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National Book Critics Circle Award Finalist

Traveling for nearly two years and across four continents, Caroline Moorehead takes readers on a journey to understand why millions of people are forced to abandon their homes, possessions, and families in order to find a place where they may, quite literally, be allowed to live. Moorehead's experience living and working with refugees puts a human face on the news, providing unforgettable portraits of the refugees she meets in Cairo, Guinea, Sicily, Lebanon, England, Australia, Finland, and at the U.S.-Mexico border. *Human Cargo* changes our understanding of what it means to have and lose a place in the world, and reveals how the refugee "problem" is on a par with global crises such as terrorism and world hunger.

Human Cargo: A Journey Among Refugees Details

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From Reader Review Human Cargo: A Journey Among Refugees for online ebook

Sheryl Mountenay says

Lord. It is almost unbearable what people have to endure. Yet they do!

This book is a hard read, took me several days, but while unsettling, very informative and so well written. Well worth it.

The arbitrariness of birth determines so much. Lots to think about.

Juliajuliah says

Reading "Human Cargo" by Caroline Moorhead has changed me. She explains the history of refugees and their rights. Then she shows us what it means to live between countries by recounting the experiences of refugees as they leave their homelands, and arrive in foreign lands.

"Some stories are so heavy only silence helps you carry them" wrote Anne Michaels in "Fugitive Pieces." These stories were so raw that I could only read a few pages of this book at a time.

Refugees from across the world explain how they worry that their memories are becoming "thinned with exile." They hanker after the past, the comforts of home, the feeling of belonging and community.

Now they live in makeshift shelters and cannot work. They become depressed. They worry about those they have left at home. They feel vulnerable and unwanted. They don't belong anywhere.

Is home a fixed place or a narrative? Are movement and migration becoming the norm? In small ways aren't we all exiles – separated from people we love, longing to belong and craving home comforts?

Reading this book has prompted me to think a great deal about what gives me a sense of belonging and security. Making a pot of soup, talking to a friend, re-arranging the cushions on my sofa - all these simple things make me feel at home.

I don't want to forget that for many, these simple things are dreams, not reality.

Robby sonzogni says

I learned so much from this book about human refugees throughout the world and how each country deals (or doesn't) with them. It is sad in a lot of places but so very important in the world view. Each chapter is about a different country.

Helen says

DISGUSTED. Having come as a refugee in the US myself, I wanted to read this book, as I enjoyed C.Moorehead's other works. I was deeply appalled by hypocrisy and anti-Semitism in the chapter describing Palestinian camps. Not one word about acts of terror, suicide attacks, innocent people killed and maimed, and the only side being blamed for it all is Israel, and all of author's compassion lies with Palestinians. Meanwhile, the events on the ground tell us about "humanitarian" UNRWA activities, such as storing rockets in UNRWA school (they were caught red-handed at least 3 times - of which we know; could be more), and returning those same rockets to poor suppressed Palestinians, so that more people could be killed. This book is as liberal and "PC" as you can find. I finished this book with a sense of disgust. If I could give it negative stars, I would.

Michelle says

Human Cargo is a difficult, but absolutely essential, read. Compelling and harrowing, Moorehead takes the reader through a global account of the refugee crisis - a patchwork of modern history and human accounts. Crucially, she succeeds at humanising the numbers. Moorehead effectively covers post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health problems caused by torture, killings, violence, fear and overwhelming loss, and further depression caused by uncertainty and the long limbo of the asylum process in most countries. The Australian immigration system in particular, turning away boats of refugees and exercising indefinite detention, made my blood boil. I thought this book deserves five stars, however it bothered me that this 2016 edition seemingly had not been updated at all, having first been published in 2005. Most of the chapters would have benefitted from some more recent statistics, especially as the refugee crisis has grown considerably worse over the last few years. For me, Human Cargo especially highlights the horrific ordeals young children are forced through every day - having first watched and/or experienced horrific abuse, then travelling on often perilous journeys to safety and later spending months or years in detention centres or refugee camps. I fully agree with Moorehead's conclusion - "how a state deals with its refugees should be a measure of its social and political health." This book should be mandatory reading for all politicians.

