

# HEAR MY VOICE



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# THE HEALING POWER OF

*Art*



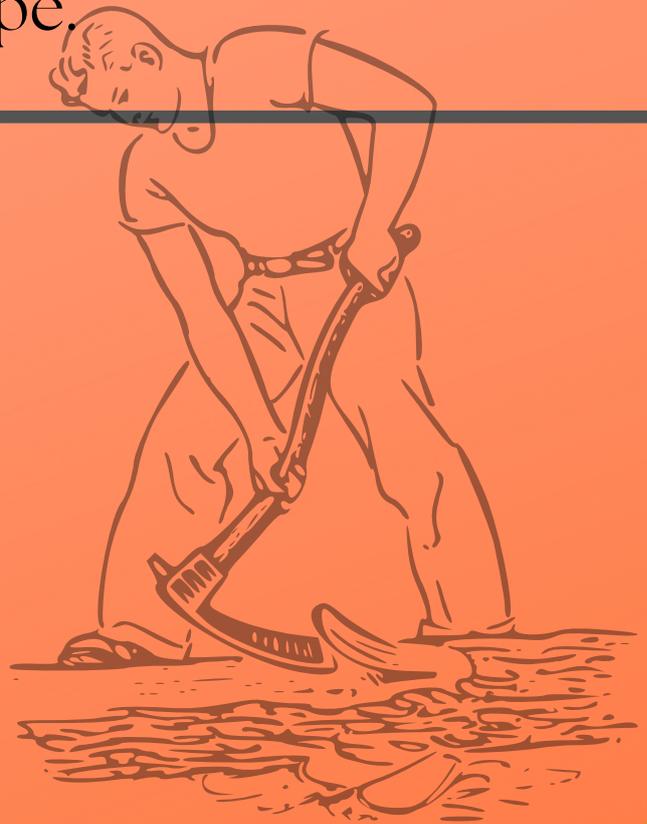
LUCI SU ROSARIO

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# Oranges for Justice

This section of the exhibition depicts migrants and refugees' susceptibility to labour exploitation, notably in agricultural production. The fundamental aspects of this exploitation are conveyed in this artwork through text, poetry, and picture — the strength of profit-driven market forces that result in salaries so low that employees are unable to live with dignity or hope.





We might imagine that arriving safely in a country such as Italy is the finishing post. The reality is far more complex. How is a person without a network – and sometimes without documents – to live?

Calabria, in the southern tip of Italy, is one of its poorest and yet most fertile regions. There, casual work is to be had harvesting produce such as citrus fruits, olives and tomatoes. The labour force doing that work is often made up of people who are living on the margins.

The price of that produce is, in general, fixed by giant wholesalers who are in competition with each other for the custom of consumers whose loyalty is primarily determined by how much they pay. The profit margins for producers selling to these wholesalers are consequently squeezed to the limit – and beyond.

As a result, wages are cut to the minimum and recourse may be made to a workforce which is desperate: often without contracts and, hence, without rights, many run by gangmasters.





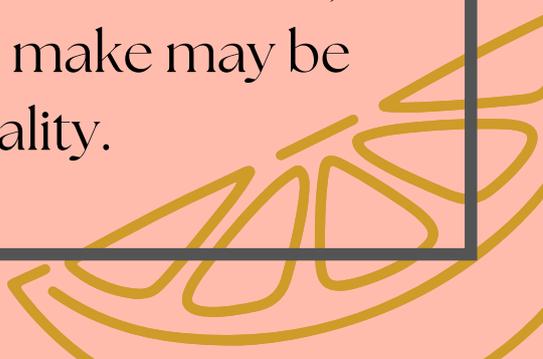
Those who pick up this casual work are often trying to support family left behind in another country. Having sent home what they can, they are left with little to live on. Around the plain of Gioia Tauro, in western Calabria, you can see the tent cities and container camps where casual workers live, with little or no hope of improving their lot. Such people have no agency.

