

**UNESCO RILA: The sounds of integration**  
**Episode 57: Poetry by the keynote poets of the Spring School 2023**  
**(06/09/2023)**

[JINGLE]

**Dr Esa Aldegheri**

هه آل ووس ههآل - أه، benvenuti, fàilte, titambire, welcome to the podcase series of the UNESCO Chair in Refugee Integration through Languages and the Arts at the University of Glasgow. We bring you sounds about integration, languages, culture, society and identity. with us.

[JINGLE]

**Tawona Sitholé**

Hi, my name is Ganyamatopé and I am Artist in Residence with the UNESCO RILA team. In May 2023, we hosted our 6th annual Spring School: The Arts of Integrating. We invited 4 keynote poets to summarise the days in a poem. Marzanna Antoniak covered the first day with her poem Our Cèilidh House.

**Marzanna Antoniak**

Our Cèilidh House

In our Cèilidh House,  
there is a culture in the making,  
a culture being cooked and baked,  
a culture being brewed and drunk,  
and we may get tea drunk sometimes, 茶醉

O, we spend hours at our table,  
long zestful hours of houring.

In our Cèilidh House,  
culture is told through the stories of friends and strangers,  
who in the sharing become destranged.  
It is sung in languages that use strange sounds,  
yet somehow the woven choruses  
soon sound familiar to our eager ears.

Oh, we keep storytelling, story singing, story dancing,  
throughout long, zestful hours of houring.

The living room stage is open to all.  
We're all performers and we're all witnesses.  
Invitation is an expectation to take part.

So share your story. Let us learn.

In our Cèilidh House,  
culture is being repeated and continued.  
It is a river, lively, alive and always living.  
So come in, fàilte, اهلا بك,  
hoş geldiniz, welcome, witamy,  
join us till you tire  
for more long zestful hours of houring.

Do you know everyone by their first name yet?

### **Tawona Sitholé**

Next up was poet Chantelle Warner.

### **Chantelle Warner**

Listen...

These are hard times.  
And hard times call for tuning to human ways of being.  
“Everything in the world is speaking to us” – and through us.  
If we, come. Come out of our echo chambers,  
So, we can hear here.

Listen...

These are hard times.  
And hard times call for sustaining relationships,  
For it is relationships that sustain us.  
Warm soup for our souls.  
Long sips of reciproci-tea.

Hard times call for finding ways to grow together,  
To build together,  
Not what was, but anew.  
“Community is a process, not a product.”  
A process of not taking stock of what we have in common,  
But of creating commons  
To ground us.  
Feeling one another’s embodied landscapes,  
As we work not to integrate but to reassemble,  
A cèilidh,  
A txalaparta,  
Unexpected hospitality at the river’s raging middle.

Chenga ose mannanga hapana risina mhodzi.

These are hopeful times.

As we attend to one another's stories,  
We attune ourselves  
To a world we can make together  
Of words  
Music  
Paintings  
Weavings  
Pumpkins  
Snot and  
Stardust

Listen...

Everything in the world is speaking through us.

### **Tawona Sitholé**

The third day was a found poem by Anita Govan. She invited participants to add words to a word box (in red) and also collected words from sessions she attended (in blue). She put these together and added some words of her own (in green) to create her poem Reading the Tea Leaves.

### **Anita Govan**

Reading the tea leaves

Welcome, Welcome

Come to the well

A well where

all are Welcomed

Where magic is harvested

A Restorative Cycle

Amongst Old trees- young buildings

Express Delicious

Relief

And breath

Refuelled with Joy

And tides of soft smiles

Accounting for dignity

Moving through

the accountability of government

In conditions of conflict

Tracing the purple line

Through ghost houses

And velvet revolutions

In mutual learning

belonging / unbelonging

In the art of no purpose

Breath into your Belly

Breath into the integration of arrival

every minute, so rich,

Gifts of pure gold

Peace

Justice

Kindness

A circle

Reading the tea, leaves

Grounded in Hopeful Transition

A Thank you for caring

**Tawona Sitholé**

Our last poet, S'Phongo, covered the online sessions and joined us from Zimbabwe.

**S'Phongo**

I could hear the crickets chirp as the smiling faces circled comfortably around the zoom fire.

Yes. Zoom can with bonfires round those days,

like the one we used to sit around in the village,  
stars twinkling the approval of those who left before us.  
*Ugogo*, my grandmother recalling awe draped stories.  
Stories that laid the foundation of our morals.  
Some of them real, some of them stories pure works of the mind.  
the infinitely soothing voice of Chioneso invited us to connect to the spirits of joy.  
Place our masks on the wall, feel at home, rise above divisive labels,  
and live the truth that is we belong.

Like Mary,

a glowing, sturdy woman of Chinese descent born in Singapore,  
grew up on a distorted image of British ways,  
a fact she lived when she stepped on British lands  
“A huge culture shock it was!” she called the experience,  
allowing it to feed and embody the global citizen that resides in her heart.

She belonged.

And I do too. I belong too.  
Do not let your visual perception  
of my physical features fool you.  
I belong too.

*Chero muchitadza kunzvisisa mazvi andirikutaura izvezvi,  
Ndiriwepano  
Zvandopfeka hazvinei nehunhu wangu,  
Ndati ndiriwepano\**

Through my words, I exist,  
Connect with other beings on this energy field,  
pushing pain to bleed out the pain  
of paying three times the price  
Because me Krio(Creole) very, very bad.  
I'm not able to break the Queen's language like that...

Pause.

Take a deep breath.  
Live in the moment.  
That's where you belong.  
Like the crickets in the background,  
the warm Zoom fire illuminating our smiles,

like Aminata a descendant of the freed slaves that walked the coast of Sierra Leone, a lost girl  
once struggling to find a place in the broken Freetown streets until she learned that her great  
great grandmother used to communicate freedom through hairstyles, the same hairstyles she

had abandoned in favor of those similar to Barbie's... In that moment she found Aminata, in that moment language, which was more than words. It was the sound of the rain on the old zinc house, the ten plus buckets of water she hurdled up the hill since the day she could, it was the music repeatedly played, the 4am call for prayer that annoyed her, it was the infinite days spent chasing waves at the beach in Bureh, it was the first time she let go.

Language was life with every second from birth, written on her body as a map in case, just in case she found herself in this moment.

Peace, Power and Love.

\*Even though you can't understand the words I'm speaking right now,  
I belong here.  
What I wear has nothing to do with my humanity,  
I belong here.

[JINGLE]

**Dr Esa Aldegheri**

شكراً, grazie, tapadh leibh, totenda, thank you for listening to this episode. For the full show notes and for شكرا, more information about our work, please visit [bit.ly/UNESCO\\_RILA](https://bit.ly/UNESCO_RILA).

[JINGLE]