



 **JRS USA** Refugee Action Team Toolkit





Welcome

to the JRS

Action Team Toolkit

At a time when more than 123 million people have been forced to flee their homes around the world, understanding of their plight and support for their needs is diminishing in too many places. We can make a difference.

A JRS Refugee Action Team is a group of individuals dedicated to organizing their own community to support displaced people around the world by raising awareness, advocating, fundraising, and organizing other programming centered around refugees. These teams are diverse in their membership and scope. You can create an Action Team with any group of people interested in promoting a greater understanding of and support for the displaced. This can be at a school, on a college campus, in a parish, or elsewhere in your community.

This toolkit will provide you with guidelines, suggestions, and resources to help you launch your Action Team and ensure that it is successful!

On behalf of those we serve, we sincerely thank you for advocating for the rights of the vulnerable. We look forward to forming a partnership that will help build welcoming and supportive communities in the U.S. while changing the lives of many around the world.

If you have any thoughts, comments, or questions regarding this toolkit, please contact clara.sayans@jrsusa.org or visit www.jrsusa.org/take-action. Thank you again!

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Handout:

The State of Global Displacement

Today, we are in the midst of one of the largest periods of global displacement since World War II. People around the world are forced to flee their homes in fear of violence, persecution, or human rights violations. It is important to remember that these refugees are diverse in their ethnicities, countries of origin, and needs. JRS aims to structure its education, psychosocial, and training programs to best support this vulnerable population in the ways that matter most. These displacement statistics from the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) highlight the experiences of refugees across the world.

REFUGEES WORLDWIDE

- More than 123 million individuals are forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, or generalized violence. 1 in 69 people is now forcibly displaced.
- This includes over 42 million refugees, 73.5 million internally displaced persons, and 8.4 million asylum seekers and 5.9 million other people in need of international protection.
- 47 million children are forcibly displaced.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

- More than 73.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been uprooted from their homes because of war and violence but have not yet crossed an international border in search of shelter and safety.
- In 2024, conflict and violence triggered 20.1 million new internal displacements across 45 countries and territories.
- Natural disasters triggered another 45.8 million internal displacements in 167 countries and territories.

OTHER PEOPLE IN NEED OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION

- People who are outside their country or territory of origin, typically because they have been forcibly displaced across international borders, who have not been reported under other categories but who likely need international protection including protection against forced return, as well as access to basic services on a temporary or longer-term basis.

ORIGIN AND LOCATION OF REFUGEES

- The largest number of refugees are from Afghanistan (5.8 million), Syria (6 million), followed by Venezuela (5.9 million), and Ukraine (over 5 million).
- The countries hosting the largest number of refugees are: The Islamic Republic of Iran (3.5 million), Turkey (2.9 million), Colombia (2.8 million), and Germany (2.7 million).
- The majority (69% of people fleeing conflict remained near their country of origin, often residing in a neighboring country. Many of these are low-income countries which continue to host a disproportionately large share of the world's displaced people, both in terms of their population size and the resources available to them. In fact, these nations represent only 0.6% of the global GDP, yet host 19% of refugees.

LIVING CONDITIONS OF REFUGEES

- Refugees live in widely varying conditions, from well-established camps and centers to makeshift shelters or living in the open.
- More than half of all refugees live in urban areas.
- They all await one of three possible solutions:
 - repatriation to their country of origin
 - integration in their host country
 - resettlement in a third country

Jesuit Refugee Service



An Overview

The Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is an international Catholic non-governmental organization founded in 1980 as a work of the Society of Jesus. Our mission is to accompany, serve, and advocate for the rights of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons.

JRS is now present in 57 or 58 countries, addressing the educational, health, social, and emergency needs of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons. Our services are available to refugees and displaced persons regardless of their race, ethnic origin, or religious beliefs.

To get you started, the following is a list capturing some of JRS's programs serving refugees and other forcibly displaced persons across the globe. Familiarize yourself with the many ways in which JRS works to make a difference.

Additional information on JRS programs can be found at: www.jrsusa.org.

JRS Services Throughout the Globe

JRS programs start with sharing the journeys of forcibly displaced people as the best way to understand their aspirations and rekindle their hope. Programs are framed by reconciliation rooted in justice and dialogue among diverse cultures and religions. JRS engages in an integrated approach to service, encompassing the healing brought by accompaniment, the hope nurtured by education, and the dignity given by work.

EDUCATION: Education is at the heart of JRS's work in most regions, comprising a wide range of services involving formal and informal instruction. This encompasses pre-school, primary, secondary, tertiary, special, distance, and vocational education as well as life-skills education, adult literacy, computer and language classes, and education for peace and reconciliation.

LIVELIHOODS: JRS seeks to promote self-sufficiency by helping refugees access employment and land, providing technical training and assistance, and facilitating the establishment of small businesses by making available funds, grants, and loans in addition to tools and other resources.

RECONCILIATION: In a spirit of welcome and hospitality, JRS works to build a communal expression of social cohesion and reconciliation through its programs supporting forcibly displaced populations.

EMERGENCY RELIEF: In some parts of the world, JRS is involved in the distribution of food and non-food items. These items include mattresses, blankets, clothes, medical referrals and provisions, seeds, tools, and money for transport. JRS also distributes tents in refugee camps, renovates buildings in post-conflict situations, and helps refugees find accommodations in urban areas.

ADVOCACY: A vital part of JRS's mission is to defend the rights of refugees and migrants throughout the world. In the United States, JRS/USA advocates for just and generous policies and programs that benefit victims of forced displacement, so people made vulnerable by exile can receive support and protection, and so a durable solution to their plight can be achieved.

JRS Domestic Programs: Detention Chaplaincy & Binational Border Response Programs

The JRS/USA chaplaincy programs provide pastoral and religious assistance to meet the needs of non-citizens detained by the Department of Homeland Security. The program operates in five U.S. federal detention centers located in Florida, Texas, Arizona, and New York. We provide comfort and accompaniment to detainees by offering a range of emotional and spiritual support for people of all faiths at an extremely stressful and difficult time.