Mark says

Refugees and Asylum Seekers have become political footballs in recent years, this book traces the history of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and follows the conditions of people seeking asylum in the world today. There are some personal, tragic and horrific accounts of the violence and persecution that people flee from, and the bureaucratic morass and ill-feeling they encounter when they finally arrive at any given destination in search of, not just a better life, but some semblance of human existence. We hear of men and women tortured and separated from their children or partners, one young man even suffered seeing soldiers playing football with his mothers severed head; this is no book for the faint of heart or stomach. It is harrowing, and all the more so because it is true. Such stories ejected from the pen of a Poppy Z. Brite novel would be macabre but fictional, these are not.

The most important aspect of the book is the slow but steady regression of refugee rights when they reach, supposedly more tolerant societies. Australia has lead the world in how to keep the unwanted out and other "western" nations have followed suit making it ever more difficult for people to regain their lost dignity. An important point is made in the disparity of the gender of refugees; it stands to reason that for every male asylum seeker, there is a woman who couldn't afford to escape, who is burdened with children or simply

stuck thanks to a repressive society.

If we judge a nation by how we treat the weakest in it, then shouldn't we judge the world by that same benchmark? As citizens of the world we have failed our brothers and sisters, and continue to do so with sickening gusto. We were happy to let in the victims of authoritarian communism when escaping the GDR or USSR during the cold war, now we refuse entry to those in need. Refusing to let the needy in is as bad as any nation not letting them out, furthermore, while we continue to tolerate and encourage a world so unequal, then we must also tolerate the victims of that world seeking redress.

george says

I read the hardcover version of this book which, for some reason, is nowhere on here. A very good and detailed look at refugees today. What it means to be a refugee, how a person becomes a refugee, and what other countries are doing about refugees. What was nice about this is that it has a lot of stories about actual refugees--how they came to be refugees and what their lives are like as refugees. And this is what is so heartbreaking. What is worse is that these stories are an unbelievably small fraction of refugees. One thing that I took away from this is that the lives of refugees aren't automatically better if and when they are accepted to new countries--sometimes they are just as bad, but a different kind of bad. The saddest thing that I was aware of before but reinforced to a great degree in the book, is that so many countries don't really understand refugees. They don't or can't comprehend the horrors these people have endured; the lives and families they have had to leave behind; the people close to them killed in front of the survivor. But most countries don't want these people and do everything in their power to refuse them. There must a a huge overhaul in the system and this must happen sooner than later.

Nicole Means says

Although this book several months to complete, it is extremely well-written. I was particularly interested in the chapter Afghanistan. Interestingly, Australia has taken extreme measures to keep refugees out-- this fact was particularly disturbing considering European settlers treated the Aborigines. This book was published several years ago, so it would be interesting to see how many of the statistics are accurate. I recommend this book to anyone interested in human rights and the horrible plight that refugees endure to seek safety.

Aditya R. Marwan says

Last few decades of the 20th century witnessed an unprecedented mass exodus of people throughout the world and gradually it has become even worse as there seems to be no end to the cataclysms like civil wars, environmental catastrophes, foreign invasions etc. The flow of migrants and asylum seekers have been a constant predicament to the governments throughout the world as most of them are signatories to the UNHCR convention and hence have responsibilities to grant asylum to those fleeing persecution in their country of origin. So far almost all the signatory states have failed to comply with the provisions of the convention with regard to the intake capacities and the inefficiency further seems to have been exacerbated by the underfunding of the UNHCR. Moreover, as the globalisation paved the way for the exchange of services and ideas, the refugee crisis has become ever dynamic resulting into various kinds of asylum seekers ranging from the ones fleeing persecution to those seeking asylum for exploiting economic opportunities which makes the crisis even more complicated and unexplored. At the receiving end of all these

inefficiencies and predicaments are the asylum seekers who try to make it to the safer lands by enduring perilous journeys. They hope of a better future but end up disillusioned once they make it to the other end as they either get deported or are left to languish without any work or a place to sleep unless their applications for a refugee status are accepted, which in many cases takes a year or even a longer period. This book is an insight of the lives of these asylum seekers who even after fleeing their countries cannot get rid of the ordeals as their claims for a refugee status is either rejected or they have to live in the camps in unfathomable conditions until the resettlement takes place or they can be sent back home once it is declared to be safe enough for return.

