



MANIFESTO FOR CHANGE

YOUTH AND FUTURE

A PROJET BY

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## SOME EXAMPLES OF TEXTS

### **GRATITUDE**

Let us imagine our life as a spaceship of which we are the commander: every morning we get up, open our eyes, enter the control room and sit in front of the dashboard. In front of us we see one hundred glowing buttons of which, on average, ninety-five are green, on, and five red, off. The five red buttons are the problems, more or less relevant, that daily capture our attention and spoil our days: a job, a work problem, the longing for a better economic status, the failure to achieve a goal, a chronic illness, the loss of a loved one, the lust for success or possession. These five red lights translate emotionally into the cause of our latent unhappiness.

One day, sitting as usual at our commanding post, we notice that one of the ninety-five buttons, which has always been lit green, has suddenly turned red: the freedom button. An unexpected pandemic has forced the whole of humanity into isolation. That button, which we took for granted and hardly remembered existed, has turned into an unprecedented and complex problem that can disrupt the entire system, causing each of us to feel the urge to do things that were previously commonplace: go for a walk, have dinner with friends, hug a loved one. The question I ask myself, then, is: 'Why have I never valued the freedom button before? Why have I never given those small gestures the importance they deserve?'

Now, faced with the new state of my dashboard, I have two options: either continue to focus on the red buttons and complain about what I don't have, or change my perspective, change my point of view, and start having awareness, feeling gratitude and appreciation for all the green buttons, learning to give them identity and value.

To do this in a simple way, a visualisation exercise comes to our aid: when we realise that negative thoughts begin to polarise our mind and our emotions, we have to stop and sit down, close our eyes and observe carefully what is happening. "Which buttons am I conceiving of that can make me unhappy?". Once we have identified and named them, let us put them aside for a moment and focus on the green buttons: I have a home to live in, I am healthy, I live in a country without war, the sun warms the earth, my mother is alive. Now we start, one by one, to break these buttons into red, emotionally connecting with that state of mind. I turn off the button of my home: I no longer have a place to live. I turn off my health button: my body and mind falter. I switch off my peace: suddenly missiles and bombs appear around me. I switch off the sun: the atmosphere begins to collapse and cover the planet with oxygen, hydrogen and other solidified gases. I switch off my mother: I experience her loss and mourning. We find ourselves at this point in an emotional state of anger and despair. After a few minutes, looking to our right, we will see a large lever with reset written on it which, when lowered, will allow us to immediately return to the starting state. We will then realise how the few red buttons that threatened the peacefulness of our day were after all relative problems and we will smile again.

Learning to exercise gratitude on a daily basis for what is granted and given to us helps us to feel loved and consequently to love. Only in being a tiny ant do I find peace, only in being a passing note in the universal harmony do I lighten my soul and my mind from the heavy boulders of accumulation, greed, selfishness, rushing, deceptive immortality, and I regain my breath. I breathe consciously, I inhabit my breath, I inhabit my emotions.

Change today means rediscovering our roots, living a slow time more in tune with our human nature and the changing of the seasons; a life of dialogue, of silence, in the service of light, beauty and a collective consciousness; being aware of who we are and finding our place in the world; moving from a spirituality based on demand to a spirituality based on gratitude.

**Giovanni Caccamo**, *artist*

## ALIENATION

I am writing this letter on July 25, 2022 from a world that is experiencing a crisis of acceleration, the engine is overheating, something is causing friction and we observe this on all levels: material, environmental and spiritual.

The environment is unbalanced, minds become neurotic, anxiety and depressive disorders increase, human relationships are less and less lasting, institutions become more and more unstable, the Church grows old and spirituality gives way to a flaunted rationality.

All of these phenomena are the reverberation of just one: consumerism, a term already aged and used-up. Consumerism is not just going to the shopping mall, it is a way of living at three hundred and sixty degrees, consuming every resource (even love, even time) as if it were never ending. Yes, because consumerism uses up everything and turns everything into merchandise, words included, consumers included!

For a while mankind surfed on the enthusiastic wave of seemingly unlimited progress, now that the wave has crashed against the reef of reality it is time to do some reckoning.

Let's be clear, we will most likely find the great solutions to the great environmental, food, health, logistic and energy-related problems. Change in these areas will occur because technology is advancing inexorably. What scares me, however, is the shrinking of human intimacy. The new millennium is a gigantic social experiment with a long series of historical innovations: one of them is the symbiosis with machines, which have become a crutch for the brain.