JRS/USA and JRS Mexico launched a new program to respond to the needs of refugees, asylum seekers, and displaced people at our shared border. The program, called Caminar Contigo, will aim to reduce suffering, improve mental health and psychosocial wellbeing, and to decrease violations to the legal rights for refugees, asylum seekers, and other displaced people in the Ciudad Juarez and El Paso region



Joan Rosenhauer, Former JRS/USA President, accompanies a young mother with her baby and little boy across the border in El Paso, TX.

Salma Khalil's Story



The Malala Fund estimates that approximately 20 million secondary school-aged girls may never return to the classroom. It's never been more critical to protect refugee girls and women, and to expand and maintain learning opportunities across JRS.

Born in D'Njamena, Chad, and raised in Germany and Nigeria, Salma Khalil is a remarkable artist whose media include photography, illustration, and graphic design imbued with traditions of her birthplace. Her fire is fueled by a love to connect self-expression, teaching, and humanitarianism.

15 years ago, Khalil herself was displaced due to conflict in Chad. Before she was displaced, she'd been content with artistic projects, a home, a family, and loving neighbors — then her world exploded in February 2008.

"We heard the shells that fell here and there, behind the river and they told us that the women and children had to leave. I didn't want to go but they forced me. We arrived in Kousséri [Cameroon] around two in the morning," she recounts. "On the way we had to be careful," she says, "because there was a combat situation, cartridges, wounded people, [and] corpses. It was really traumatizing."

In 2020, Khalil connected with JRS Chad and Entreculturas on a new idea to help others displaced girls process their own traumas: She led a group of girls in creating an illustrated children's story about the reality of refugee girls across her country.

"The workshops have had a remarkable impact in and of themselves, as they have enabled the girls to understand the role of women in society," Khalil says.

She was able to identify girls who already understood the role of women through education and which was passed on by the strongest role models: their mothers.

As the workshop progressed, we developed tales in which the heroine was a girl, and they immediately claimed that the village can be led by a woman. They all collectively agreed: women are the ones who truly make the world move.

"War is a truly terrible thing...During childhood, it can be very traumatic and destabilizing, but these girls have recovered with responsibility and courage in their work and success."



What You Can Do

To Support Refugees

Around the world, millions of men, women, and children have been forced to flee their homes to escape persecution, violence, conflict, or human rights abuses. It's a crisis that has both immediate and challenging implications for the future. With such urgency, JRS is pleased to work with you to make a real difference in response to this crisis. Together, we can help displaced people overcome the trauma that they have experienced and build a constructive future for themselves, their communities, their countries, and the world.

LOCAL GROUPS IN THE U.S. CAN PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN GENERATING SUPPORT FOR DISPLACED PEOPLE BY:

- Building positive awareness that the individuals and families who have made the difficult decision to flee their homes are just like us. They are children, mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers with hopes and dreams of contributing to their own and their communities' well-being. Action Teams work to shift the tone of the discussion within the U.S. to one of support for refugees.
- Advocating for policies that are welcoming to displaced people in the U.S. Action Teams encourage policymakers to make the U.S. a beacon of hope and freedom that supports refugees around the world.
- Hosting fundraisers that provide an opportunity for Action Teams to contribute towards JRS-run programs helping displaced people around the world rebuild their lives.

What Can You Do?

BUILD AWARENESS

- Share refugees' stories on social media platforms.
- Include prayers and reflections at Masses, in your parish bulletin, and at other events.
- Host On the Move refugee awareness exercise (see page 15).
- Start a book club and/or read "Dying to Live: Stories from Refugees on the Road to Freedom" by Danielle Vella, And/or "Those We Throw Away are Diamonds" by Mondiant Dogon

ADVOCATE

- Sign up to receive JRS/USA Action Alerts.
- Organize a petition drive with help from JRS/USA.
- Write to your members of Congress.

RAISE FUNDS

- Make a donation to support one of JRS's many programs helping refugees around the world.
- Launch a personal fundraising page to encourage your friends and family to support refugees.
- Host a fundraising event to raise donations for JRS programs.



How to Start

A JRS Refugee Action Team

GETTING STARTED

Start off by finding a core group of 3-5 committed people. Then try to expand to 10 or more members. You can do so by reaching out to friends or other contacts you think might be interested, speaking to groups that you are currently involved with who are willing to listen, and setting up information tables in public spaces (such as your student union, parish vestibule, school cafeteria, local supermarket, or town square). Post fliers, pass out handouts, utilize your social media, and hold information sessions to spread the word and attract members. Make sure to be inclusive and open minded. Diversity broadens ideas! Always keep a list of interested prospects that includes their contact information (Name, Phone, Email) and contact them shortly after with a notification of when your team will meet next.

CONNECT YOUR TEAM WITH JRS

Next, register your Refugee Action Team with JRS by emailing the JRS Outreach Officer at clara.sayans@jrsusa.org. Please provide your contact information and location. Once you register your Refugee Action Team, you'll receive email updates, personal support from the JRS/USA team, and opportunities to work with other teams nationwide.

You can also invite a JRS representative to speak to your school, community, or parish about current refugee issues, JRS's experience of working with the forcibly displaced, and effective ways to promote positive social change for our vulnerable brothers and sisters. Contact the JRS Outreach Coordinator to request a speaker and we will do our best to accommodate your request.

CREATE YOUR OWN MISSION STATEMENT

Work as a team to create a 1-3 sentence mission statement. Your mission statement should reflect the JRS mission to "accompany, serve, and advocate for the rights of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons." Make sure it answers the following: Why was the group created? What does it hope to achieve? Keep it short and sweet, using informative and positive phrasing.

FORMALIZE YOUR ACTION TEAM

Officially establish your Action Team within the context of your location. (For example, if your Action Team is located in a school, make sure that your school's administration recognizes it as a club.) This may require informing a social committee, a pastor or pastoral associate, a school administrator, a campus minister, or a community leader. Be sure to know the rules: What is needed to start and maintain your team? What are your group's limitations in terms of fundraising and outreach? Where can you meet? Additionally, consider what funds your group might need to sustain itself and how you can raise those funds. Find an advisor or local sponsor to help you if necessary.

