Books and Films About Refugees and US Refugee Resettlement

Biography, Fiction, Non-Fiction, Autobiographies, and Academic Resources

- A Long Way Gone. By Ishmael Beah
- Alek: My Life from Sudanese Refugee to International Supermodel. By Alek Wek
- Andy Grove: The Life and Times of An American. By Richard Tedlow
- Artists in Exile: How Refugees from 20th Century War and Revolution Transformed the American Performing Arts. By Joseph Horowitz
- Asylum Denied: A Refugee’s Struggle for Safety in America. By Philip G. Schrag
- Autobiographical Notes: A Centennial Edition. By Albert Einstein
- Buddha is Hiding: Refugees, Citizenship, the New America. By Aihwa Ong
- Call Me By My True Names. By Thich Nhat Hanh
- Children of War: Voices of Iraqi Refugees. By Deborah Ellis
- Coming Home? Refugees, Migrants, and Those who Stayed Behind. Lynel Lyn and Ellen Oxfeld (editors)
- Courageous Journey: Walking the ‘Lost Boys’ Path from Sudan to America. By Barbara Youree, Ayuel Leek, and Beny Ngor
- Day and Night. By Elie Wiesel
- End of Hell: One Woman’s Struggle to Survive Cambodia’s Khmer Rouge. By Denise Affonco and Jon Swain
- Escaping North Korea: Defiance and Hope in the World’s Most Repressive Country. By Mike Kim
- First they Killed my Father. By Luong Ung
- Global Changes in Asylum Regimes: Closing Doors. By Daniele Joly (editor)
- Good Scent from a Strange Mountain. By Robert Olin Butler
- Hmong in Minnesota. By Chia Vang
- Homecomings: Unsettling Paths of Return. By Fran Markowitz and Anders Stefansson (editors)
- I Live Here. By Mia Kirshner, J.B. Mackinnon, Paul Shoebidges, and Michael Simons
- I Love You’s Are for White People: A Memoir. By Lac Su
- In The Land of The Magic Soldiers. By Daniel Bergner
- Kite Runner. By Khaled Hosseini
- Landscape of Hope and Despair: Palestinian Refugee Camps. By Julie Peteet
- Little Daughter: A Memoir of Survival in Burma and the West. By Zoya Phan and Damien Lewis
- Lost Boys of Sudan. By Mark Bixler
- Mathematicians Fleeing from Nazi Germany: Individuals Fates and Global Impact. By Reinhard Siegmund-Schultze
- Minaret: A Novel. By Leila Aboulela
- My Land and My People: The Original Autobiography of His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet. By The Dalai Lama
- No Dream Beyond My Reach: One Woman’s Remarkable Journey from Cambodian Refugee to American MD. By Sopheap Ly
- Notes From My Travels. By Angelina Jolie
- Nowhere Man. By Aleksandar Hemon
• Nuer Journeys, Nuer Lives: Sudanese Refugees in Minnesota. By Jon D. Holtzman and Nancy Foner
• Of Beetles and Angels: A Boy’s Remarkable Journey from a Refugee Camp to Harvard. By Mawi Asgedom
• Precious Problems: Selling White Refugees. By Adnan Mahmutovic
• Problems of Protection: The UNHCR, Refugees, and Human Rights. By Niklaus Steiner, Mark Gibney, and Gil Loescher (editors)
• Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania. By Lisa H. Malkki
• Refugee Women. By Susan Forbes Martin
• Refugee. By Adnan Mahmutovic
• Refugees in a Global Era. By Philip Marfleet
• Rejecting Refugees: Political Asylum in the 21st Century. By Carol Bohmer and Amy Shuman
• Selling Olga: Stories of Human Trafficking. By Louisa Waugh
• Silent Exodus: Portraits of Iraqi Refugees in Exile (Photo Essay). By Khaled Hosseini and Zalmai
• Slave. By Mende Nazer and Damien Lewis
• Storming the Court: How a Band of Law Students Fought the President and Won. By Brandt Goldstein
• The Bite of the Mango. By Mariatu Kamara and Susan McClelland (Voices of Courage Honoree by the Women’s Commission for Refugee Women and Children)
• The Day of the Pelican. By Katherine Paterson
• The Eaves of Heaven: A Life in Three Wars. By Andrew X. Pham
• The Empire Trauma: In Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood. By Didier Fassin, Richard Rechtman, and Rachel Gomme
• The Great Escape: Nine Jews Who Fled Hitler and Changed the World. By Kati Marton
• The Land of Green Ghosts. By Pascal Khoo Thwe
• The Middle of Everywhere. By Mary Pipher
• The Politics and Ethics of Asylum: Liberal Democracy and the response to Refugees. By Matthew Gibney
• The Price of Indifference: Refugees and Humanitarian Action in the New Century. By Arthur Helton
• The Shan: Refugees without a Camp - An English Teacher in Thailand and Burma. By Bernice Koehler Johnson
• The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down. By Anne Fadiman
• The Unwanted: A Memoir of Childhood. By Kien Nguyen
• They Poured Down Fire on Us from the Sky. By Alphonsian Deng, Benson Deng, Benjamin Ajak, and Judy A. Bernstein
• This Flowing Towards Me: A Story of God Arriving in Strangers. By Marilyn Lacey and Helen Prejean
• Under the Persimmon Tree. By Suzanne Fisher Staples
• UNHCR: The Politics and Practice of Refugee Protection in the 20th Century. By Gil Loescher
• United Stress of America (in Serbo-Croatian language only). By Dalibor Bilic
• What is the What. By Dave Eggers
• When Broken Glass Floats: Growing Up Under the Khmer Rouge. By Chanrithy Him
• Where the Rivers Meet: A Tibetan Refugee Community’s Struggle to Survive in the High Mountains of Nepal. By Clint Rogers
• White Pearl and I: A Memoir of a Political Refugee. By Svetlana Kim
Titles for Children and Youth

