



Let Me Tell You My Story

Trisha Leimer (Editor), Twila Bird (Editor), Elizabeth Benson Thayer (Contributor), Nathanael Read (Contributor), Christophe Mortier (Contributor), Lindsay Allen Silsby (Contributor), Kristi Libutti Burton (Contributor)

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Over the course of two years, a group of award-winning photographers, filmmakers, painters, and authors trailed and documented the flood of refugees pouring into the West from the Middle East, Africa, and Southeast Asia, recording the refugees' firsthand accounts of who they are and what made them refugees. Spare, haunting, utterly magnificent, and profoundly human, this inspiring collection creates a portrait of the greatest humanitarian crisis of modern history. From the pregnant mother in the dusty warehouse-turned-refugee-camp in Greece to the emaciated child in a mud-filled tent in Bangladesh to the lone Sudanese crouched under an overpass in Italy--the people inside this remarkable volume of exquisite photography and resilient stories will teach you that the surest way to draw humans together begins with the words "I want to tell you my story . . ."

Let Me Tell You My Story Details

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From Reader Review Let Me Tell You My Story for online ebook

Becca McCulloch says

I rarely give a book five stars but this beautiful collection deserves every one. The photography is breathtaking and the stories will stir your soul. I read them one at a time, allowing the heartbreak and courage to work inside me until my heart was filled. I've found myself sharing the stories in conversation and working them into church lessons. These stories have value to the human family. They will change your perspective, enhance your ability to feel empathy, and remind you that we are all brothers and sisters. I can't recommend this book highly enough.

Estelle R says

I was privileged to be involved with the TSOS documentary group for a few months in the midst of their website setup and launch, and can attest to their commitment and passion in telling the authentic stories of these courageous individuals and families. I was brought to tears, sometimes huge ugly sobbing heaving tears, every time I posted a new story for them through the various TSOS social media outlets.

The numbers of this humanitarian crisis are so large that they are impossible to comprehend, which renders many of us not knowing what we can actually DO to help any of it, or how to even imagine what's happening at the ground level - 70 million refugees! They walked 3000+ miles! Here's what to do: READ THIS BOOK. This amazing book and the amazing TSOS volunteer group introduces you on an individual level to a few of those 70 million people - their names, their past professions, their dreams and hopes, who their families are, and what was the breaking point that put them in mortal danger, what compelled them to leave EVERYTHING behind and flee for their very lives.

These are not happy stories and are heartbreaking to read, but what shines through is the SPIRIT of these people - their resilience and bravery is astounding and inspiring. Refugees are not enemies; surely we can agree that all humans have the right to flee certain death, the right to keep our families SAFE. This book (and the TSOS website tsosrefugees.org) will introduce refugees to you as HEROES surviving what would, to most of us, seem impossible and unimaginable to survive. Meet the Syrian nobel-prize nominee physician whose fellow surgeon was tortured to death, and who saw another colleague and son die in a car bomb: "I'm not thinking about what I lost; I'm sad, but I'm also happy because I have good health and a good mind and WE ARE SAFE." Read about the amazing Afghan man who lost his leg in an explosion and used a duct-taped prosthetic leg to who carry his nieces and nephews over thousands of mountainous miles to Europe. Learn about the West African girl who barely made it to Italy after surviving fleeing from brutal Libyan soldiers: "I am calming down; I have confidence that if I go to bed nobody will break the door." Cry with the young father who fled Afghanistan with family after his toddler child was kidnapped and then delivered dead to his doorstep: "The only thing important to me was to live in a safe place without danger."

What would you do if it were YOU?

Please remember that all sales proceeds of this book go BACK to the TSOS group, helping them document and tell more stories, which in turn helps our fellow brothers and sisters. Telling their stories helps them clarify and process, and gives them hope that there are other people in the world who care about them and what happens to them. In some cases, having their stories documented in a public manner (TSOS' website, this book, social media) assists in the asylum granting process because publicizing the Taliban or other terrorist group threats against them would place them in even MORE danger if they were forced to return to

their dangerous home countries. Us **READING AND KNOWING THEIR INDIVIDUAL STORIES MATTERS**. Us caring about their stories can change our lives - change our perspective and our priorities and our service to others - and it **DOES** change theirs.

Karen says

The news cycle will sometimes relay stories about refugees, but most of the reporting is about groups of people. This book humanizes the crisis by focusing on several refugees and allowing them to tell their own stories with the help of interviewers, translators, photographers, and even a painter.

The result is a collection of accounts that display the most horrible aspects of the human experience (destruction of property, torture, rape, killing).

