

*displaced
but not*
MISPLACED

FIRST WORD

The world is currently seeing an unprecedented wave of refugees. From Syria, Afghanistan, Africa, and South-East Asia (especially from Myanmar), thousands upon thousands of desperate people are risking their lives for a better future. Not since World War II have we seen such a massive movement of people needing help.

The response of the world has been varied. There are heroes. They are the ones who meet these people with an attitude of love and compassion; the ones who help, heal and honor them because they are human beings in need of assistance. They are the ones who treat the refugees with the dignity they deserve.

But then there are others. The ones who say: "These people are only trying to get to our countries to get a free ride in life." "They are going to take advantage of us." "They are criminals." "They are not actually desperate; they are lazy." "They will most likely pollute our culture." "Their religion is so extreme." Such attitudes are shocking, and I find it hard to understand how people can be so callous. How can our nations, with all our wealth and privileges, with a good conscience say no to helping?

It is easy to write people off when you see them as a mass of humanity, when the faces have no names, and we don't know the stories of the desperate-looking men, women and children. Most of us feel uncomfortable when faced with human misery.

We cannot deny our responsibility to get involved, to help and to give of our wealth. As Christians, we have fewer excuses than any. The Bible calls us to help the poor and the oppressed over and over again. In fact, the word justice, is mentioned twice as much as the word love. There should be no doubt that we are called to do justice and to defend the rights of the poor and the needy (Proverbs 31:9).

In Partners we have seen refugees for more than 20 years. By seeing them, I mean really seeing them. They are not people who have fled because they are looking for the greener grass; they are not opportunists. They are not lazy, nor are they any more criminal than others. What we have seen are people very much like ourselves. They have talents, dreams, fears, longings and a value exactly the same as ours. Never have we met a refugee who has fled his or her home unless it was their last resort. Never have we met a refugee who thought life in a refugee camp was bliss.

In this magazine you will read about just a few of the thousands of refugees that we have seen. You will read stories that we hope will grab your heart. You will also read about how we are working to make a difference for the people who have not fled. The best thing for them is, of course, to stay in their own communities. We work to make that possible.

Your friend,

ODDNY GUMAER

Co-Founder, Partners Relief & Development



THEY CALL US A **DISPLACED** PEOPLE,
BUT PRAISE GOD WE ARE **NOT MISPLACED**.
THEY SAY THEY SEE NO HOPE FOR OUR FUTURE,
BUT PRAISE GOD OUR FUTURE IS AS
BRIGHT AS THE PROMISES OF GOD.

THEY SAY THEY SEE THE LIFE OF OUR PEOPLE IS A MISERY,
BUT PRAISE GOD OUR LIFE IS A **MYSTERY**.

FOR WHAT THEY SAY IS WHAT THEY SEE
AND WHAT THEY SEE IS TEMPORAL,

BUT **OURS IS THE ETERNAL**.
ALL BECAUSE WE PUT OURSELVES
IN THE HANDS OF GOD WE TRUST.

by Rev. Dr. Simon

In loving memory of Rev. Dr. Simon, a man who worked tirelessly for the Karen people.





SUDDEN DEATH

Fran Derocher



SPORTS FANATICS KNOW THE MEANING OF THOSE TWO WORDS – SUDDEN DEATH. It is an odd use of the words for a sports match. The intent of course is to continue the game until a winner emerges.

This story has no winner. We were traveling to a small village to follow up on a number of families who had been displaced from a refugee camp because they were followers of Christ. Our guide to the village was a man who knew the area well. He shared that the home we were going to visit was the home of a father who recently lost his son. The story shared by this father is one that many refugee parents, husbands, wives are unable to share, because they have no idea where their child or loved one is.

This father knows only because a 'friend' saw an article in a country far away about a refugee that had died as he was carried across the border. The father filled in the gaps. It was 3 months earlier that he had paid \$8,000 to a 'handler' to get his two sons to a country where there was work and a brighter hope for tomorrow. One son had made it and was working. The other son, was lost. No one knew where he was. The few details that could be gathered was there were many stops on the way to the final destination. Likely camps set up by human traffickers with little concern for those in their care. The son became ill along the way and passed away as he crossed in to what was going to be a new country and a new life for him.