- *Drita, My Homegirl.* By Jenny Lombard
- *Four Feet Two Sandals.* By Karen Lynn Williams, Khadra Mohammad, and Doug Chayka
- *Gervelie’s Journey: A Refugee Diary* By Anthony Robinson, Annemarie Young, and June Allan
- *How I Learned Geography.* By Uri Shulevitz
- *How Many Days to America: A Thanksgiving Story.* By Eve Bunting and Beth Peck
- *Kiss the Dust.* By Elizabeth Laird
- *Making it Home: Real-Life Stories from Children Forced to Flee.* By Beverly Naidoo (introduction)
- *Muktar and the Camels.* By Janet Graber and Scott Mack
- *Refugee Boy.* By Benjamin Zephania
- *The Clay Marble.* By Minfong Ho
- *The Other Side of Truth.* By Beverly Naidoo
- *The Silver Sword.* By Ian Serraillier
- *Tropical Secrets: Holocaust Refugees in Cuba* By Margarita Engle
- *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit.* By Judith Kerr
- *Zlata’s Diary: A Child’s Life in Sarajevo.* By Zlata Filipovic

Films on Refugees and Asylum Seekers

**War Child (2008)** Christian Karim Chroboq, 94 minutes
The film documents the story of Emmanuel Jal, a former child soldier of Sudan’s civil war. He is now an emerging international hip hop star sharing a message of peace for his war-torn land and beloved Africa.

**Gran Torino (2008)** Clint Eastwood, 116 minutes
Walt Kowalski is a widower who holds onto his prejudices despite the changes in his Michigan neighborhood and the world around him. Kowalski is a grumpy, tough-minded, unhappy old man, who can't get along with either his kids or his neighbors, a Korean War veteran whose prize possession is a 1972 Gran Torino he keeps in mint condition. When his neighbor Thao, a young Hmong teenager under pressure from his gang member cousin, tries to steal his Gran Torino, Kowalski sets out to reform the youth. Drawn against his will into the life of Thao’s family, Kowalski is soon taking steps to protect them from the gangs that infest their neighborhood.