GET ORGANIZED

The best way to get your team organized is to designate responsibilities to different members. Consider creating a group structure that can include President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Events Chair, and Publicity Chair. Make a schedule with all meetings and events and be sure to send reminders to members through email or social media.



How to Host A Successful Meeting

Now that you have an established Refugee Action Team, you should begin to hold regular, productive meetings to brainstorm projects and track your progress. Below is a suggested outline for hosting a successful meeting:

1. CHECK-IN

Allow time for socializing as you sign in members and gather the contact information of new members.

2. CELEBRATE SUCCESS

Highlight successful recent projects and recognize group members (consider creating a “Member of the Month” to recognize at this time).

3. DEBRIEF

Allow the secretary (notetaker) to give a brief recap of your last meeting. Take the time to review any events or activities you’ve organized since the last meeting.

4. CURRENT PROJECTS

Discuss what needs to be done to complete current projects. If the group is large, you can divide into sub-committees that focus on specific components of the project. If you use this method, consider providing some time for the sub-committees to meet and then come back together as a group to discuss further.

5. FUTURE PROJECTS

Discuss future projects you’d like to pursue. Gain input and ideas from members.

6. WRAP-UP

Announce the next meeting, review decisions made during the current meeting, and ensure everyone is aware of their assignments.

Tips:

- Make sure that your meetings are open to anyone interested in joining the Refugee Action Team.
- Allow for a variety of opinions by giving everyone in the room an opportunity to speak. If the group is not too large, it can be helpful on key points to go around the room asking each person to contribute so that everyone’s voice is heard.
- Consider creating a clear decision-making process to avoid conflicts.
- Consider bringing snacks to meetings for motivation.



Advocate

With JRS

At JRS, advocacy involves empowering forcibly displaced people to claim the rights to which they are entitled, assisting them in exercising those rights, and supporting them by engaging others in promoting refugees' rights. This involves addressing the public perception of the forcibly displaced, lobbying for governmental and institutional action to address challenges that they face, and working towards sustainable and durable solutions. There are various advocacy opportunities that your team can pursue!



**SCAN OR CLICK
THE QR CODE TO
SIGN UP FOR
ACTION ALERTS!**

HOST A LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGN

Speaking out on behalf of refugee rights is critical to the work of JRS. Groups can take action by sending a letter to their policymakers on a variety of issues: ensuring refugees have access to an education, protecting asylum seekers who come to the U.S., and providing sufficient humanitarian assistance to refugees in need.

Studies show hand-written letters are among the most powerful ways to reach members of Congress. Choose one of JRS/USA's current advocacy priorities and bring together friends, family, and community members to advocate for the displaced.

SCHEDULE AN IN-DISTRICT LOBBY VISIT

Face-to-face meetings with members of Congress and their staffers send a very powerful message and ensures that your voice is heard. Lobby visits can be done individually or in a group. Legislators will often not be able to meet with you due to their busy schedules, but a meeting with the right staff member can be just as influential

Follow the steps below to prepare for and execute an effective meeting.

- 1) Schedule a meeting by calling or emailing your Senators' and Representative's local offices. You should do this at least a week before you would like to meet. Be persistent! Contact the office until you have agreed upon a date and time. Be sure to ask about space limitations so that you can organize an appropriately sized group (normally around 2-3 members of your team). You can find your elected officials' contact information online by entering your home address at www.senate.gov and www.house.gov.
- 2) Prepare for your meeting by practicing your message and gathering relevant information. If you would like to organize your thoughts and discuss key issues for the meeting, please contact the JRS Outreach Officer at clara.sayans@jrsusa.org.
- 3) At the meeting, exchange contact information and leave relevant materials for the legislator and/or staffer to become more engaged and familiar with this issue. As a constituent, your position matters; you do not have to be an expert. You will rarely be asked detailed questions, but if you cannot answer anything simply promise to find more information and send it via email.
- 4) Follow-up with the staff that you met by sending an email restating your message, providing any additional information that you promised, and thanking them for their time.
- 5) Please let JRS/USA know how your meeting went! Your in-district visits are important to our advocacy efforts, and the information that you provide helps us send a stronger message from our office in Washington, D.C.

PARTICIPATE IN JRS/USA'S ADVOCACY DAY

JRS/USA hosts an annual Advocacy Day in Washington D.C. Look out for an invitation to your Action Team to join us. On Advocacy Day, JRS supporters come together to advocate for the rights of refugees and other forcibly displaced people on Capitol Hill. JRS/USA organizes meetings with key appropriations and foreign policy legislators who need to hear from their constituents about the importance of U.S. leadership on refugee issues. Participants meet with these legislators' offices to discuss topics such as the importance of refugee resettlement, funding for overseas humanitarian assistance programs, and access to education for refugees.



Host an Event or Activity

Events can support engagement in awareness-raising, advocacy, or fundraising. They are effective ways to get your community involved with your action efforts. Schools, parishes, and communities across the nation have utilized creative methods to support the refugees JRS serves worldwide.

The sky is the limit for creative forms of support! Staff at JRS/USA are always available to help you as you organize an event to raise awareness, fundraise, or promote advocacy. Your efforts will go far and wide to help refugees across the world.

Following these 8 steps can help your event be as successful as possible.

STEP 1: ESTABLISHING GOALS

What is the purpose of your event? What goals are you trying to achieve? Outlining your purpose and goals will enable you to determine what details need to go into the event.

STEP 2: PICKING AN ACTIVITY

Some event ideas include: bake sale, pancake breakfast, a walk or march, a form of “a-thon” event, benefit concert, sporting tournament, movie screening, or a panel discussion.

STEP 3: FINDING PARTNERS

If possible, find partners to co-host events and increase publicity. Aim for partners that can help you achieve your goals and provide support for the event.