It's heartbreaking to read the horrors that human being inflict upon one another--often in the service of absurd abstractions. Violence committed in the name of defending God and country has never made sense to me. Many of the stories are about Syrian refugees waylaid in Greece. However, there are accounts from refugees fleeing other Near Eastern countries, some Eastern European countries, and several African countries as well. Certainly, parallel stories exist for refugees from countries in Asia, Central America, and South America as well.

But just when I want to crawl in a hole and give up on all of humanity, this book gives me hope that people can be good.

Let Me Tell You My Story also documents the most admirable aspects of the human experience:

Here are just a few examples of goodness described in this book's pages:

economic sacrifices for family, friends, and strangers; carrying children for miles; nursing the sick, the sad, and the injured; teaching people a new language, a new job skill; providing food, shelter, and clothing; helping people process paperwork in order to function in an unfamiliar bureaucracy.

After being a witness to these stories, it's hard to do nothing. The book concludes with a list of suggestions, some of them very simple and not super costly in time or money. Just doing **SOMETHING** small and sharing a skill, expertise or a small sum of money can make a difference in the life of someone suffering.

If you don't read the book, at least check out their webpage by searching for Their Story Is Our Story.

I found out about this because I know a few of the volunteers who are members of my faith; however, their organization is an interfaith/interpath organization, which is also a positive, affirmative act in and of itself. **WE ARE BETTER TOGETHER!**

Yusra ? says

I can guarantee you I will cry.

This is such an important book in our day and age, and I can't wait.

Ranee says

This makes you want to go out and help someone! It also makes you appreciate why our soldiers are trying to help those in places like Afghanistan with freedom. The proceeds from this book go to help those refugees in need - get it! Beautifully put together.

Heather says

The comment-free editing, the accessible layout, and the beautiful pictures left me feeling like I was personally listening to and gazing at the people in this book.

Given how overwhelming the refugee situation is, there is something calming about offering people the simple dignity of "listening" to (or reading about) them.

As the title suggests, the refugees are allowed to tell their own stories. There is little editorial comment and the stories and pictures are allowed to speak for themselves.

A nice feature of the book is that you can spend as much or as little time on the book as you have time for in a sitting. My first sitting with the book involved looking at each photograph or painting (they really are beautiful) and reading the titles, which are usually quotes from the text and act as mini-stories. In my second sitting, I had time to read the stories, most of which are only one or two pages long.

In short, I thought the book was thoughtfully laid out in a way that allowed the humanity of its subjects to take center stage.

Michael Austin says

Today marks the publication of one of the most extraordinary acts of consecration that I have ever seen, the book *Let Me Tell You My Story*, which contains photographs, poetry, and art of and by refugees. The refugees come Afghanistan, Syria, Iran, Iraq, and various nations in Africa. Most of them have found their way to Germany, Italy, or other European nations, often in crowded camps where their futures are far from certain. Their stories matter.

The book is a team effort by the Their Story Is Our Story organization, a group of writers, artists, photographers, editors, translators, and other volunteers who have consecrated their time and their considerable talents to the sacred effort of collecting the stories of a small fraction of the world's 22.5 million displaced people.

It is a beautiful book on just about every level. The photographs are stunning, the art is beautiful, and the stories are profoundly human. They are, as one might expect, precisely the stories that you or I or just about anyone else would tell if we were displaced by war and brutality and forced to take our families somewhere--anywhere--to protect their lives.

I don't want to summarize these stories because it is not the summaries that matter. We've all seen the pictures and engaged in the arguments. Since the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the civil war in Syria, refugees

have become the world's #1 political problem. Summaries of the collective experiences of these refugees--and even on occasional profile or two--have long been part of the political discussion.

The urgent thing that *Let Me Tell You My Story* does is transform a political problem into a series of human connections. Through the enormous efforts of the volunteers who put this book together--many of whose stories are interspersed among the stories of the refugees--we can see these people as people. We can listen to their voices in our own language.

Or we can turn away. We can see the problem as too big and too hard and too far away. Without a book like this, turning away would be the only real option that most of us have. Books like this make it at least possible to mourn with those who are mourning--even when they are 4,000 miles away and speak Pashto.

And this is what makes these stories sacred. Nothing is more urgently necessary for people who profess to be religious than to make human connections with people beyond our own communities of people more or less exactly like us. This is kind of the point of most of the things that we call "the scriptures."

Let Me Tell You My Story is itself a work of holy writ--holy because it makes it possible for us to start fulfilling one of our most important religious obligations. It helps us answer the question ". . . and who is my neighbor." Once we answer the question, of course, we have to do stuff--we have to start consecrating our own talents and treasures in order to provide relief.

Reading a single book--no matter how beautiful it may be--will not give food and shelter to refugees. That will take a lot of coordinated effort by a lot of people willing to consecrate their time and talents to building the Kingdom of God. All a book like this can do is turn our attention towards the human beings that we have been trying desperately hard not to notice.