In order to turn human beings into a commodity, it is imperative that they take on its key character: homologation. Television has done a great job in this area, but nothing compared to the smartphone: TV was a kind of deity providing information and entertainment, the phone on the other hand is interactive, you become the deity! Create yourself, create your own reality, dressed in original but recognisable characters.

Artificial reality trains you like a dog and at the ring of the bell you perk up your ears, unlock the screen and instead of a biscuit you receive a small dopamine rush, a reward earned without having done anything.

Here is the perfect commodity: always available, predictable in its mode of operation and predictable in its failures.

My word is "alienation". We have come to the point of my whole message and the hardest one. Every escape from reality is an escape from pain, living in an artificial dimension is the junkie's choice. Social media in many ways behave like any other drug with the difference that there is no limit, always available and above all free.

The deep discomfort that is the mark of a society that chooses to alienate itself is something hard to frame and analyse, let alone solve. The only real solution is to raise awareness, barriers, educate on digitization not by demonising its tools, which are now unavoidable, but by learning to know its potential, traps, and mechanisms.

Sometimes we forget that most interfaces are designed to be addictive: you resist against them. This is a good enough reason to decide to resist them.

**Marco Anastasio**, *rapper*

## **KNOWLEDGE**

My name is Mario Falanga, I am an inmate in the Rebibbia prison. In the precinct of this new home, I have been wondering whether each of us, during our lives, takes enough time for introspection, to ponder our existence, peacefulness and fulfillment, or whether instead we get lost, alone, in the labyrinth of regrets.

For years now, my body has always gravitated to the same precincts waiting for the longed-for freedom, due to the wrong choices of my past. It is my daily endeavor to try to heal this wound by building a healthy and more conscious life.

Over the past few years I have felt the urgency to meditate, to go on a long inward journey in search of meaning. We are born unaware of what is right or wrong, unaware of good and evil, wrapped in the warm drapes of purity; we grow up in different families and contexts that contribute to the formation of our character and sensitivity. Each life is, thus, unique and unrepeatable. Often, however, our uniqueness is flattened by fear of judgment from others, which leads us to conform to a common thinking devoid of empathy. Listening time loses ground.

As paradoxical as it may seem, prison delivered me this precious time by giving me the opportunity for healthy confrontation: the discovery and listening to others. This has been a rebirth for me.

Life before prison, though in bodily freedom, had imprisoned my soul and my thinking, leading me to make wrong choices. From an early age I grew up with the example that arrogance was the currency to buy respect, that bullying was the right approach to others and disobedience the norm to follow. I felt strong about the fear of others.

I had my first problems with the justice system as a mere teenager, only to be arrested when I was only seventeen. My unruly behavior led to several transfers: I wandered from one institution to another, first between Campania and Sicily, then, as soon as I came of age, to Piedmont. A few years later I was transferred to Rebibbia Penitentiary, where I am still serving my sentence.

Facing thirty-five years of imprisonment, I was at a crossroads: make the most of this time or lose myself in despondency. With the help of staff of great human and professional depth, I began to study, interface and discover an aspect of life I had never known or imagined before.

I was able to establish friendships based on mutual respect and trust; I found people dedicated to listening, who spurred me on and enticed me toward rehabilitation. Initially, all this appeared very strange to my eyes, because, like most people, I had always associated prison with a community of evildoers and delinquents, an enclosure of criminals; instead, over time I discovered a humanity torn apart by personal traumas and defeats, damaged by prejudice and left to its own devices. Amid barbed wire and iron bars, I discovered what study was, the excitement of discovery; thus I chose to enroll in high school. The more the years passed, the

more my interest in culture grew. One of the first milestones I achieved with pride and happiness was my graduation: 90/100. I had no hesitation in enrolling in college and today I am in my third year of Humanities.

I got to learn about extraordinary figures such as Giacomo Leopardi, with his *Dialogo di Cristoforo Colombo e di Pietro Gutierrez*; I learned life lessons through Verga's *I Malavoglia*, which taught me how the spirit of sacrifice makes life unique; I rediscovered with Giovanni Pascoli's *Il fanciullino* the value and richness of innocence, which is increasingly weak in the hearts of us adults.

I spent entire afternoons in the company of the thoughts of great philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, which broadened my view of the horizon of knowledge.

All of this made me realize that study should belong to us as much as life itself and that in it are stored the keys to open our minds and our awareness. History, philosophy and literature are the only weapons that can fight ignorance and prejudice, stripping man from appearances and superficiality. Understanding who I am, where I come from and what I can become are the wonderful gifts that prison, despite everything, has given me. I understood the right values of life, reflection, temperance.