Mediterranean Hope, FCEI's refugee and migrant programme, is working in Calabria with those trapped in this reality. Amongst other things, MH is promoting ethical production and buying choices. It is a drop in the ocean but, through promotion of the "Etika" brand, together with SOS Rosarno 3 and the Mani e Terra cooperative, MH is enabling producers to reach a wider market directly and, thereby, to fix a fair price.

Etika producers abide by a code of practice, provide contracts to all their workers and pay a fair wage.

Consumers, producers and workers all benefit.

This type of exploitation is just one of the many dangers faced by people in host countries, including those in Europe. It may be sobering for us to realise that, as consumers, the buying choices we make may be helping to sustain that reality.

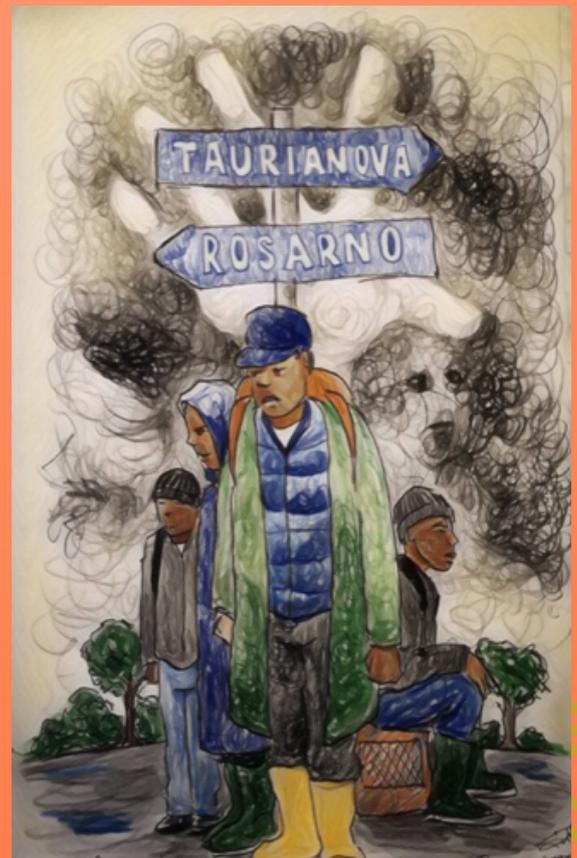
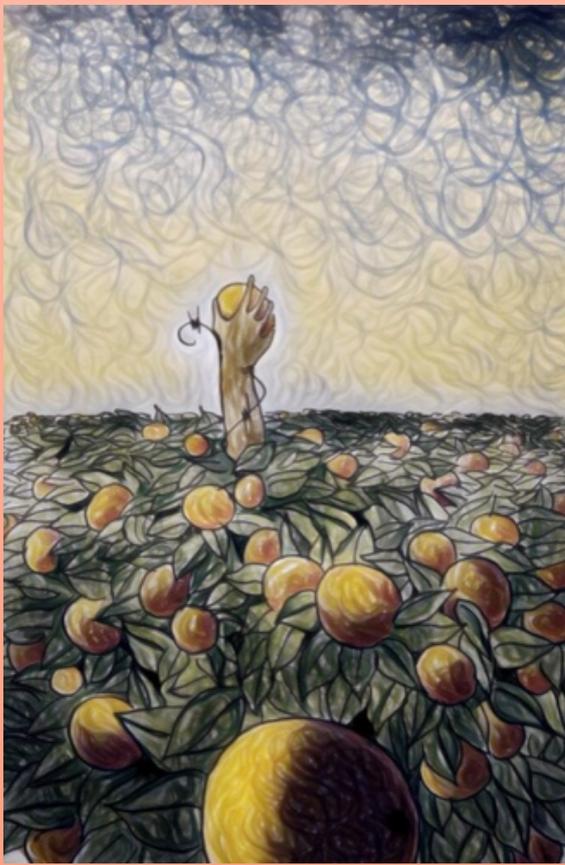


## Sometimes They Appear

Every year, in the plain of Gioia Tauro by the hundreds, labourers come from all over Italy. They collect oranges and clementines for a few euros per hour. The dehumanisation they encounter on the frontier they have been carrying for years like a curse on their skin. Sometimes they appear. But only because the death of one of them makes the news, because someone was shot dead, because someone was killed by a car in a dark street. Sometimes, for a moment, they appear.