STEP 4: LOGISTICS

Choose a date, location, and time for the event. Make sure you schedule far enough in advance. Once you figure out the details, register your event with JRS by emailing clara.sayans@jrsusa.org so that JRS/USA is aware of your event and available to help in any way.

STEP 5: ORGANIZE YOUR EVENT

What is needed to make your event happen? Clarify the tasks needed to carry out your event. Then recruit volunteers, give them assignments, secure supplies, etc.

STEP 6: ADVERTISE

Post on social media, make flyers and posters, talk to friends, and make announcements. Ask volunteers to personally invite their friends and family. Wherever possible, make sure to tag or acknowledge JRS/USA in some shape or form. We want to be active in your efforts!

STEP 7: DAY OF EVENT

At the event, set up a table for participants to learn more about the refugees JRS/USA serves. For those interested in receiving updates from JRS, have them fill out a sign-up sheet so they can be placed on JRS/USA’s mailing list.

Make sure there is a way to facilitate collection of money and checks, in case people wish to donate to the cause. Keep track of a donor’s name and address, so you can send a thank you card or email after the event.

Taking pictures can also be a good way to advertise your team’s efforts in the future. If you do take pictures, send them to us! We would love to see your accomplishments. You can also tag us on social media (Twitter: @jrsusa; Facebook: /JRSUSA; and Instagram: @jrsusa_photos).

STEP 8: WRAP-UP

Make sure to thank your partners and volunteers. Following the event, contact JRS/USA and let us know how it went. Send us any new contacts and pictures you may have. For more information on handling donations, follow this link: www.jrsusa.org/donate.

EXTRA: INCLUDE A DIGITAL COMPONENT

Broaden your support by adding a digital component to your event. Contact fundraising@jrsusa.org to set up a personal fundraising page online that you can customize and share with fellow students, faculty, parishioners, parents and alumni.

A fun way to boost success is to add a competitive spirit: create a fundraising challenge among classes or students vs. faculty. JRS can help with ideas and prizes.



Reflect and Pray

Prayer and reflection can be powerful ways to engage others, spiritually connect to the JRS mission, and build a network of solidarity with the forcibly displaced. Consider incorporating these approaches into your JRS Refugee Action Team and promoting prayer for refugees within your community. Use the examples below or create your own to connect your faith to your advocacy.

Sample Prayer for Refugees and Migrants

Lord, may we not wash our hands of our refugee brothers and sisters, and may you rain down upon them with all of the love and peace you were denied in your condemnation. Lord, may we be “struck and shocked by the plight” of our brothers and sisters worldwide and follow in the steps of Fr. Arrupe as we humbly bear the cross that awareness brings. Lord, we pray for vulnerable migrants that you may grant them strength and safety in their journeys, and we pray for open hearts to understand their desperate motivations. Lord, as we see your full humanity and suffering, may we see the full humanity and suffering of our displaced brothers and sisters.

Lord, we pray for women and children around the world. You asked us to weep for their oppression, and we pray that we may see their gifts, their strengths, and their plight as you do. Lord, as we see you wounded on the cross, help us to recognize the wounds of our brothers and sisters throughout the world. Let your spirit guide us to bring your light and hope to refugees and displaced people as we join together to build a world of love, justice, and peace for all.



[SCAN OR CLICK HERE FOR OUR PRAYER RESOURCE WEBPAGE!](#)

Sample Intentions

Incorporating prayers for refugees during the general intercessions at Masses, or in other prayers, helps all parish and school members reflect on God’s call to love our brothers and sisters who are suffering around the world. Here are sample intentions:

- For all those who have been forced to flee their homes seeking a safe and dignified life...
- For all those living in refugee camps around the world...
- For advocates who work to defend the rights of refugees...
- For the education of all children caught in crisis and conflict...
- For strength that we may all participate in welcoming and defending the rights of refugees and displaced persons...



Raise Funds

For Refugees

Giving children the hope and stability that regular schooling provides, making sure the basic household needs of refugees are met, and helping displaced people work through the trauma they've experienced all require funding. Your group can make a real difference in people's lives by providing financial support for some of the almost one million individuals JRS serves worldwide.

Below you will find some ideas to motivate your community to donate and fundraise for refugees. Feel free to get creative and come up with your own initiatives!

SET UP A PERSONAL FUNDRAISING PAGE

Contact fundraising@jrsusa.org to set up a personal fundraising page online that you can customize to share with fellow students, faculty, parents, alumni, parishioners and community members. Post your fundraising page on your social media to get the word out!

FUNDRAISING CHALLENGE

More entertaining ways to fundraise include charity basketball games, "dance-a-thons" (or other "a-thon" events), and community wide competitions between different groups (like classes) to reach the most donations. Reach out to JRS for help with ideas and prizes.

INCORPORATE SALES AND BUSINESSES

You can raise donations by hosting a bake sale or yard sale and committing your profits to JRS. You can also reach out to local businesses or religious organizations and encourage them to match your donations.

For any questions related to fundraising and donations, please reach out to fundraising@jrsusa.org or 202-629-5906.



Share the Stories

Of Refugees

SOCIAL MEDIA

Promoting a positive understanding of refugees and other displaced people is a critical need today. Social media platforms can play a key role in awareness-raising, advocacy, and fundraising.

You can tag **JRS** when hosting an event or meeting, receive updates on our work, and share information with your followers.



www.facebook.com/jrsusa



www.twitter.com/jrsusa



www.instagram.com/jrs_usa

MEDIA OUTREACH

Engaging your local media outlets is one of the most effective ways to spread the word about upcoming events, desired advocacy actions, and to inform the masses about refugee issues. Contact your local news stations and request more coverage of humanitarian concerns worldwide. Ask your newspaper or TV station to feature an article on refugee issues.

You can also submit your own writing to advocate for refugees in the press. Local newspapers often accept opinion submissions (Op-Eds) and Letters to the Editors. Guidelines for these submissions can usually be found online on the newspaper's website.