**Home Across Lands (2008)** John Lavall
The film chronicles the work of the International Institute of Rhode Island as it guides and empowers a group of Kunaman refugees making the transition from life in the Shimelba Refugee Camp in Northern Ethiopia to their new home in America.

**The Fortress (La Forteresse)** Fernand Melgar, 104 minutes
This documentary takes a look at a Swiss registration and processing center for asylum seekers. It follows the lives of the residents and the staff and immerses us into the heart of this “daily sorting process of human beings”.

**War Dance (2006)**, Sean Fine and Andrea Nix, 105 minutes
Set in civil war-ravaged Northern Uganda, this Best Documentary Oscar nominee follows the lives of three youngsters who attend school in a refugee camp and find hope through song and dance. Coming from a world in which children are abducted from their families and forced to fight in the rebel army, these kids give it their all when they travel to the capital city to take part in the prestigious Kampala Music Festival.
**The Betrayal: Nerakhoon (2008),** Ellen Kuras, co-directed by Thavisouk Phrasavath, 96 minutes  
“During the Vietnam War, the US government waged its own secret war in the neighboring country of Laos. When the US withdrew, thousands of Laotians who fought alongside American forces were left behind to face imprisonment or execution. One family, the Phrasavaths, made the courageous decision to escape to America. Hoping to find safety, they discovered a different kind of war.”

**Mrs. Goundo’s Daughter (2009),** Barbara Attie and Janet Goldwater, 60 minutes  
An official selection of the Human Rights Watch Film festival, the documentary is a moving story of a West African mother’s fight for asylum in the US to protect her two-year-old daughter from female genital cutting.

**A Stranger in My Homeland (2005) Chloe Traicos, 45 minutes**  
This film tells the story of the Zimbabwean refugees who spoke out against the regime of terror under which they lived. These brave people were tortured electrocuted and left for dead.

**24 Days in Brooks (2007) Dana Inkster, 42 min**  
In a decade, tiny Brooks, Alberta has been transformed from a socially conservative, primarily Caucasian town to one of the most diverse places in Canada. Immigrants and refugees have flocked here to work at Lakeside Packers - one of the world’s largest slaughterhouses. Centering on the 24 days of the first-ever strike at Lakeside, this film is a nuanced portrait of people working together and adapting to change. As 24 Days in Brooks shows, people from widely different backgrounds can work together for respect, dignity, and change - even though getting there is not easy.

**Into the Arms of Strangers: Stories of the Kindertransport (2000) Mark Jonathan Harris, 122 min**  
In 1938 and 1939, about 10,000 children, most of them Jews, were sent by their parents from Germany, Austria, and Czechoslovakia to the safety of England where foster families took most of them in for the duration of the war. Years later, eleven children, one child’s mother, an English foster mother, a survivor of Auschwitz who didn’t go to England, and two of the kindertransport organizers remember: the days before the Nazis, saying farewell to family, traveling to England, meeting their foster families, and trying to find families after the war ended.

**Heavy Metal in Baghdad (2007) Suroosh Alvi and Eddy Moretti, 84 min**  
In the late summer of 2006, filmmakers Eddy Moretti and Suroosh Alvi traveled to Baghdad to meet and interview the only heavy metal band in Iraq, Acrassicauda. "Heavy Metal in Baghdad" is the story of the band and its members, young Iraqis whose lives have been distorted and displaced by years of continual warfare in their homeland. The filmmakers have collected glimpses into the struggles of Acrassicauda as they try to stay together and stay alive. The International Rescue Committee has been working to resettle the members of Acrassicauda since last summer. Nearly three years after fleeing Iraq and living as a refugee in Syria and then Turkey, heavy metal drummer Marwan Riyadh stepped off an airplane at Newark Liberty International Airport on January 30, 2009.

**A Great Wonder: Lost Children of Sudan, Kim Shelton, 61 minutes**  
Documents the difficult transition of three of the "Lost Boys and Girls" of Sudan to lives in Seattle, Washington.