If we can do this, though--and I mean really do it, really look people in the face and allow ourselves to listen to their stories--we just might find ourselves unable to look away until we have built the kind of world that our own faith has always told us we can build.

The Kingdom of God is within us. But we have to stop looking where it isn't.

Sarah says

Reading these stories of refugees is heartbreaking but necessary to understanding the world refugee crisis. I've always read historical fiction and wondered what I would have done if I lived during those times? This book (and other accounts I've read) have not just moved me with compassion but moved me to action. Everyone has something to give and I like that this book is not just full of tragic stories but also ways we can help. The photography, art and writing make this a beautiful book that pay tribute to the humanity, strength and hope of the refugees.

Kate says

"We are aware that reading story after story of trauma, violence, injustice, and despair can be disheartening, but surrounding the dark shadows of human suffering we have encountered unexpected light... while reading...we hope you (will feel) inspired to connect and become a part of someone's story. No one person, organization, or country can possibly relieve all of the human suffering taking place, but these personal

connections can and will push back the darkness one spark at a time”- Their Story is Our Story

This message is especially powerful at this moment in time. I was honored to read these stories, and I am so glad that refugees are able to share bits of their lives through this platform and book. We are all human and share many of the same priorities and emotions. This book brings that to light.

Segullah says

A few weeks ago, I sat on my daughter’s bed and read my twin girls an unconventional bedtime story. It was from this book, Let Me Tell You My Story.

We read one narrative, and then another. Short personal accounts of individuals who fled their countries of origin in search for a life we admittedly take for granted. A life with physical safety, peace, clean water, three meals a day, the chance to attend school, sleep without fear, and freedom.

My daughters are in 6th grade and this year they have a new student in their class. She is from Afghanistan. They tell me she has the nicest smile, is always polite, and has a little sister who runs into her arms every time the two see each other at school. But she doesn’t speak English. And they do not yet know her story.

So in an attempt to help them understand the country she has come from, I began reading to them these refugee stories of courage and hope. I told my girls, “You have no idea what your new friend has experienced....

to read the rest of this review, please visit our website at <https://segullah.org/daily-special/le...>

Heather says

Beautiful book. Large, well laid out, lovely images, heart-wrenching stories. Seeing the refugee crisis on a personal level is important.

I think the stories could stand for themselves. The appendix was a lot of repeat of what was already in the stories (a lot of direct quotes- if you already read the stories, the appendix is not as necessary). Also they highlighted some of the interviewers/photographers/other people in the TSOS organization. I don't think they needed to add that. It sort of took away from the refugee stories. I do personally know one of the interviewers and I read her little snippet because of that personal connection, but the refugee stories are more important and can speak for themselves.

Still it does make you want to do something and brings my mind to the current asylum seekers at the US/Mexico border right now.

Esther Michela says

The book itself is beautifully put together. It's got a great heft and feel when you hold it. The inside is just as impactful. The stories are heartbreaking, but human. The pictures and art draw you in.

Kip says

Hard to read, but such a powerful book! How can we turn our backs on these people? They are part of the human family, and they need our help.

Erin says

Stunning photography and beautifully curated vignettes of refugee experiences, shared in their own words (occasionally a family member speaks for the individual). It provides a very human face to the refugee crisis, and these stories provide nuance about the experience that often gets left out of news articles or think pieces. It is powerful to hear refugees from around the world discussing their hopes, pains, and history. This is important work.

My only real criticism is that I would have arranged the sections in the book differently. The book's greatest strength is the way it favors refugees' voices and their lived experience, so it felt jarring to have the TSOS staff's discussion of their involvement with refugees interspersed through the text. They were well written and relevant, but I would have liked to see them as an appendix in the back. Transitioning back and forth between their stories and staff stories prevents the emotional power that happens when you find yourself falling into refugee story after refugee story. You respond differently when it is someone offering their reasoning and values than when you hear someone's lived experience.

But still, this is a powerful book that was executed beautifully.

Megan says

I first came across the NPO behind this book - Their Story Is Our Story, Giving Voice to Refugees (tsosrefugees.org) - back in December 2017. I started reading the stories of refugees they were posting on social media. I looked at their photographs and portraits, seeing the depth of the pain and refinement in their eyes. It became immediately clear that these were people who'd been through things that far surpassed my imagination... and have survived.

I've since come to know many of them by name, knowing the details of who they are and where they've come from and why. Their stories, their determination, their hope for a better life, have completely changed my life. My perspective has forever been altered to see the world through a lens that reveals my every day abundance as a responsibility to give whatever I can to helping "the least of these." This book of their stories has the potential to change the worldwide narrative and bring happy beginnings (and endings) to these good people.