Today I think of my future with such light and positivity, after years of living in the shadows of remorse and pain, wondering if society, once I leave here, would accept and welcome me. I know it will be arduous to get people to have a different idea of me, to trust me, but I will do everything in my power to make that happen.

It is precisely because of my experience that today I can answer the question, "What would you change about the society you live in and how?"

The state must once again take responsibility for the education of the younger generations, both in human and cultural terms, by expanding funds for schools, family support, youth initiatives, cultural centers, especially in the most peripheral and degraded areas, ensure psychological support for those in need. Without culture, without knowledge, without history, without introspection and contact with our inner selves, we are men destined for shipwreck.

Do not waste your life as I did.

**Mario Falanga**, *inmate*

## WELCOMING

My name is Remon Karam, some people a few years ago would have called me an illegal immigrant. I came from Egypt when I was only fourteen years old, an unaccompanied minor aboard a boat. I was at risk of death because I was seeking freedom in your country, the right to study, in a place free of all racial and religious prejudices. At the age of fourteen, I suddenly found myself in another world. I decided to leave home, parents, friends to follow my dream to study and be that someone my father never managed to be since he never got lucky in life.

I can still picture my mother's reaction when she woke up at six in the morning to make us breakfast before school, hot milk and bread from the day before, and suddenly found one less child at the table.

I continue to carry on my shoulders the weight of the pain caused to my family, but even so, the urge to make my father proud of me has been growing stronger ever since. I wanted to see him happy, healthy and never lacking anything, as he did with my brother and me. I left home without saying goodbye, I had only warned my brother and hugged him in a perfunctory way, not imagining I would not see him again for years.

If I went back, I would hug him for hours. I had nothing with me but a small picture of him and a baggage of dreams to fulfill. I risked being killed by the boatmen, they threatened and attacked me, they told me they would kill me if my father did not pay the sum of forty thousand gunayh, which is equivalent to four thousand euros, a year and a half of his salary. My father paid to save my life, despite all the suffering I caused him. He sold my mother's few jewels, my grandfather's land, borrowed money from friends and relatives. He did all this to save me.

I ended up with one hundred and eighty human beings, crammed into a small wooden fishing boat full of holes from which water entered. We were Egyptians and Sirians, there were babies a few months old and adults in their seventies. I ate rice cooked with sea water, in one bowl for ten people, we looked like so many animals. I drank water mixed with gasoline from the bottle cap. I had no traveling companions, no brother beside me or my parents. How I missed my mother's chicken, my father's sleazy jokes, the games in the street! Fortunately I had two things to keep me company, my brother's picture and my faith in Jesus.

I looked at the stars drawing the faces of my loved ones, those stars accompanied me throughout the seven-day journey, they were my dreams to become true. On the night of the sixth day, I saw the lights of Sicily and the boatmen told us that we would arrive in the morning. Finally, a moment of happiness after entire days of sailing without talking to anyone. Everyone was afraid to simply ask each other, "Hey, how are you?" I didn't want anyone to make me tell them about my family; it would make me feel bad. In the afternoon of the next day, the Italian coast guard spotted us and motioned for us to follow them.

We landed in Portopalo on July 17, 2013, I remember it was sunset. When I put my foot on the ground, I knew I had survived, it was time to think about my fu-



ture and become that someone my father always wanted to be. When I landed, they stuck the number 92 on my chest. I lost my identity for weeks and kept feeling like a number among many and no longer a human being.

I experienced true acceptance thanks to my foster family, they took me in me without ever expecting or receiving anything in return except the simple love of a child they never had. I still remember the first goodnight kiss from my second mother, Marilena, a kiss that held the meaning of free and sincere love. I remember the help of my second dad, Carmelo, who, to teach me the language, would stick post-it notes on objects around the house writing the words in Italian and Sicilian. Marilena and Carmelo gave me the love I needed, treating me for all intents and purposes like a son. I must give credit to my Egyptian family for the values they passed on to me and to Marilena and Carmelo for making me the man I have become. In my life I have met many people who have allowed me to make my dreams come true without ever expecting anything in return. Francesca Barra told my story in her book "Il mare nasconde le stelle" - The sea hide stars - and thanks to her I was able to spread my message of life, telling the harsh reality that migrants endure before landing in Italy. The fight for human rights has become my human, not political, battle. I would like to make people understand that there is no difference between an Italian and a non-EU citizen, we can all work together for the common good of our Italy.