**Rain in a Dry Land, Anne Makepeace**  
An official Selection of the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival 2006, the film chronicles two years in the lives of two Somali Bantu families who leave Kakuma refugee camp for Springfield, Massachusetts and Atlanta, Georgia.
Sierra Leone’s Refugee All Stars, Zach Niles and Banker White
Chronicles a band of six Sierra Leonean musicians living in a refugee camp in Guinea. Sierra Leone’s Refugee All Stars chronicles the band over three years, from Guinean refugee camps back to war-ravaged Sierra Leone, where they realize the dream of recording their first studio album.

Lost Boys of Sudan, Megan Mylan and Jon Shenk
An Emmy-nominated feature-length documentary that follows two Sudanese refugees from Sudan and Kenya to the U.S. Winner of an Independent Spirit Award and two Emmy nominations.

Roosevelt’s America, Roger Weisberg and Tod Lending, 30 minutes
An inspirational story of a Liberian refugee, Roosevelt Henderson, who resettles in Chicago from Liberia attempts to reunite with his wife and young daughter, who are still in Liberia. Winner of numerous awards at the Columbus International Film and Video Festival, the San Francisco Black Film Festival, the Cleveland Film Festival, and other venues.

And God Grew Tired of Us, Christopher Quinn, 89 minutes
Winner of the Grand Jury Prize and the Audience Award at the 2006 Sundance Film Festival, God Grew Tired of Us explores the spirit of three Sudanese young men who leave their homeland, triumph over adversities, and move to America.

Becoming American, Ken Levine and Ivory Waterworth Levine
Becoming American records the odyssey of Hang Sou and his family, as they travel from Laos to a refugee camp in Thailand to a new home in Seattle.

The Lost Boys, Clive Gordon, 77 minutes
Orphaned by the war in Sudan and raised in a desert refugee camp, Moses and his young friends are one day invited by the U.S. government to start a new life in Boston.

Afghan Stories, Taran Davies and Walied Osman, 58 minutes
Filmmakers Taran Davies and Walied Osman set out to gain an understanding of how a generation of war has affected the Afghan people, spending time with families in Queens, New York, the frontline in Afghanistan, and points in between.

The Valley, Dan Reed, 70 minutes
A real-time war documentary made in the middle of the Kosovo ethnic conflict, the piece was filmed in 1998 in Drenica Valley where the Albanian Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) had its base. The film documents interviews with people on both sides of the conflict.

Being Hmong Means Being Free, NEWIST/CESA #7 and Wisconsin Public Television, 56 minutes
Focusing on a Hmong immigrant community in Wisconsin, this documentary offers a comprehensive look at fundamental practices of the ancient Hmong culture and investigates how these have framed Hmong culture and community. "Being Hmong Means Being Free" explores how life has changed for Hmong in the U.S. in the space of a generation.

Blue Collar and Buddha, Taggart Siegel, 57 minutes
A Laotian community in Rockford, Illinois survives terrorist bombings and drive-by shootings at its local Buddhist temple.
**Bui Doi: Life Like Dust**, Ahrin Mishan & Nick Rothenberg, 28 minutes
This film takes us inside the mind of Ricky Phan, once a gang leader in Southern California and now serving an 11-year sentence for armed robbery. We are forced to ask ourselves which is more violent: fleeing from a war-ravaged nation or trying to survive in an alien western culture?

**First Person Plural**, Deann Borshay, 56 minutes
In 1966, at the age of nine, Deann Borshay came to the U.S. from South Korea as one of tens of thousands of children adopted by white American families after the Korean War. In this extraordinary personal documentary she chronicles her struggle to reconcile the demands of two families, two cultures and two nations.

**The Split Horn: Life of a Hmong Shaman in America**, Taggart Siegel, 60 minutes
Follows the emotional saga of Paja Thao, a Hmong shaman and his family in the U.S. who were transplanted from the mountains of Laos during the Vietnam War to America’s heartland. For over seventeen years, Siegel has chronicled the intimate and private lives of Paja Thao, his wife, and their thirteen children. This intimate family portrait explores universal issues of cultural transformation, spirituality and family. It is a rare close-up view of one Hmong family’s resettlement and acculturation in America.

