

↳ MHI Congrés Mundial
Moviments Humans
i Immigració

↳ MHI Congreso Mundial
Movimientos Humanos
e Inmigración

↳ MHI World Congress
Human Movements
and Immigration



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Organitzat per:



Opening Session
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Najat El Hachmi

You look at me with dark eyes and you tell me you'll soon be setting off on a long journey, that you'll be emigrating like millions of people before you and millions of other people after you, despite the barriers, the concrete walls and the bureaucracy. You think that it will change your life, that everything will be simpler afterwards, that you'll have new opportunities, new challenges.

And what can I tell you? I could warn you about so many things that I don't know whether it would do you any good. It makes no difference whether you travel to some distant town or just to the neighbouring village, the same feelings always go with you.

You'll miss the smell of your favourite spots, the depth of the gaze of those around you, the wave of tenderness of those who love you. That pillow that you lay your head on each night, the old mattress you sleep on, even the rough walls of your home. Can you feel that breeze caressing your cheek that you've never paid any heed to? You'll tremble with emotion at the very thought of it when you're far away. You'll remember the breakfasts of familiar foods, warm smiles and the gleam of oil on toast, the smell of freshly picked tomatoes, the warmth of the kitchen on holidays, pots bubbling all around you.

You'll find the sounds that issue from the mouths around you strange, you'll imagine from time to time that someone has just spoken in your own language, a mirage in a desert of unknown phenomena, and you'll want someone to welcome you with a different accent, a harsher vowel sound or a more aspirated consonant.

You'll remember your mother sitting on the doorstep on hot days, engrossed in the thoughts of a busy woman, and you'll think if only you had sat down beside her then and hugged her with all your might; we love things more, the further they are from us. And you'll see your father sitting in the courtyard at home like he always does, and that image will remain fixed in your memory for as long as you are away, as if he had been there forever and at any moment might say, "come over here, son, come over here".

You'll miss being able to look out towards the horizon, that line you grew up with and that will always be with you. It will seem to you that the sky in your home country is bluer than any other sky, that its breeze is gentler than any other. You'll even miss the arguments with your brother, you'll wish he was there with you so that you could argue with him, and you'll think that perhaps now you'd hold his gaze longer.

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But you'll have to get over all this, you'll have to cope with the absences in order to be able to carry on. Otherwise, what sense would it all make? You can't give up right at the beginning, after all there'll be other obstacles along the way. There'll be those who treat you well, others who pay you no mind. And there'll those who will be suspicious of you, the unknown person come from afar who is capable of leaving everything behind him does not inspire confidence. You'll get angry with those who treat you badly, but of course you'll learn to live with it. Lots of doors will be closed to you, as you will be given away as an outsider by the colour of your skin or your accent, but others will gradually open as you become more established in the country that takes you in.

One day you'll go back 'home'. You'll be convinced that at long last the whole process is over, that your long journey has borne fruit, that everything has been worthwhile. But then you'll discover that 'home' no longer exists, that the people are not the same. Your gaze will become critical and you'll see everything with the eye of an outsider who has come from a better world, who knows whether you'll be able to get used to the same pillow once again or whether the line of the horizon will come to irritate you as you look at it. Who knows?

Those who were small won't have waited for you before growing up, those who were adults will have grown old in your absence, your children won't have needed you in order to grow up, and the woman you loved, well perhaps it won't be so urgent now to get back to her, it's not true that absence makes the heart grow fonder.

So long waiting to return, living while putting things on hold, as if everything were just an interim state. So much time spent longing for so many things and now it's almost time to go back. A month to accumulate more memories, a month to lessen the sense of guilt. You think that when you retire you'll be able to build a shack down by the beach, but you only think that because it's still a long way off. Nothing will ever be the same. Not because the others have changed, but because you have become someone else, you don't fit in anymore, perhaps, not in the world you left behind nor in the world you ended up in.

Eventually, you'll learn to live on the border between these two worlds, a place that can be a dividing line but which is also a place of encounter. One day you'll think yourself lucky to be able to enjoy that border, you'll think that you are more complete, more hybrid, bigger than anyone else.

Najat El Hachmi