The author, Caroline Moorehead, in her book Human Cargo has brought to us a deep humane insight of the lives of refugees in different parts of the world like Cairo, Mexico, Liberia, Australia, Sicily, Newcastle, Afghanistan etc. Her details on the asylum policies of the governments and the limitations of the UNHCR as an organisation for the protection of the refugees fleeing persecution is very persuasive. She excels in describing the ordeals of the asylum seekers who look for a better future but end up getting stuck in the limbo completely uncertain of their future. She says that asylum seekers have no home but the one they left behind and it, apparently, is true. Her unmatched account of the traumas the asylum seekers deal with throughout their lives, the depression and stress which haunts them, the linguistic and cultural barriers they face in the new communities, the way liberal governments fail in protecting the humanitarian values etc. makes this book a source to understand the humane aspects of the asylum seekers/refugees and the apathy governments show up in contrast to the values of 'collective sovereignty' which demands a humanistic approach to deal with this desperate situation.

Cheryl says

This was a heartbreaking and very instructive book very relevant to today. I liked how she divided the book up into the different sections (leaving, arriving, afterward) and dealt with the different issues that concerned each. Overall I felt the author was fairly even handed in her presentation of the topic. It didn't become too preachy, but presented both sides of the argument.

The only weakness, which is not the book's fault, is that even now, ten years later it is somewhat outdated. Not on the overall theme but the severity of the issue. It was almost funny to see her write that refugee numbers are down because anyone who pays attention to the news knows that there is a refugee crisis happening in Europe and there are more refugees worldwide now than since WWII. Not her fault since she can only talk about what was happening at the time, but it doesn't make me curious how or if the book would be changed today.

Tim Green says

A brilliantly moving and important book detailing the journeys and hardships faced by refugees around the world.

One thing that really struck me was the effect that uncertainty has on one's ability to live life. The uncertainty of whether you will be granted asylum, the uncertainty of where you will end up and crucially whether you will be settled long enough in one place to start making connections such as friends or start an educational course, or whether you will be shortly shifted to another unfamiliar location and have to familiarise yourself with a whole new place and people. This uncertainty prevents people from living in any meaningful way.

The book does a great job in humanising refugees, proving insight into their world and documenting their stories. You learn about the homes they have been forced to flee and why they may never be able to return, whether because of a physical threat that still exists, or the very real mental trauma that home now represents, due to their prior experience.

Fiona says

This book starts with a sometimes confusing race through the history of organisations tasked with the management of displaced people but the following chapter, which describes the plight of Africans crossing the Mediterranean in often perilous and fatal conditions, is very moving as is the description of the Mexico-US border and the risks, again often fatal, that people take to reach what they hope to be a better life on the other side of the fence. The chapter on Australia is an indictment of the appallingly heartless reaction of the Australian authorities to the plight of asylum seekers. The hypocrisy of a country full of immigrants protecting its borders against other immigrants is clear but we only have to look at how they treat their own indigenous population to see the underlying ideology. Britain fares a little better perhaps but the policy of dispersing applicants across the country while they wait for a decision shows no empathy or respect for these people as human beings. The book was written 7 or 8 years ago but a few minutes research on the Internet shows that not enough has changed in the intervening period.

I chose to read this book because I often meet asylum seekers and refugees through my work and I felt that I needed a better understanding of their journey, on many different levels. It's too easy to be judgemental and the many different stories Moorehead relates serve as a reminder that few will have had an easy journey. I didn't finish this book however because I felt it lacked balance. I learned a lot but I felt swamped by heartbreaking stories. What about all the success stories? The asylum seekers and refugees now settled in 'safe' countries who are making a success of their lives now that they have the chance to do so? We see them all around us but we don't read about them in this book.

Cynthia says

Okay so I didn't even get a quarter of the way through this book and I am unlikely to finish it (in fact, I think I've lost it). No fault of the book, it's interesting and well written, I think I wanted a break from it, and then never went back.

Maire says

I forgot I had read this book and realized while reading What is the What that I drew from some background information on the politics of refugee resettlement from Moorehead's research. (Although it's not necessary to have this information.. Egger's writing speaks for itself).

Caroline Nguyen says

Read this book for a course at Stanford University with Professor Kulkarni. The course was entitled Refugee Crisis Across the Globe. Loved how the book was divided in subparts, each

containing a different story. It was rich in geography and culture!