**Letter Back Home**, Nith Lacroix and Sang Thepkaysone, 14 minutes
A compelling look at life in San Francisco’s Tenderloin district for Laotian and Cambodian youth.

**Reflections: Returning to Vietnam**, Producer: KCSM TV60, 30 minutes
Vietnamese refugees speak about the loss of family and friends, migration and feelings about their war torn homeland. The program offers three individual perspectives from the Vietnamese Diaspora.

**Shadow Over Tibet: Stories in Exile**, Rachel Lyon, 57 minutes
This film is a personalized account of Tibetan refugees attempting to maintain their ancient culture in exile while using nonviolent means to bring peace and freedom to their homeland. "Shadow Over Tibet" investigates the personal odyssey of Norbu Samphell, a Tibetan immigrant now living in the U.S., who is determined to become part of the American social fabric without abandoning his cultural heritage; and the Dalai Lama, religious and secular leader of Tibet-in-exile, who seeks to create a "zone of peace" in Tibet.

**In This World**, Michael Winterbottom, 88 minutes
The story of two Afghan cousins who trek from a refugee camp in Pakistan to London, where relatives await them.

**From Refugee to Immigrant: A Story of Three Kosovar Albanian Americans**, Ellen Friedland and Curt Fissel
Traces the lives of three refugees from Kosova who arrived at Fort Dix, New Jersey in 1999. With footage from the U.S. and Kosova, the documentary examines the process of assimilation into American society.

**Asylum**, Sandy McLeod and Gini Reticker, 20 minutes
Baaba Andoh fled Ghana in fear for her life, when her long-lost father tried to force her to undergo female genital mutilation. Arriving in the U.S. with a phony passport, she was imprisoned by the INS for one year while her asylum case was tried. Her story ends in victory, but she refuses to forget the thousands of asylum seekers who remain in detention today.

**Asylum**, Garry Beitel, 78 minutes
Follows three refugee claimants through the legal process that decides their status in Canada: Marnus Chowdhury from Bangladesh, Tatiana Linco from Kazakhstan, and Cristian Ghitescu, a stowaway from Romania. Their stories show the questions that have to be answered to determine who is a refugee.

**Brothers and Others, Nicolas Rossier, 54 minutes**
Brothers and Others follows a number of immigrant and American families in the U.S. following September 11, 2001. In interviews with Arab and Muslim immigrants, government representatives, and legal and historical experts, this film explores how America’s fear of terrorism has negatively impacted many U.S. residents.

**Beautiful People, Jasmin Dizdar, 107 minutes**
In London, during October 1993, England is playing Holland in the preliminaries of the World Cup. The Bosnian War is at its height, and refugees from the ex-Yugoslavia are arriving. The lives of four English families are affected in different ways by encounter with the refugees, and one of the families improbably becomes involved with a Balkan refugee through the England vs. Holland match.

**Catfish in Black Bean Sauce, Chi Moui Lo, 119 minutes**
Dwayne and his older sister Mai are adults: Mai is married to Vinh, Dwayne is about to propose to Nina. Twenty-two years ago, when Mai was 10, she and Dwayne were refugees in Vietnam, adopted by Harold and Dee Williams, African-Americans from Los Angeles. When Mai locates their birth mother, Thahn, and she arrives in Los Angeles, tensions reach the breaking point.

**A Family Crisis: The Elian Gonzales Story, Christopher Leitch, 90 minutes**
This film is based on the true story of the five-year-old Cuban boy who is the sole survivor of a refugee boat that sunk in a storm on its way to the U.S.

**Fire Dancer, Jawed Wassel, 79 minutes**
The film follows Haris, an Afghan-American artist who shows his work at a downtown Manhattan art gallery. His story explores the ramifications of leaving Afghanistan and living as a refugee in America. Haris embarks on a journey through the world of Afghan-Americans to learn more about their culture, finding humor and tragedy.

**Flygtninge fra Kosovo, Per Wennick**
This three-part documentary follows two families on their way from Kosovo to the primitive conditions in a refugee camp in Macedonia to resettlement in Randers, Denmark.