- Op-Eds are typically 600-750 words in length. They express your view on a current situation and include a specific call to action. When writing an Op-Ed, be aware that the average reader may not be familiar with your issue, so make sure to fill in the blanks and give background information. Make your point clear.

- A Letter to the Editor is typically around 100-200 words in length. It references a story, column, or comment that appeared in the newspaper. Your letter should make a new point or counterpoint to a certain piece and should conclude with a suggested action.

(See pages 12 and 14 for examples)



Ready-to-use

Resources

HOST A REFUGEE AWARENESS EXERCISE WITH ON THE MOVE

ON THE MOVE invites people to become informed and educated about what happens every day in the lives of people who are forced to leave their homes.

Walk a Mile in My Shoes is an in-person event that can be delivered by the hosting institution following the provided Toolkit. The exercise is held in an open area where participants can learn more about particular aspects of the refugee experience and get an inside into the hardships, frustrations, and often the pain that refugees endure.

Journey Into Exile is an online simulation exercise to raise awareness about the reality of refugees around the world seeking safety, security, and a better life in a new country. As a refugee, you will make various group and individual decisions, hear refugee testimonies, and watch videos about their journeys, challenges, and resilience.



Students at Gonzaga College High School in Washington, D.C. walk through the shelter station during Walk a Mile.



Students at Misericordia University in Pennsylvania get a sense of what it is like to gather and carry water in a refugee camp.



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THE MOVE
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September 29, 2024 – World Day of Migrants & Refugees

Each year the Vatican designates a World Day of Migrants & Refugees to recognize the plight of the displaced around the world. Commemorate this day in your community!

November 14, 2024 – JRS Day

Help us to commemorate the founding of JRS by Fr. Pedro Arrupe, S.J. by joining us in prayer, learning, and taking action.

December 1 – December 24, 2024 – The Season of Advent

Join JRS/USA on a journey as we accompany refugees and migrants through prayer during the Advent season.

March 5 - April 17, 2025 – The Season of Lent

A season to accompany, serve, and advocate on behalf of refugees through prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.

Spring 2025 – Advocacy Day

Join JRS/USA in advocating for refugees and forced migrants in meetings with legislators on Capitol Hill.

June 20, 2025 – World Refugee Day

World Refugee Day was first commemorated by the UN in 2001. On this day, people around the world celebrate the achievements and resilience of refugees and the displaced.

Summer 2025 – JRS Leader Summit

Join JRS/USA for either an in-person or virtual gathering to learn how JRS collaborators can take action in their own community.

United Nations Days

Use these United Nations designated specific days as an occasion to mark particular events or topics in order to promote, through awareness and action, forcibly displaced people issues. Reach out to Clara Sayans (clara.sayans@jrsusa.org) for more information and guiding questions on the different topics.

January 24th: International Day of Education

The UN has established education as a human right, public good, and public responsibility. 48% of refugee children remain out of school. Education is crucial to protect refugee children from child marriage, sexual exploitation, forced entry into armed groups, and child labor.

February 4th: International Day of Human Fraternity

Human Fraternity Day was established in a 1999 to respond to the need for spiritual guidance to stop the division of people. This began with the understanding that at the core of all faith systems that humanity thrives off of unity and harmony.

February 20th: World Day of Social Justice

A sense of urgency for social justice work and global solidarity due to the humanitarian and governmental crises over the last 20 years. This day hopes to renew a global, social contract.

March 8th: International Women's Day

Officially recognized in 1977, this day aims to decrease the gender gap and celebrates the advancement of women and girls across the world. Women represent almost half of the migrant and refugee population.

March 22nd: World Water Day

Access to water is a human right under Article 25. SDG 6: everyone will have safely managed and sanitary water by 2030. About 2.6 million refugees live in managed camps, creating a refugee water crisis as more than 50% of camps do not have enough water to fulfill the basic requirement of 20 liters per day per person.

April 7th: World Health Day

Most refugees and migrants do not have access to regular, quality health care and compounding factors such as education, housing, and access to resources negatively impact their health. Access to inclusive mental health and psychosocial support services is also critical for upholding one's well-being.

May 21st: World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development

The ability to express/show culture is considered a global, public good and the protection of culture needs to be implemented in public policy. Cultural diversity is essential for the reduction of poverty.

October 13th: International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction

This day was recognized first in 1989 to promote a global culture of risk awareness and disaster reduction.

December 10th: Human Rights Day

This day recognizes the day that the UN adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. This day works to enshrine human rights, create more progress towards human rights and support economies that sustain human rights.

December 18th: International Migrants Day

This day was created to promote safe migration and commend migrants for their contributions to society despite hardship.

Teens

Solito: A Memoir

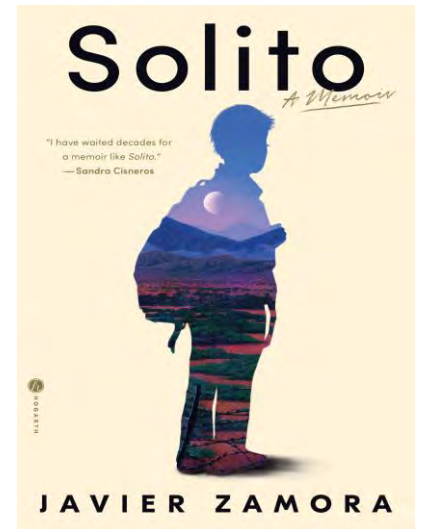
Written by Javier Zamora

An emotional story recounting the journey the author had to take when he was 9 years old to join his parents in America.

Where to Read

Reflection Questions:

1. How would you feel if you had to make such a difficult journey at a young age without your parents?
2. What moments of his journey stuck with you the most?



The Good Lie

A group of Sudanese refugees, given the chance to resettle in the U.S., arrive in Kansas City, Missouri, where their encounter with an employment agency counselor forever changes all of their lives.

Where to Watch

Reflection Questions:

1. Which themes greatly impacted how you felt when you finished the movie?
2. How can this movie's storytelling help spread awareness about issues for refugees?