## Profit Is Hungry For Them

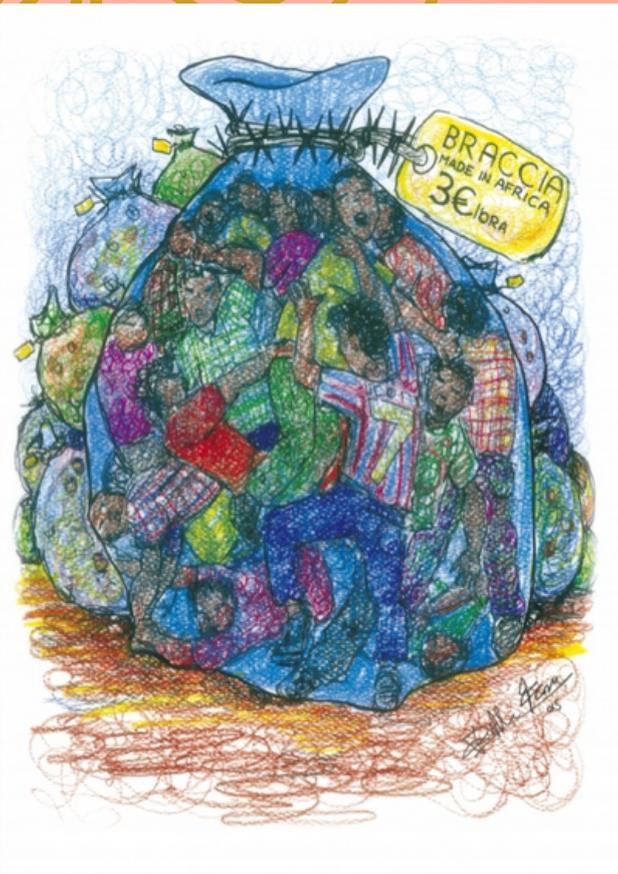
Waiting for them, at the crossroads of blackmail between misery and exploitation, is the profit that is hungry for them. Profit waits and chooses, ready to suck the sweat from their skin, while the wind of hatred takes away their voice, rights and dignity.



## In The Darkness Of Rights

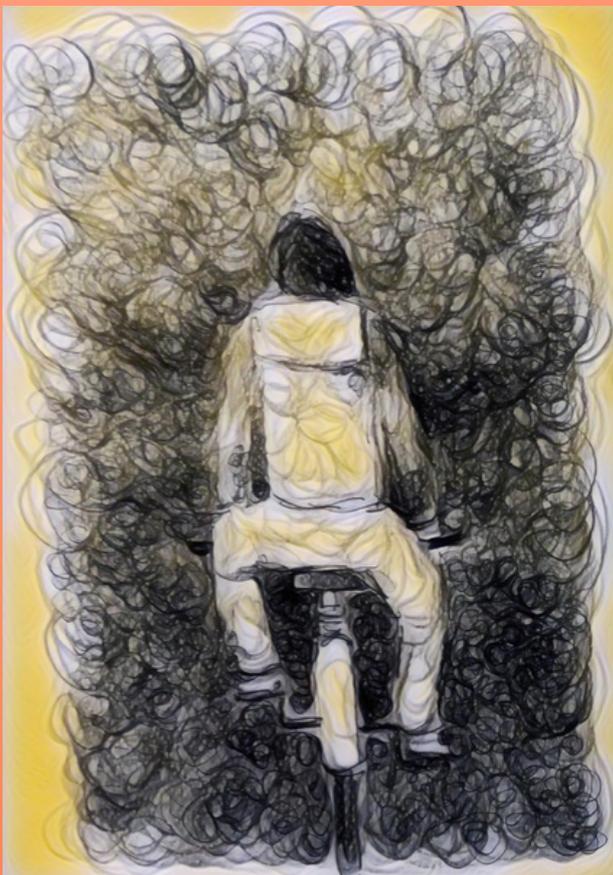
In the darkness of rights everything becomes lawful.