**The Letter, Ziad H. Hamzeh, 76 minutes**
In the wake of 9/11, a firestorm erupts when the mayor of Lewiston, Maine sends a letter to 1,100 newly arrived Somali refugees advising that the city’s resources are strained to the limit and asking that other Somalis not to move to the city. Interpreted as racism by some and a rallying cry by white supremacist groups across the U.S., The Letter documents the crossfire of emotions and events.

**A Great Wonder, Kim Shelton, 61 minutes**
Documents the resettlement of three Sudanese young adults from Sudan to in Seattle, Washington.

**Against Wind and Tide: A Cuban Odyssey, Jim Burroughs, 57 minutes**
In Spring 1980, Fidel Castro opened the Cuban port of Mariel to thousands of refugees to cross to Key West, Florida and the promise of a new life in the U.S. Director Jim Burroughs and his crew boarded a flotilla vessel bound for Mariel to film the exodus. Burroughs charts the lives of three individuals during their first years in the U.S.
Journey to Kapasseni: A Refugee’s Gift, Bill Weaver, 51 minutes
Joseph and Perpetua Alfazema are refugees from Mozambique who live in Victoria, Canada. They are determined to start a school in Joseph’s home village and, against all odds, they raise money for the school and begin a long journey.

North Korea - Shadows and Whispers, Kim Jung-Eun, 52 minutes
This documentary, filmed in the remote northeast mountains of China, captures the dire circumstances of North Korean refugees who journey to China.

One Family, Voices & Visions/ The Documentary Project for Refugee Youth, 10 minutes
"One Family" tells the story of twelve youth from Sierra Leone, Bosnia, Burundi, and Serbia who have weathered war and long journeys to America, and New York City. Weaving their voices into a shared story, they reflect their views on themselves and the whole world, joined as one family.

TL Xmas, School Daze, and Home, Spencer Nakasako in collaboration with the Vietnamese Youth Development Center (VYDC), 50 minutes
“TL Xmas” follows Cambodian youths as they attend a "Gift Giveaways" program and experience the holiday for the first time. "School Daze" humorously breaks down a day in the lives of six students from different San Francisco high schools. "Home" closes the package with nine youths’ tender, poetic dedication to their family, friends, and San Francisco.

Refugee, Spencer Nakasako
In this film, three young refugees raised in San Francisco's Tenderloin district, journey to Cambodia.

Aka Don Bonus, Spencer Nakasako and Sokly Ny, 55 minutes
After escaping the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, the Ny family became one of thousands of refugees faced with resettlement in the U.S. Their lives unfold through the lens of this stirring video diary, which sees 18-year-old Sokly Ny (Don Bonus) struggling to graduate from high school.

Kelly Loves Tony, Spencer Nakasako, 57 minutes
Seventeen year-old Kelly Saetourn has a dream – an "American dream." Just out of high school and on her way to college, Kelly envisions a rosy future. Kelly is the first in her family of Lu Mien refugees from Laos to have accomplished as much as she already has, but she encounters grave obstacles in the course of pursuing her dream.

Acknowledgements
The book list above was compiled by the International Rescue Committee’s Seattle office and New York Headquarters, with contributions from IRC offices across the country. The film list was compiled with contributions from IRC NY Headquarters and IRC offices across the country.

About IRC and Project SOAR
Do you know of additional resources, or do you have stories about how you have used these resources in your community? Submit your contributions at soar@thelRC.org. We will update this list regularly.

Through 24 regional offices in cities across the country, the International Rescue Committee annually helps thousands of refugees resettle in the U.S. and become self-sufficient. IRC staff members and volunteers believe
that refugees’ greatest resources are themselves. We help them translate their skills, interests and past experiences into assets that are valuable in their new communities.

The IRC’s Project for Strengthening Organizations Assisting Refugees (SOAR) provides organizations that serve refugees with the networks and organizational development tools they need to deliver high-quality services to refugee clients. Funded by the Office of Refugee Resettlement, SOAR provides training and resources on resource development and marketing, board development, financial management, strategic planning, and many other topics.