELLATIF LAQUIASSE

On stage, all four confessed their nightmares and sung of their victories. Abdellatif was born into a big, loving family in Marrakech, Morocco but his family could not afford to give him with the most basic opportunity despite the backbreaking efforts of his parents.
He started out his journey at 15 years old, driven by a dream that before seemed simple and logical, but his homeland had foiled: a desire for a life of dignity, his own future, and human rights.

Abdellatif arrived in Spain on a boat (36 hours journey). His desire and a piece of wood was greater than the hundreds of millions that the civilized North gives to the Moroccan government to prevent the transit of those, like him, cross the Channel that separates Europe from Africa. Upon arriving at Tarifa, the first thing he saw was the "summer rock"; the first thing he felt was "Relief. You think that your life will change." Thus, the unanticipated problems began.

Like many migrants, Abdellatif discovered that, despite what he had heard about Europe, his rights were not guaranteed. The reality is that being unaccompanied minor did not save him from exploitation in Madrid. It did not save him from having to beg on the streets of Almería and El Ejido. He felt humiliated for looking so miserable and kept his silence for a long time when his worried parents asked how he was doing. After being imprisoned for a time and a lot of bureaucracy and work, he managed to get his ESO (Obligatory Secondary Education certification in Spain), and later his Bachillerato. Now he holds a bachelor's degree – without scholarship – in Social Education, and he works with boys and girls in Cordoba that, like his pas self, are fighting for a future. "We need our time," he explains with a frank smile.

Jesús Cintora asks him about those who did not arrive. He reflects and affirms – in first person – "that many times we stay in that moment in the picture or the video of the boat, but the next day we think about something else. It would be necessary to give names to all those people." So that their stories do not die, nor their memory be erased. His name is Abdellatif Laquiasse, and he can say that he succeeded.

MARIAN BERETE

According to the UNHCR, the majority of migrants that arrived in Spain and Europe in 2018 were from Conakry, Guinea (1 in 4 and 1 in 10, respectively). That is where Marian Berete came from in 2015. She is now twenty-two years old. She is the daughter of a migrant woman and mother of an emigrated son.

Marian escaped twice: the first was to avoid a forced marriage when she was 13 years old. The second, an unfinished voyage, to reclaim her son and to live in peace. She left for Morocco at her aunt's side, that, unlike Marian, had planned to continue until reaching Europe. Marian shares, "I ended up pregnant, but I do not want to say how." Journalist Marta Nebot hardly ever intervenes and listens attentively, but she peeps into that dark room; and thus, Marian, faced before the public and, probably for the first time out load, says 'how'. "I was raped." She was 15 years old.

The child was born healthy. One day Marian left her home for a moment and left him with her aunt; she found when she returned there was no one in the house. Her aunt had looked for her on the street and, when she did not find Marian, had left. Her son arrived in Spain, and Marian calmed down thinking that her aunt would care for him. She survived another ó months in Morocco before one day she proceeded south, to the neighboring Guinea-Bissau.

When she arrived, she received bad news: the police had taken her son; her aunt could no longer care for him. It was then that Marian, 1ó years old at the time, regained her courage, lost her fear, and told herself, "I want to take back my son and try again."

"I had been worse than in all my past suffering," she believes now that she could see the end of her odyssey. They told her that if she went to Spain that she could recover her son, but after a long journey filled with abuses and a survival instinct intact (including exaggerating a fainting spell in order to cross the triple anti-human fence), she ended up secluded in the CETI (Center for Temporary Migrant Detention) in Melilla. She was then 19 years old.

Now, she survives in Algeciras. She found her son, and now she looks for a job. "To this day, I continue with this. The only thing I have achieved is that I am in contact with my son. They allow me to see him once a month. They tell me that if I cannot find a job, I cannot take him back." Applause filled with rage and grief fill the air as she descends from the stage.

MAHAMADOU SIMAKHA

Before presenting Mahamadou, Virginia Pérez Alonso, co-director of Público.es, reflects on the poor treatment "from you to you" between journalists and migrants. It is possible this distance that brings many to repeat with an easy and empty mantra, "Migrations would not exist if the migrants fought in their countries to change the reality from which they flee."

Mahamadou fought and ended up exiled. He did not want to leave Mali. He studied law and political science in university, enjoyed time with his brothers, and, thanks to the money his dad sent him from France, they lived a humble life. In 2012, however, came the coup, the armed conflict, and the Jihadists. Mahamadou and other students took to the streets to defend democracy and to ask for peace. They were abused. They went out onto the streets again, and they were kidnapped. They were obligated to exchange their books for rifles, and they were sent to kill armed Fundamentalists without the training or desire. Mahamadou preferred to risk his life than to spill the blood of others. He was 20 years old.

He felt betrayed. He believed he had rights in Europe. He trusted a mafia and ended up in an overcrowded apartment in Morocco. He reiterates the fear and cold that he felt on that year-long trip that ended on the day that he was fitted below the seats of a car. He ended up in Ceuta, where he began with another ordeal: he was imprisoned. Then, he was transferred to the CETI, and he spent another year there.

He was able to get out by swearing that he would continue to travel until he reached France where his father was. There, he would encounter another surprising hardship: he would see his father enslaved and struggling to survive in an overcrowded ghetto. The regrets ate him alive. He had believed that his father was happy abroad by sending money so that he could continue his studies.

"I decided to return to Spain because I had begun to work in Ceuta giving classes to the recently arrived." Before that, he passed through Barcelona, Madrid, and Cordoba. He survived, first with what he made as a beggar; later, he worked in the mornings as a recycler. In the evening, he continued with his dream: studying.

He has been here for five years already, a fifth of his life. He was integrated into Spanish society through the CEAR (Spanish Commission to Help Refugees) and helps in the welcoming reception for those who cross the Channel. He welcomes them with a "ani kié" which means "Welcome." Soon, his daughter will be born. To her, he dedicates a message while the audience listens eagerly, "May all the efforts of your parents not be taken in vain."

Journalist Gabriela Sánchez says that the deaths on the Channel began when the Southern Border closed under lock and key. She remembers that beíore that, migrants were classiíied as regulars or irregulars. Now, the categories have regressed: they speak oí the living and the dead. What has changed?

Control, security, indiíference, million-dollar business. High rates oí returns, impunity. "The migration system is made to control migration movements, not to govern them... It is a criminal policy. The íirst alternative option is to not cause harm." Gonzalo Fanjul demands saíe and legal avenues íor those who risk their lives by migrating.

The event ends with the poem Como sin nunca huberan sido (As ií they had never existed) by Javier Crudo. "The bodies sink like a ílood into water... even the sky has turned its back," recites actor Chumo Mata while he tightens his íist and liíts his gaze.

It happened on cold, autumn Monday aíter dark in Madrid. A poster on the stage reads "Universal Declarations oí Human Rights, Article 13: Everyone has the right to íreedom oí movement." That same day, seventeen migrants disappeared on the Channel and another seventeen drowned. Day aíter day, the ocean engulí dreams; 30 years later, things have not gotten better.

Ildefonso Sena, Los Lances's beach, tarifa, 1st November 1988

For those who lost their voice and for those who raise theirs for them

Madrid, November 2018

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