This can be done by avoiding prejudice, through cross-cultural comparison and exchange of opinions. Exchange with the other leads to knowledge of the truth. Welcoming is not just opening a port, it is not throwing people into immigrant centers and feeding them to criminal organizations and exploitation. Welcoming is giving love, respect, acceptance and above all listening to the needs of others. All of these factors have characterized my inclusion in Italy, including by my "Kore" University, which gave me from the very beginning the opportunity to be able to spread my ideals.

Thanks to the university and my colleagues, I was elected with the highest votes to the most prestigious body, the Board of Trustees. I was allowed to speak in front of the President of the Republic Sergio Mattarella and in front of the whole country. I was able to graduate from the three-year degree program in modern languages and cultures, and at present I am attending the second year of the specialist program in languages for intercultural communication and international cooperation. All this was possible thanks to the people who helped me. Probably if everyone was welcomed in this way, there would only be so much good for our Italy. I dream that I can become an ambassador and represent my two places of the heart, Egypt and Italy. I dream of being able to shout louder and louder for the rights of the least privileged. Finally, I dream of being able to say, "Mom, Dad, I did it." Maybe, finally, I have succeeded in making my father proud as I promised him.

**Remon Karam**, *human rights activist*

## BEAUTY

How many times do you torment yourself before the mirror by brushing your fingertips over what you believe to be repulsive imperfections distributed along your hips or on your thighs? How many times has that same mirror been wounded by your frustrated, disappointed, stymied fists as icons of beauty on the walls mischievously judged you?

Focus now on the walls: how many secrets do they hold that they cannot reveal? How many screams have they heard and how many tears have they silently wiped away in the night? How many times has embarrassment made your cheeks blush and covered your body with heavy clothes in the sultry summer heat? How many times have you preferred to isolate yourself because you were cumbersome, awkward, clumsy?

Why did you do it? "Because I didn't feel beautiful enough." Are you sure that this is actually beauty?

Thinking carefully, you will recall that some wise philosopher considered beauty an intangible concept associated with art or nature. "Beauty is what is beautiful and satisfies the senses," Kant theorized. It is elusive, indefinable, celestial, an intimate and moving experience out of the ordinary; it is that moment when you perceive that you are present, inescapable, when the heart pumps blood for you, vibrates for you, softens for you so that you can fill, in turn, the heart of those who have stopped loving.

It would be nice, then, to be able to grasp all this, to cherish beauty, to distinguish it from aesthetics, from the idea of perfection. Your fingers now do not wound your hips but caress them, your body is imperfect, fragrant, healthy, ready for a thousand experiences, you have broken the chains by granting freedom to clumsiness, a respite from homologation and a gentle gesture of reconciliation. You thrill to tears without feeling wrong, but simply in dialogue with your essence, the earth, the roots, true beauty.

**Beatrice Canullo**, *student of Modern Literature, University of Perugia*

## **COURAGE**

How much courage it takes to be a flower exposed to the storms of life and the indifferent injustices that trample the soil.

It takes courage to be a man: like trembling leaves we fall lying long on the ground, in the inertia of failure, deaf to any wind of rebirth.

Courage was taken by young David, with his stones and sling, against the giant Goliath; courage was taken by Moses in the journey to free the people from slavery in Egypt; courage was taken by Desmond Tutu in his mission against apartheid in South Africa; courage was taken by little Sophie Scholl with her nonviolent struggle against Nazism.

Rocks have courage before the violent waves of life. When a wave comes it hurts, it burns the eyes and nostrils, it obscures the future, it blocks thought, it takes the breath away. Yet, I admire in amazement their allowing themselves to be courageously shaped by that pain, like elderly fishermen with pipes who though they have experienced evil remain there, steadfast and strong, somewhere between the water and the air, a landing point for so many castaways.

They have courage those artists who travel the streets leaving behind the expectations of parents who would have preferred a safe harbor for them.

They have courage those dreamers with deep pockets who pursue their passion by relying on the providential wind of life.

Brave are those who continue smilingly to offer their rose despite the insults and indifference of passersby.

The students have courage. Many fall off the cliff, victims of lying servitude: "you're not capable," "you're not good," "you're late," sirens that sing and by which too many, unfortunately, are bewitched.

We all have within us a seed of contempt to which we sometimes give voice and which drives us to seek goals and affirmation to try to silence it, to quiet its cries in the silence of the unconscious.