Exploitation is linked to misery and arrogance to ignorance. The border one carries can lead to madness, the frontier one carries kills freedom, even hope. Those who remain caged between residence permits to be renewed and residence to be requested have the curse of illegal work as a life partner.



## Cycling In The Night

It gets dark in the streets of the Piana di Gioia Tauro. Pedal after pedal I see them getting lost in this region without light or hope.



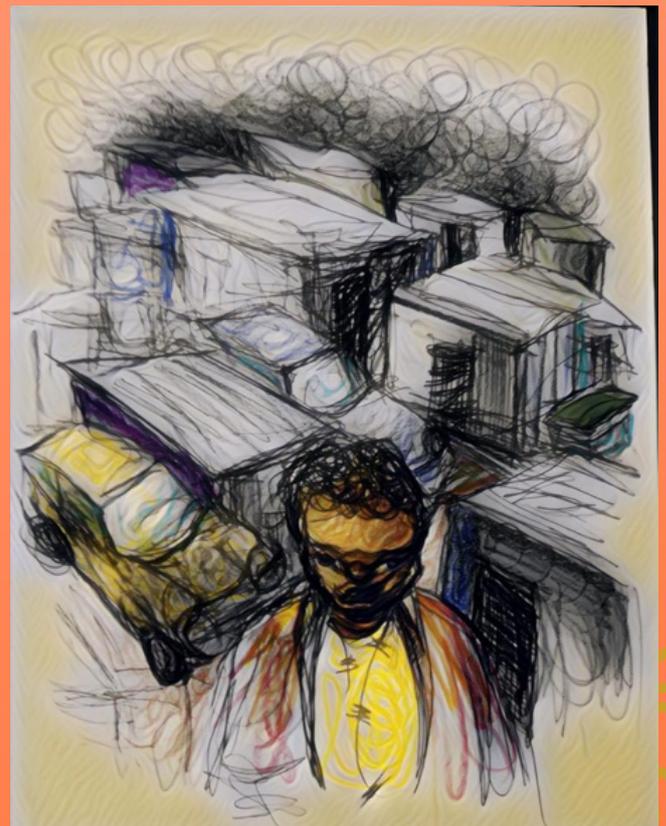


## For A Moment...

They return tired in the evening after a day of work picking clementines or oranges, kiwis or olives. For a moment they are illuminated by the cars that drive past them. For a moment light prevails over darkness, for a moment their faces become human again, for a moment the frontier seems to have disappeared.