America's Dreamers

By America Arias

AMERICA'S DREAMERS shares inspiring stories, resources and knowledge from brilliant leaders, entrepreneurs and influential celebrities that are DACA Dreamers.

[Where to Listen](#)

Reflection Questions:

1. Which of the stories from this podcast were the most inspiring to you?
2. What common themes or experiences emerge across the different episodes, and how do they reflect the diversity of the American immigrant experience?



Girl at War

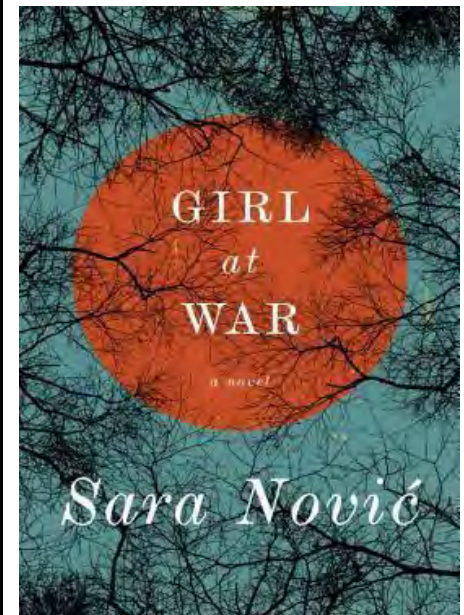
Written by Sara Nović

In 1991, 10 year old Ana Jurić was swept away by civil war, losing her friends and family. She embarks on a daring escape plan to America. Ten years later, Ana is a college student in New York, reminiscing about her past and returns to Croatia to rediscover her past and search for the ghosts of those she lost.

[Where to Read](#)

Reflection Questions:

1. How does this novel affirm or challenge your perceptions of war?
2. What lesson can be learned from this novel about resilience and the power of the human spirit?



When Stars Are Scattered

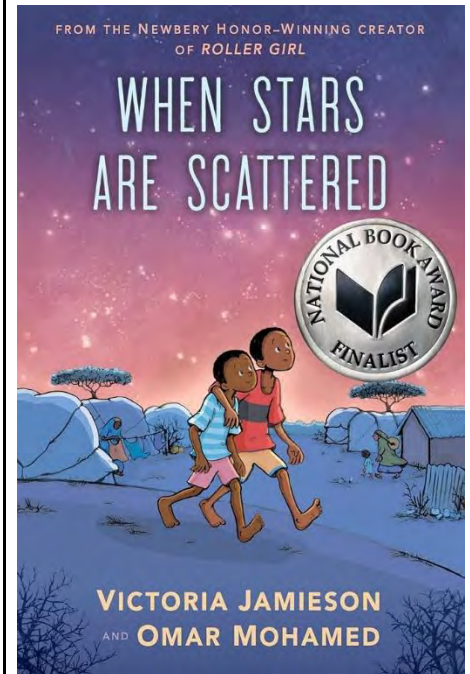
By Victoria Jamieson and Omar Mohamed

Omar and his younger brother, Hassan, have spent their lives in a refugee camp in Kenya, waiting for better opportunities. Omar's desire to attend school brings hope and a chance to change their future, but it also means leaving his brother, the only family member he has left, every day.

[Where to Read](#)

Reflection Questions:

1. What insights does the novel offer into the daily struggles and routines of life in a refugee camp, including access to education, healthcare, and basic necessities?
2. How does the novel explore the complexities of decision-making and uncertainty for refugees, including the difficult choices they face about whether to stay, seek asylum, or attempt to return home?



Adults

Modern Immigrant

By Vero

This podcast interviews guests with different histories with immigration and shares their inspiring stories.

[Where to Listen](#)

Reflection Questions:

1. How many of the stories gave you different perspectives on the immigrant experience?
2. What steps can be taken to promote inclusivity for immigrants based on this podcast?



The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears

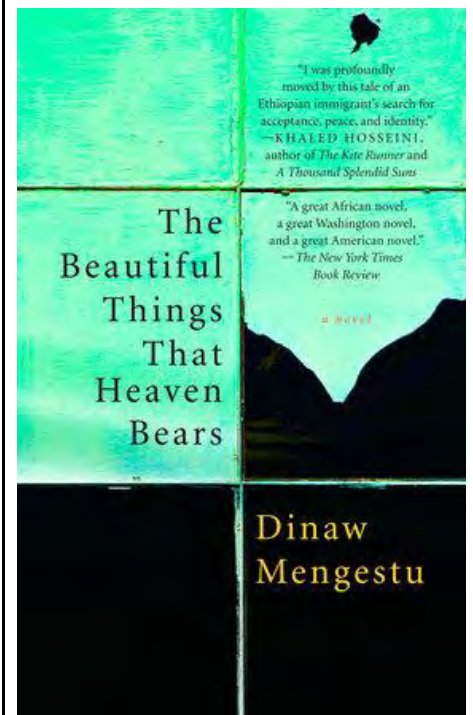
By Dinaw Mengestu

Sepha Stephanos, a former Ethiopian Revolution refugee, now runs a struggling grocery store in Washington, D.C., with fellow African immigrants. Despite his isolation, he finds hope in a friendship with neighbors Judith and Naomi, but faces racial incidents that threaten his future.

[Where to Read](#)

Reflection Questions:

1. How can the theme of isolation in this novel relate to the immigrant experience in America?
2. In what ways does the novel explore the complexities of friendship, community, and belonging among immigrants and long-time residents?



