

Rescue: Refugees and the Political Crisis of Our Time. **David Miliband.** Simon and Schuster, 2017.

David Miliband not only writes about refugees but is also personally affected by their plight. In his book, *Rescue: Refugees and the Political Crisis of Our Time*, Miliband states that both of his parents were forced to flee their homes to escape war and suffered for years from the traumatic backlash of enduring displacement. As a child, Miliband recognized that his parents strove to provide him a better life, free from the sorrow and trials they had experienced as refugees. In his book, Miliband emphasizes the idea of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ a number of times. An important goal for Miliband seems to be to compare the importance of readers’ involvement in the plight of refugees. The book emphasizes an implied responsibility of ‘us’ (the readers) to help ease the pain and suffering of ‘them’ (the refugees struggling with displacement around the world). The focus is put on the struggle the refugees undergo and the pain, torture, and sacrifices made just to acquire freedom. Many things that have led to the suffering of refugees are also put into consideration, like the 120-day ban of all refugees by the United States president, Donald Trump, and the war caused by warlords in developing nations.

Miliband addresses President Trump’s Executive Order calling for a 120-day ban on all refugees. The decision only made a difficult situation more unbearable for displaced refugees who struggle daily to survive. The book sheds light on the refugee situation from many places around the world such as Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The “crisis of our time” (pp. 24), in Miliband’s opinion, is that our world is leaderless and therefore, it lays the heavy weight of duty on our shoulders, as ordinary citizens, to make the desired change. With the pervasive media coverage in our society we can no longer turn a blind eye to the plight of the many people living in crisis and dealing with displacement all over the world. Through interviews with refugees from various countries, and during the course of extensive research, the author came to accurately explain the horrors that these individuals experienced throughout their daily lives. Haya AlAttar and Noor Ghazi (the book reviewers) believe that Miliband artfully incorporated very detailed descriptions of the refugee population’s experience. While reading this book, Haya noticed some of the stories were similar to what was shared with her throughout her close work in refugee and immigrant communities in North Carolina. Noor, on the other hand, is a refugee herself and was able to make direct connections to Miliband’s ideas. Noor also saw the description of her own story that was summarized throughout his book, which showed the humanitarian part of the process along with what goes on behind the scenes. Reading the book made Noor feel a huge sense of responsibility towards refugee and immigrant societies, which she can’t abrogate.

Miliband was shocked and saddened to find that education takes a back seat while families struggle to fulfill basic survival needs, such as food and shelter. This is one of the things that makes the book worth reading. The author’s clinical precision in describing the ways in which refugees experience the world makes this book a valuable resource to those interested in refugees. When one reads Miliband’s work, one comes to understand quite clearly why this issue is important. In the mayhem of life, millions of displaced children lose the opportunity for an education, which puts them at significant risk for being forced into child labor, early marriage, or terrorist radicalization. On the other hand, Miliband mentioned: “There is no way that the particular needs of those fleeing war and persecution will be recognized if they are grouped together with those who are seeking to improve their

economic circumstances” (p. 39). Miliband emphasized the idea of separation between these distinctions, because of the disparity in their basic needs that ought to be addressed sooner rather than later.

The idea of mixed migration is brought up in the book to prioritize refugees who are forced to displace, over refugees who are simply seeking economic development. Mixed migration in Miliband’s words are:

A category that includes some who are fleeing for economic reasons and some for political reasons... It is also the case that war, poverty and climate change can come together to propel people to flee. So, the distinction between the people who are forced across borders and those who choose to cross them is not as neat and tidy as the framers of the original refugee convention might have hoped. (p.38-39)

There are many reasons why people choose to pick up their things and their lives to move to an entirely new place. In some cases, they are doing so because they have no other choice. In those cases, they are often making the move because war has torn their country apart or the political conditions no longer make it safe for them to stay. In other cases, people might technically be safe in their home country, but they are moving to a new country to seek out a better economic life. “Although there might not (yet) be groups of people who can be labeled ‘climate refugees,’ there is likely to be increased pressure on population movements by changes in the climate” (p. 36). While each of these can be a valid migrant experience, they are very different in nature.

Miliband’s book, apart from describing the general phenomenon of the refugee crisis and providing the respective empirical data to support his arguments, is an insistent call for political action. According to the book, the refugee crisis is closely linked to globalization, yet globalization can create circumstances in which some countries and communities fall into inequity. In short, there are many instances in which globalization can make it hard for the maligned or voiceless to have their voices heard. Miliband shows his support of the system of international relations that had been established after World War II, including the economic reforms at Bretton Woods and the geopolitical partnerships at the UN. However, he calls for the importance of the U.S re-establishing itself as the global leader in assisting refugees. He writes what is needed is “to turn humanitarian action into a system that will change the lives of displaced people in the most powerful way possible--indeed change our global future” (p. 90). This is a process that has been stopped relatively recently in the U.S. as the result of changes in political power dynamics within the country.

Considering the situation through the lens of the book, the West should play a more active role in terms of helping refugees. By offering better aid, Western countries have the power to fix the global refugee crisis. Eventually, such aid will not only benefit the ‘victim’, but also the West. The author makes this suggestion by showing the responsibility that the West has because of how it benefits from the conditions of the current global order. As a beneficiary, the moral obligation is now pointed toward the West, requiring it to do something to ensure that people are not crushed by that global order. According to Miliband, there are a number of actions that, if translated into practice, will help to ‘rescue’ the world that is dealing with the refugee crisis now. Among the author’s ideas in the book are suggestions that immigrants and refugees should be given a bundle of economic rights during their migration. He makes it clear throughout the book that, from a human rights perspective, richer countries must ensure that the people moving into their nations are given the basic things needed to survive.

In addition, Miliband emphasizes the importance of giving agency to refugees

and empowering them, to give them a chance to reestablish control over their own lives. The message of the book is foremost political as it addresses the problem that has social and political roots and offers a political means as the solution to the crisis. Readers will come away with a view into the living situation and suffering of refugees. Still, Miliband leaves the reader wondering about their own role in the refugee crises and how to help in their home, community, and society. We are in a state of global refugee crises and according to Miliband, it is a test that we must pass together in order to meet the refugees' needs and save their dignity by making the journey easier on them. Welcoming them in our country is one of the many things that we can do. Many local and international organizations are doing their best to make an impact in this way, but our role should be present in this calamity. Miliband successfully addresses and highlights the refugee crises by providing some practical resources that can lead people to a better understanding of the situation for refugees, what they face, and what those people can do if they find themselves desiring to help. The book is worthy of reading because it can provide direct insights into an important situation in the world today. The book is a nice companion for anyone trying to understand the modern refugee crisis because it gives the reader practical steps and emboldens them to understand the overall global order and disorder.

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