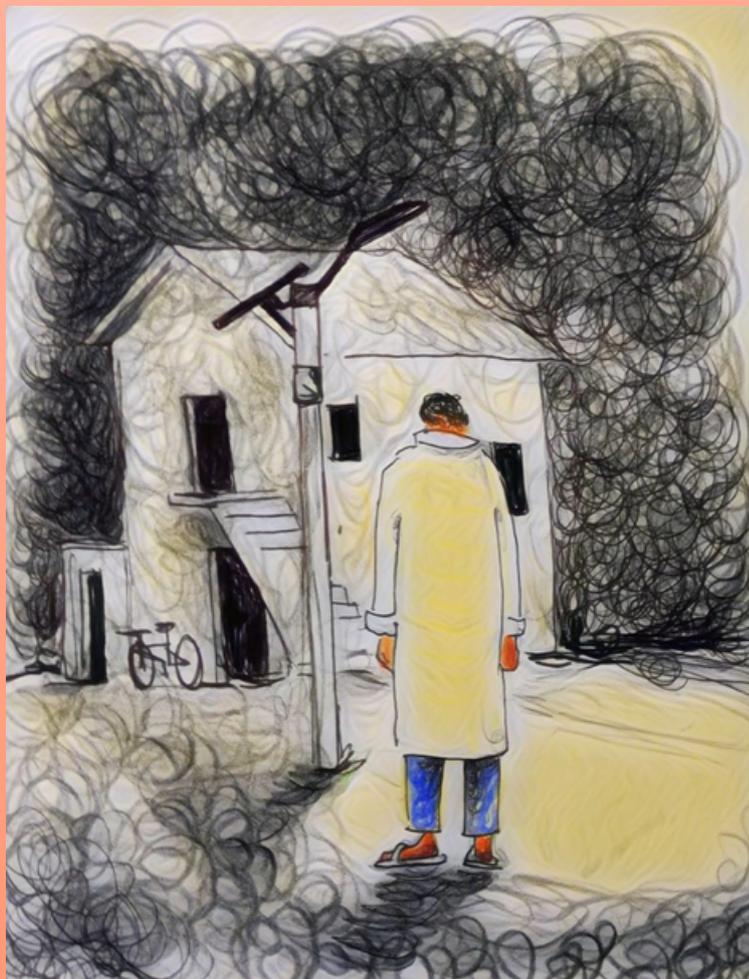
## The Ghetto Enters Your Soul

Waiting for them after a day of work is not a house but shacks and sheets, tents and containers. Day after day the ghetto enters your soul. They hope that tomorrow can erase the reality of the present, but it is an illusion and nothing more.



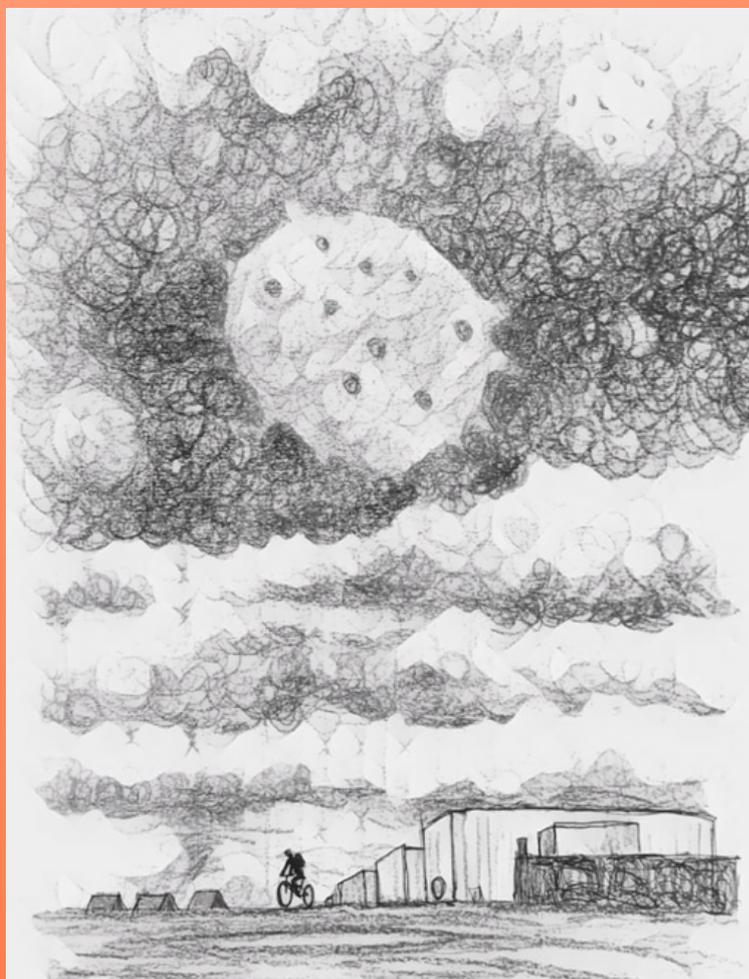
## Loneliness Prevails

In the silence of the farmhouses, far from the lights of the villages, silence dominates the night. From the white man, solidarity, far less affection, is rare. While waiting for light, darkness caresses the soul of the earth's damned.