Behold the Dreamers

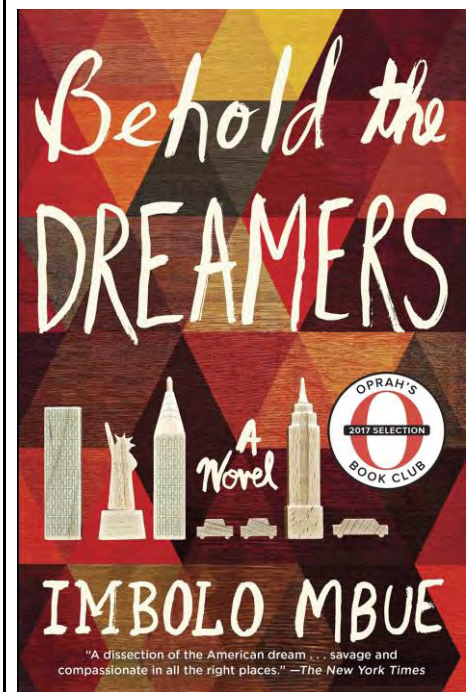
By Imbolo Mbue

Jende Jonga, a Cameroonian immigrant, arrives in the United States to provide a better life for himself, his wife Neni, and their son. However, their lives are upended when the financial collapse of Lehman Brothers, the company he works for, disrupts their marriage and their lives.

Where to Read

Reflection Questions:

1. How do the characters' aspirations and struggles reflect the complexities of the immigrant experience in America?
2. What parallels can be drawn between the Jonga family and the struggles faced by immigrants in modern society?



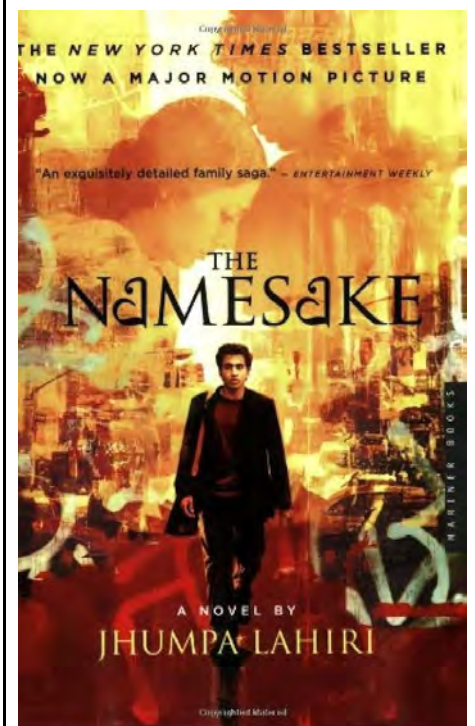
The Namesake

After moving from Calcutta to New York, members of the Ganguli family maintain a delicate balancing act between honoring the traditions of their native India and blending into American culture. Although parents Ashoke and Ashima are proud of the sacrifices they make to give their offspring opportunities, their son Gogol strives to forge his own identity without forgetting his heritage.

Where to Watch

Reflection Questions:

1. What role does memory and nostalgia play in shaping the characters' perceptions of their past, their homeland, and their sense of self?



Mosaic

By The Public's Radio

Mosaic is a podcast about immigration and identity, with a focus on the true, personal, and often unbelievable stories of immigrants and migrants living in New England.

[Where to Listen](#)

Reflection Questions:

1. How have the personal stories shared on the podcast expanded your understanding of immigration and its impact on individuals and communities?
2. How does the podcast shed light on the intersectionality of immigration with other social issues, such as race, class, gender, and religion?



The Public's Radio

Inspired by Ignatius: A JRS Examen

This prayer resource is also available as a audio recording at www.pray-as-you-go.org/player/prayer%20tools/jrsexamen

BECOME AWARE OF GOD'S PRESENCE



Take a few deep breaths. It's the same air that we all breathe - from the refugee on the road to those of us in the comfort of our home. It's the breath of the Spirit that gives life to each and every one of us. God is present.

For some, God may feel absent. Continue to explore this feeling of absence. Where is it especially felt? Where's the space that God needs to fill?

REVIEW

Take a moment to gather the information you know about a refugee situation or crisis. Where is it happening? Who is being affected? Where are they going? How are they being welcomed?



Review this information. Acknowledge what may be missing. Allow this to inform your next step.



PAY ATTENTION

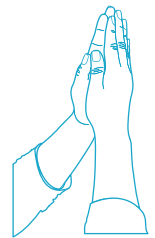
As you review the information, what strikes you? What do you keep returning to? How does it make you feel? Are you angry? Upset? Saddened? Inspired to make a change?

Sit with that feeling and pay attention. What you're feeling is real.

CHOOSE ONE FEATURE AND PRAY FROM IT

By this point, you may have identified one thing—a thought, an image, or a feeling—that you can't leave behind. It's something that sticks with you. Pray from it.

How can you approach it? Is there something you can do at home? Or are you being called forward to take action?



LOOK FORWARD TO TOMORROW

Carry that thought, image, or feeling to the next day. How will it form tomorrow? What will you do differently? Move away from indifference and allow this prayer to become inspired action on behalf of refugees and the forcibly displaced.

CLOSING PRAYER:

God of all people,

We pray that we may accompany those on the road,
Walking in solidarity with those forced from their homes.
May we serve them humbly, recognizing not the cost,
But freely giving from what we have.

Remove all fear and allow us to become a voice crying out in the desert,
Proclaiming the good news and advocating on behalf of all those forcibly displaced.

May we follow your example in being a friend to the excluded and a ready defender in their time of need.

Please keep us united as a family,
brought together in faith, hope, and love.

Amen

Sample Op-Ed

On International Women's Day, Let's Remember Refugee Girls

By: [Author's Name], Opinion Contributor

Today marks International Women's Day, an opportunity to highlight the achievements of women and girls around the world, and the challenges they still face in reaching their potential. As the appropriations season kicks off, Congress must prioritize funding for education programs that reach the most vulnerable – including refugee girls.

This includes girls like Mireille Twayigira, who fled Rwanda with her family when she was just two years old and journeyed for six years from country to country before arriving at Dzaleka refugee camp in Malawi. There, Mireille became a student in one of Jesuit Refugee Service's education programs and dedicated herself to her studies, eventually graduating from secondary school among the top three female students in the country. She went on to defy odds, continue her education, and became a medical doctor in 2016.