Passing around his son's autopsy photos I was stunned by how 'matter of fact' it was. It was only two weeks since the news had arrived. I have read and watched news specials on the TV about all the human trafficking that is taking place. Those stories were shocking and difficult to understand how fellow human beings can be so heartless. I was now in the same small, dark and very hot room listening to a father sharing his story. These are stories that are seldom heard outside the walls, village or country. This is their life and reality. Sudden death.

It was with joy that we were able to provide small gifts to each of the thirty-five families represented who are living in very difficult circumstances, no education, minimal health care if any and unable to work legally. They are truly a people without a 'home'. There are plans to help in more sustainable ways. It is not an easy task and it comes with risk. We seek to obey our Lord. *Join us.*

NOBODY'S Daughter

Marci Haigh



SEAMS WORN AND COLORS FADED, JUST LIKE THE MEMORIES OF HER MOTHER... Naw Mimi arrived on my doorstep with a few threadbare articles of clothing and wide fearful eyes. Slowly, piece by painful piece, the story of her history unfolded. Her mother passed away while she was young, and her father succumbed to mental illness. A harried aunt took Naw Mimi in and scolded her when she did poorly in school. At twelve years old, when a skin lesion appeared, Naw Mimi didn't dare to bother her aunt. As it grew and chafed she finally spoke up. Her aunt took her to the clinic and walked away. At sixteen, she was on her own.

Naw Mimi stayed at the clinic for about a year trying her best to be helpful. When the treatment the medics tried failed, they referred her to Partners Relief & Development.

"What are your interests, Naw Mimi?" I meant to find out what she might like to do as a hobby while waiting for hospital appointments.

"I'll be no bother," she worriedly pledged. "I can eat rice and boiled vegetables. I can do housework for you."

It took some time to convince her that she was a kid, a patient, and our guest. Her job was to relax. We started off by having her vision checked, as it was apparent she couldn't see well. Turns out her severe astigmatism is likely the reason she did poorly in school.

I held her hand as the doctor examined her body, tears streaming down her face at embarrassment of having to expose her skin. What's worse, the condition was

going to need referral to a specialist, meaning there was another exam in store. She was nobody's daughter, but oh, how she needed a mom. As we left the hospital that day we passed a street side clothing vendor. Her eyes strayed to the skinny jeans.

"Want to check it out?"

A sweet smile grew and her eyes shined. That afternoon, we bonded over fashion and I learned that she aspired to learn sewing and design. With excitement, I asked my co-worker Pranee to make space for Naw Mimi in her migrant sewing class.

"I'll call the unloved and make them beloved"

ROMANS 9:25 (msg)

Naw Mimi graduated the course wearing her new designs and got a short contract job, earning her first paycheck. Naw Mimi needs additional financial support for surgical removal of the skin lesion. While we fundraise and wait for slow public hospital referral documents, Naw Mimi stays with me. This morning she snagged my favorite shoes for the umpteenth time.

"This must be what it's like to have a teenage daughter," I smirked at my husband. Then my heart did a funny little leap. Yes, for the time being she is mine. And she is beautiful.

IT'S THE MOST

WONDERFUL
time*
OF
THE YEAR!

* to buy a Christmas gift that's
a little bit different!

BECAUSE OF YOUR GIFTS

last year

53 STUDENTS

are receiving medic and community health worker training in Shan State.
Your gifts are helping to build the fledgling health system, improving
public health and providing medical care in emergency situations.

HELP US BRING JOY TO
CHILDREN IN MYANMAR

here's how it works

#1

You want to make
a difference and
you've got family and
friends who want to
help too.

#2

Choose a Partners
alternative gift that
directly helps the
people of Myanmar.

Place your order online at

[GIFTS.PARTNERSWORLD.ORG](https://gifts.partnersworld.org)



INSPIRING CHANGE

Laura Miller



YIM'S JOURNEY WITH PARTNERS IS UNLIKE MOST. As a little girl, Yim's family joined the flood of refugees to Thailand to escape the civil war in Myanmar (also known as Burma) so Yim and her siblings could have better access to education. At the time, her parents reached out to help other displaced families but Yim found herself indifferent to assisting because she didn't want to miss school.

