



Tip Sheet: Books and Films About Refugees and U.S. Refugee Resettlement

Films and books can be powerful tools to illustrate the challenges, successes, and individualities of refugees' experiences, providing first-hand, intimate accounts of their stories. Share the films on this list with your volunteers, staff, clients, and community members to spur discussions about refugee resettlement, or to help them understand the context your MAA's or VOLAG's work.

Then, send your additions to these lists – and your comments on the resources – to soar@theIRC.org. We will update this list regularly.

Autobiography, Biography, Fiction and Poetry

- [A Long Way Gone](#), Ishmael Beah
- [Andy Grove: The Life and Times of An American](#), Richard Tedlow
- [Autobiographical Notes: A Centennial Edition](#), Albert Einstein
- [Call Me By My True Names](#), Thich Nhat Hanh
- [Day and Night](#), Elie Wiesel
- [First they Killed my Father](#), Luong Ung
- [Good Scent from a Strange Mountain](#), Robert Olin Butler
- [Kite Runner](#), Khaled Hosseini
- [Lost Boys of Sudan](#), Mark Bixler
- [My Land and My People: The Original Autobiography of His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet](#)
- [Notes From My Travels](#), Angelina Jolie
- [Nowhere Man](#), Aleksandar Hemon
- [Of Beetles and Angels: A Boy's Remarkable Journey from a Refugee Camp to Harvard](#), Mawi Asgedom
- [Refugee](#), Adnan Mahmutovic
- [Slave](#), Mende Nazer and Damien Lewis
- [The Great Escape: Nine Jews Who Fled Hitler and Changed the World](#), Kati Marton
- [The Land of Green Ghosts](#), Pascal Khoo Thwe
- [The Middle of Everywhere](#), Mary Pipher
- [The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down](#), Anne Fadiman
- [They Poured Down Fire on Us from the Sky](#), Alphonsian Deng, Benson Deng, Benjamin Ajak, and Judy A. Bernstein
- [United Stress of America \(in Serbo-Croatian language only\)](#), Dalibor Bilic
- [What is the What](#), Dave Eggers

Titles for Children and Youth

- [Kiss the Dust](#), by Elizabeth Laird
- [Making it Home: Real-Life Stories from Children Forced to Flee](#), Beverly Naidoo (introduction)
- [Refugee Boy](#), by Benjamin Zephania
- [The Clay Marble](#), by Minfong Ho
- [The Other Side of Truth](#), by Beverly Naidoo

Questions on this resource or how Project SOAR can help you free of charge on your ORR grants? Contact us at soar@theIRC.org or 212.551.3142. The [International Rescue Committee](#) partners with the [Nationalities Services Center](#) and [Pan-African Association of Chicago](#) on this project.

- The Silver Sword, by Ian Serraillier
- When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit, by Judith Kerr
- Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo, by Zlata Filipovic

Other Nonfiction

- Refugee Women, Susan Forbes Martin
- Refugees in a Global Era, Philip Marfleet
- Global Changes in Asylum Regimes: Closing Doors, Daniele Joly (editor)
- The Price of Indifference: Refugees and Humanitarian Action in the New Century, Arthur Helton
- Problems of Protection: The UNHCR, Refugees, and Human Rights, Niklaus Steiner, Mark Gibney, and Gil Loescher (editors)
- The Politics and Ethics of Asylum: Liberal Democracy and the response to Refugees, Matthew Gibney
- Homecomings: Unsettling Paths of Return, Fran Markowitz and Anders Stefansson (editors)
- Coming Home? Refugees, Migrants, and Those who Stayed Behind, Lynellyn Long and Ellen Oxfeld (editors)
- Buddha is Hiding: Refugees, Citizenship, the New America, Aihwa Ong
- Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology Among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania, Lisa H. Malkki
- Landscape of Hope and Despair: Palestinian refugee camps, Julie Peteet
- In The Land Of The Magic Soldiers, by Daniel Bergner

Films on Refugees and Asylum Seekers

***A Great Wonder: Lost Children of Sudan*, by 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*, by 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*, by 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*, by 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*, by 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*, by Christopher Quinn, 89 minutes**

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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*, by 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.

***Lost Boys of Sudan*, by Megan Mylan and Jon Shenk, 87 minutes**

A feature-length documentary that follows two Sudanese refugees, Peter Dut and Santino Chuor, on an extraordinary journey from Africa to the U.S.

***The Lost Boys*, by 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*, by 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*, by 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*, by 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*, by 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*, by 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*, by 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

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transformation, spirituality and family. It is a rare close-up view of one Hmong family's resettlement and acculturation in America.

Letter Back Home, by 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, by 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, by 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, by 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, by 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, by 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, by 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, by 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.

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***Catfish in Black Bean Sauce*, by 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*, by 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*, by 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.

***Flygtningene fro Kosovo*, by 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*, by 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*, by 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*, by 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*, by 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*, by 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*, by Spencer Nakasako**

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

***aka Don Bonus*, by 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*, by Spencer Nakasako, 57 minutes**

Seventeen year-old Kelly Saeteurn 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, with contributions from IRC offices across the country. The film list was compiled with contributions from 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@theIRC.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 free training and resources on resource development and marketing, board development, financial management, strategic planning, and many other topics.