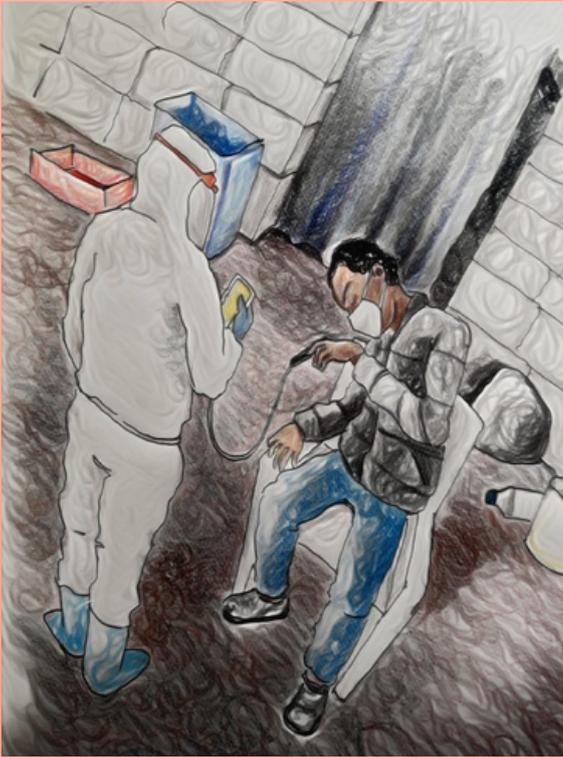
## Covid In The Wet

The virus appeared above us as a moon appears on a thunderstorm. From exploited we have become greasers. The quarantine took away our working days while on the other side of the world they asked us for money. It rains in the night. Covid in the wet.



## The Disease Of Waiting

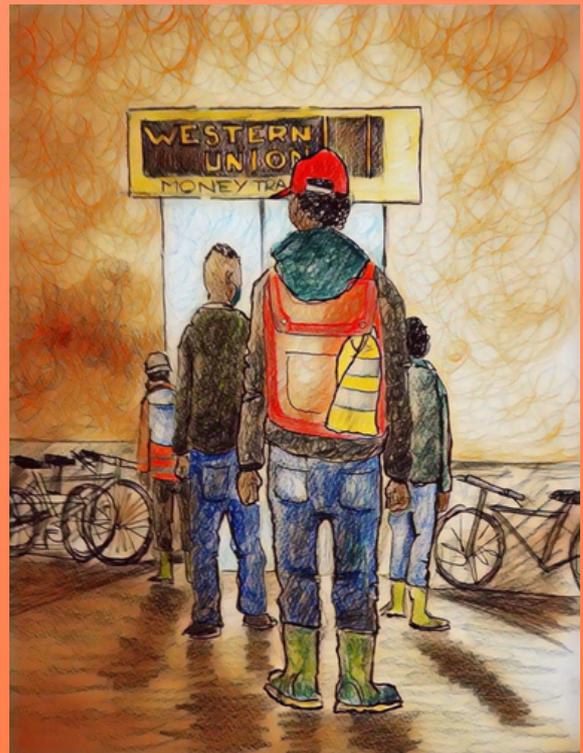
Getting sick in the ghetto means waiting because we cannot lose our working days. Those who work illegally must choose whether to work to send money home or lose a job which exploits us but is our last hope.



## In Line To Help Our Home

First they exploit us in the fields and then they earn on the transfer of the money we send to our families.

Let's help them at home they say, but in hundreds of years they have done nothing but impoverish us where we are born and where we emigrate.





*In this darkness we invoke the light of justice*

# Francesco Piobbichi



Francesco Piobbichi has worked with Mediterranean Hope since FCEI established this migrant and refugee programme in 2013, initially on Lampedusa and currently in Calabria.

Francesco re-discovered sketching whilst working on Lampedusa. As a social illustrator, he draws what he sees and, through his art, communicates impressions, ideas and commentary on the world around him.

Francesco has published three volumes of illustrations inspired by his work with migrants and refugees, the profit from which is all donated to Mediterranean Hope. See further:  
[www.claudiana.it](http://www.claudiana.it)