Later, she encountered Partners when a team visited her mother's village to run medical and birthing training. Not long after, she began an entry-level internship as the Children's Project Assistant.

"My motivation to join Partners was because I saw a group from Partners in my village and they were respecting what we do and the community but also supporting them. Other organizations have different ways but I love Partners because we respect the people we work with. We are really with them."

Now, five years after that internship began, Yim leads Partners Education Program.

Educational instability and inconsistency has plagued Myanmar since the Civil War began. As we sit outside of Partners Mae Sot office, Yim explains, *"It's difficult to provide education when you have to run all the time. The situation in Myanmar affects all parts of life. Education is a problem in Myanmar because children can't get into school because there is no school."*

For many students, even if there is a school, there are not many grades or a teacher qualified to teach higher grade levels. Whether it's an overall inaccessibility to education based on the remoteness of a village, lack of governmental funding and support or a family's financial aptitude to send their children to school, the obstacles facing many of ethnic children's access to education are numerous.

As Yim's passion for education continued to grow she began to notice all the educational hindrances within Karen State. *"If a student finishes grade four, they only understand that much. But if they read more, understand more, and know more they have more ambition and a wider vision and can fix whatever problem comes to them."*

Myanmar's wide ethnic diversity has been a source of tension and division in the past and is still arguably one of the biggest hurdles the country is yet to overcome. With over three hundred spoken languages and a vast variety of cultures and lifestyles, finding a common ground has proven to be more than a difficult task.

"We have so many ideas for education because we have so many ethnic people and different curriculums to serve the children." Yim's vision for her people and for Myanmar is that *"every ethnic group has respect for each other and every ethnic group [works] together to use education in the same way...and be united."* The way Yim talks about education is contagious. Her dream to use education as a uniting force amongst her people is so sweet and refreshing to taste.

As Yim reflects on the last five years with Partners, she recalls that one of the greatest ways she has seen Partners make a difference in Burma is through community involvement. *"We used to rely on the government and non-government organizations but what [Partners] does increases the community's participation and ability to provide for themselves."*

Not only has she seen Partners make a difference but she has also witnessed the organization change throughout the years as well. Namely, she has seen Partners use education as a tool to empower the community instead of enable. >>

"Before we helped with providing supplies for the local school. But now we have more community participation to provide education for their children. They know now education is very important... they see it's the only option for them to get better and have a better quality of life." It's Yim's hope that people will continually see the importance of education and take it upon themselves to be agents of change in their own communities.

When asked how justice plays a part in Yim's work she said "For us to see justice, we see we have enough, they do not and they need help. So we can do something small, like pray...or something more than that. I see that I have more than enough and they should have the same as me, so we have equal. They should have the same opportunities."



"Five years with Partners has changed me a lot. In 2000, my village had a lot of fighting and I didn't want to serve and help my village with my parents because I wanted to stay in school...but at that time we did not have help or an organization and I didn't want to help." It's easy to not have a sense of empathy when someone else's burden doesn't actively affect your life. However through meeting individuals with Partners and her family, Yim realized there are people whose lives are being deeply affected, not only by the war, but also by the love that is being shared through relief and development. "Hearing many stories of the people who are affected in Myanmar, has changed me because I realized what I needed to do. It changed me because I realized my skill was needed."

In times of conflict and oppression, the best and worst of humanity shows its face. Scripture says "Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it (John 1:5)." God manifests characteristics of Himself through His creation. Yim's vision is for God's light to shine brightly for the future of Myanmar. Our prayer is through this crucial upcoming season in Myanmar history, bright lights all across the nation, like Yim, would shine all the more, for the darkness shall never extinguish the Light. ■

GIVE.PARTNERSWORLD.ORG



4 YEARS

Children in Myanmar spend an average of four years attending school¹

1/7

1/7 Infants die at birth in Eastern Burma²

150/187

Myanmar is one of the poorest nations in Asia³



every child has a story

I AM MORE THAN A STATISTIC

*see back cover for references

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*A higher standard.
A higher purpose.*

**FREE, FULL LIVES FOR
CHILDREN AFFECTED BY
CONFLICT & OPPRESSION**

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