

My Journey and Stories from Refugee Girls Around the World (Malala Yousafzai)

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Yousafzai, Malala, and Liz Welch. *We Are Displaced: My Journey and Stories from Refugee Girls Around the World*. New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2019.

The book *WE ARE DISPLACED: My Journey and Stories from Refugee Girls Around the World* by Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala Yousafzai is an amalgamation of accounts that aptly justify the words: resilience, courage, and bravery. This book explores and reveals a window to hear “from” the refugees of whom we otherwise hear “about.” Each story is different but also the same in so many ways. The pain, the uncertainty, and the choicelessness are real for every person who is displaced or is a refugee. The storyline, as it unfolds, showcases the feelings of despair, desperation, and hope, along with many other deep feelings, from the very first page.

Home is held for granted by many, but the emotion is not the same for everyone. There are people outside the four walls of what the most privileged among us call home, for whom the feeling of home is a recollection of what they had lost and what they long for. Author Malala Yousafzai reinforces the experience of displacement so strongly, in very beautiful words, that we get to feel the struggle of the displaced in an impactful way. She not only put forward her story but many other inspiring stories of survival, hope, and pursuit through the book.

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Part 1: I Am Displaced

In this first part of the book, the narrator, Malala, outlines her story of displacement, resilience, activism, and hope. Malala starts by reflecting upon the peaceful young days she cherished, taken away from her due to the circumstances of the period. She enumerates the plight of the Taliban takeover of Swat Valley (her homeplace in Pakistan) and the imposition of radical methods, such as the ban on girl education and the propagation of music, dance, and Western movies as sinful, on the justification that this wasn't true Islam. Malala and her father had opposed these Talibanic impositions in all the ways they could; her father, a teacher, continued girls' education for as long as he could, whereas Malala spoke against the Taliban regime on different stages while she also wrote a blog for BBC Urdu secretly but had to stop when they were ordered to leave their home for a brief period. After coming back to a recovered hometown by the military, the deep yearning for peace once again turned out to be short-lived. Malala was shot in the head because of her stand against these regimes by extremist groups while returning from school, which marked the end of her desire to live in Swat Valley. Her displacement from Pakistan to the UK took place when she was unconscious. However, all this, instead of breaking her, transformed her into a girl with such a huge amount of resilience that she was able to create changes in other girls' lives.

Her story, her bravery, and her determination have inspired many girls around the world to fight for their rights. She pointed out throughout the book the force, rather than the choice, that most of the time leads people to leave the places they call home, and she has managed to teach so many who feel displaced or unwelcomed the power they hold within to impact their lives in the best ways.

Part 2: We Are Displaced

Malala inks down anecdotes of ten remarkable individuals in the next phase of her book. These stories are of girls and women who are closely and deeply connected to the sentiment of displacement. Penned personal encounters of the girls-Zaynab, Sabreen, Muzoon, Najla, Maria, Analisa, Marie Clarie, and Farah, are similar in ways while also being different. They are similar in all the ways we can only imagine; the struggle, emotional imbalances, and the unimaginable violence they had to run from. Yet, all these girls' stories are very different, too. Zaynab and

Sabreen are two sisters from Yemen who had to flee their home in fear of the violence and eventually got separated. Muzoon, sometimes called the “Malala of Syria,” is a girl who inspired many other girls in the refugee camp to pursue education. A resilient girl, Najla faced the worst Yazidi community massacres, which led to her and her family fleeing their home as refugees. Maria is a girl who faced displacement when she was very young (four years old) and is still brimming with high hopes and determination to succeed in life. The story of Analisa, a young girl who had to travel all alone to reach the US for a better life with her stepbrother, is empowering. Also, the inspiring story of Marie Clarie and her determination towards education is one everyone should know about. Facing displacement and her mom’s brutal death in front of her eyes, she transformed into a girl showcasing the strongest determination and resilience, becoming the first member of the family to graduate. Another story is that of Ajida, a Rohingya woman who found her resort in making and distributing clay stoves even amidst the harshness of a refugee camp. Lastly, Farah, the former CEO of Malala Fund, also has a story of displacement. Her tale of the struggle to settle in and the want to change this world is a very moving one.

Yet, with all these stimulating stories, the book does not end because it also mentions one, a rather different story. It is the story of a woman named Jennifer who made backing refugees the goal of her life and turned out to be the biggest support for one of the girls, Marie Clarie, and her family settling into a new place. She’s been through with the kids as their guardian, providing strength. This shows how small sacrifices from the side of someone like Jennifer have a huge positive impact on the lives of displaced people.

Conclusion

All these stories illuminate the strongest determination and strength. This book is a remarkable read where one finds inspiration, truth, and realisation of the difficulties that persist beyond the comforts of our house. The author’s intention to give the world a view of these stories of struggle and the quest for peace to create a change is evidently visible. In this era of the “rat race,” a pause from the constant running, a thought, would give us a chance to reflect upon our fortunate lives that are stable as compared to all the people in these stories who have suffered and are suffering to find peace. This book gives a valuable opportunity to explore the complexities and hardships

faced by refugees. It serves as a powerful reminder to reflect upon our actions and pushes us to make even small steps toward lending support. It is a compelling read that must be experienced by everyone.