From that precipice a warm wind rescued me, it was the song of God that shook the anchored ships of my dreams among the thorny shrubs of thoughts, patiently supported my balance on the tightrope of anguish, stretched the hands of friends, dribbled with fear, cut the barbed wire that fenced me in and, with its infinite love, propelled my soul on the swing of emotions cuddling the wounded child inside me.

It takes courage not to be swayed by destructive criticism and to recognize, by internalizing it, constructive criticism. It takes courage to accept our history, our emotions, who we have been and who we will be.

For a long time I felt like a small daisy in a field dotted with large brilliant roses, I despised myself until I found myself lying in a meadow. In that instant I experienced a greater love realizing how precious each living being is in its uniqueness. Light loves to enclose itself in small things, and so the daisy taught me something important: we also receive love from heaven, from life, from people, from friends, from family, from work, from a stranger, and that love we receive we must let flow through us to others.

Changing society means breaking the levees of the heart and letting the good flow. I wanted to change the world, yet I hated helping my mother in the kitchen; I gave to the poor but was unable to help my close friends in times of trouble; I wanted to help strangers but did not caress the wounds I carried in my heart. To improve society, we need to start with ourselves, small gestures for big changes.

What do all people with courage have in common? Fear. We are all im-perfect, weak, incapable, inadequate and yet we try to give our contribution to the world by overcoming the Goliaths of life, believing in a greater love.

To young people like me I say to trust in the good they have known and to believe in their passions. To love this world and to be able to improve it takes courage, and to do that we need to find the strength to embrace our frailties and call our fears by name.

To the young people of change, to the young people of today and tomorrow, I say have the courage to be like little daisies that receive and give light, to pursue their own path of revolution despite closed doors that, over time, prove to be saving signs toward our place in the world.

May every word in this manifesto be a small candle that is lit. Each person who opens to life illuminates the earth, and that is how, looking down on it from above, the world will look like a blazing star in a harmony of love in the gloomy darkness of the universe.

Here is the power of courage: it kindles hearts scattered in the abyss of fear. Good requires courage; never stop sowing it in the field of our fears. We are stronger!

**Anna Caputo**, *writer*

## **FAMILY**

I traveled the world to find a family, I walked through one hundred countries to look for my father. My name is Andrea, and in my small hometown I was the only one with my mother's last name, a disgrace to the little child I was.

I had my first family experience at the age of fifteen, when a tumor was removed from the left hemisphere of my brain. The doctors who saved my life, the nurses who looked after me with care, and the people who supported and encouraged me were all my family.

Over the years then, as I observed the many colors of the world, I discovered what my culture had always hidden from me: the true family. Family is not solely a dad and mom and what they had taught me, but is a liquid concept capable of shaping and materializing into precious people who have the gift of being able to grant their time and attention.

Change is making anyone who has had someone by their side to receive and give love to feel conscious and fortunate.

As a child, I felt inadequate because I saw mine as a “half-family” or worse as a “non-family”.

I perceived my mother and me as two floating icebergs annihilated by society. Today, a few years later, drawing colored lines over my name, I visualize clearly my family and all the souls who have educated me over time.

Family is me and mother; me and grandfather; me and grandmother; me and the children I played with in hospitals and orphanages; me and my closest friends; family is whoever invites me to lunch, whoever gives me a kind look. Family was an encounter in South Africa with an eight-year-old boy who, while carrying his twin little sisters to take them to school, told me he dreamed of becoming an English teacher so he could teach English to those who did not speak it. He was studying and working to help the only surviving adult girl in his family: his grandmother in a wheelchair.

Family is a Colombian friend of mine who, after being adopted, found out she had siblings and returned to her home country with her adoptive parents so she could meet them.

Family is a boy from Uganda who with godly eyes informed me moved that he had finally been adopted and would finally meet his mom and dad the next day.

Family is my retired friend who built a coffin for his beloved dog and prays for him every day.

Family is me when I play with children in the world's orphanages; the endless lonely, invisible children waiting for a family of their own. It is wonderful to give birth, but it is equally wonderful to give birth to the idea of not leaving children alone, saving them by making them our life.

With the Indians, in the Amazon, I lived in a hut without a door because, in their culture, all the huts formed one family. Are our locked doors a sign of fear? Can we be afraid of our loved ones?

War is the opposite of family. Let us purify our gazes, turn anger and fear into wonder by taking example from children, learning to wonder and be curious. The wish I would entrust to the Genie's Lamp is to give everyone my concept of family.

My family is the world.

**Andrea Caschetto**, *smile ambassador*



*main partner*



*partner*



*with the support of **Alessia Zanelli***