Unfortunately, Mireille is the exception. For millions of refugee girls, education is out of reach. In countries affected by conflict, girls are nearly three times more likely to be out of school than boys.¹ The challenge becomes even greater when girls try to transition from primary to secondary school. In fact, refugee girls are only half as likely to be enrolled in secondary school as boys.² Secondary education is so important to financially sustain refugee families. Girls with a secondary education go on to earn almost twice as much as girls with no education at all.³

For the past two years, the administration has proposed significant cuts – up to 30 percent – in foreign aid spending, while at the same time reducing the number of refugees admitted to the United States. Fortunately, Congress reversed these cuts and recently approved \$800 million in sustained funding for international basic education in the FY19 Federal Budget.⁴ As Congress prepares to receive the President's FY20 Budget Request, we must continue to prioritize these life-changing programs and continue to invest in U.S. foreign assistance efforts that tackle barriers to girls' education so they can thrive no matter where they are.

We must invest in efforts like Education Cannot Wait, a new fund for education in emergencies that is serving children in 19 crisis-affected countries – half of whom are girls.⁵ We encourage the State Department and USAID to commit additional funding to this important initiative, which invests in strategies that are gender-responsive and increase access to education, promote safe and protective learning environments, and improve skills for teachers.

Currently, there are 3.7 million school-age refugee girls.⁶ Having survived harrowing journeys with their families to escape violence, conflict, and persecution, these girls face a number of challenges – particularly in their quest to go to school.

Many refugee boys and girls experience a gap in education due to their displacement, find themselves adjusting to a host country with a different language, educational system or curriculum, and struggle to manage the stresses that come with having to rebuild their lives. For refugee girls, these barriers are even higher.

1 Overseas Development Institute. (May 2016). Education Cannot Wait: Proposing a Fund for Education in Emergencies. <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10497.pdf>.

2 UNHCR. (August 28, 2018). Turn the Tide: Refugee Education in Crisis. <https://www.unhcr.org/5b852f8e4.pdf>.

3 The World Bank. (July 11, 2018). Missed Opportunities: The High Cost of Not Educating Girls. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/factsheet/2018/07/11/missed-opportunities-the-high-cost-of-not-educating-girls>

4 Basic Education Coalition. (February 15, 2019). BEC Statement on Passage of Fiscal Year 2019 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Bill. <https://www.basiced.org/govt-relations-updates/2019/2/15/bec-statement-on-passage-of-fiscal-year-2019-state-foreign-operations-and-related-programs-bill>

5 For more information on Education Cannot Wait see <http://www.educationcannotwait.org/>.

6 UNHCR. (August 28, 2018). Turn the Tide: Refugee Education in Crisis. <https://www.unhcr.org/5b852f8e4.pdf>.

Sample Op-Ed (continued)

Religious or traditional values often discourage girls' education, emphasize a girl's role in the home, and may lead to early marriage. Many schools also lack gender-appropriate accommodations including gender-segregated latrines or sanitary supplies.⁷ A nurturing, supportive learning environment that provides counseling services for students and monitors the progress of girls before they have the opportunity to drop out, is also in short supply.

We must all do our part to support girls as they try to achieve an education, particularly as they progress through primary school and transition to secondary education. A recent report released by Jesuit Refugee Service highlights critical interventions including providing scholarships that target girls, building facilities to ensure adequate menstrual health management, and developing tailored programs to support the empowerment of girls and address gender barriers.⁸

Last week, Mireille walked the halls of Congress to share her life story with policymakers and to make the case for investments in refugee education programs. Mireille's experience demonstrates the positive impact that investments in girls' education can have on individuals, families and larger communities. She is a living example of what can happen when these programs are prioritized. Like she told policymakers, "I used to look at myself as a girl with a tragic past. But I realized I was more than that, I was a girl with a story to tell."

We must keep girls' education at the forefront of our foreign assistance efforts. There are many more girls like Mireille waiting and hoping for their opportunity to thrive.

[List author's credentials and give context for why they wrote this piece.]

⁷ Glamour. (February 25, 2019). "There's an Oscar-Winning Netflix Doc You Need to See: Period. End of Sentence." <https://www.glamour.com/story/period-end-of-sentence-netflix>.

⁸ Jesuit Refugee Service. (March 2019). Her Future: Challenges & Recommendations to Increase Education for Refugee Girls. https://www.jrsusa.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/03/JRSUSA_HER-FUTURE-for-web-3.3.19.pdf.





Sample Letter to the Editor

The September 4 article in The Washington Post, “A year after the death of Alan Kurdi, another Syrian child fights for survival” shared the story of 6-year-old Syrian refugee Shaima who was blinded after being caught in the crossfire and fled to Turkey with her family. Yet, impressively, she still has a strong desire to return to school.

According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, only 63 percent of refugee children have access to primary school, 24 percent to secondary school and very few have access to either pre-primary or tertiary education. For children in crisis situations, education is an absolute necessity. In the midst of destruction, violence, and instability, school is a place of learning and opportunity, a sanctuary for healing, and a haven of normalcy and hope for the future.

This year, UN member states will negotiate and finalize the UN Global Compact on Refugees to agree on policies and set forth commitments that can significantly improve the lives of refugee children by creating a better system for responsibility-sharing among nations and ensuring that education for refugees is a central concern. Support for the Compact and initiatives like Education Cannot Wait can provide an avenue towards quality, meaningful education for refugees around the globe. World leaders, including the U.S., must not forget Shaima and thousands of other children like her who are missing out on an education and the opportunity to forge a path forward for themselves and their families.

Jane Doe
Washington, D.C.

Other Resources

Below is a list of additional resources on refugees, migration, and displacement to help inform your Refugee Action Team.

UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR)

UNHCR is the UN Refugee Agency. It is a global organization dedicated to saving lives, protecting rights, and building a better future for refugees, forcibly displaced communities, and stateless people. It works to ensure that the rights of refugees, migrants, and asylum-seekers are upheld. Additionally, UNHCR collects updated research on the global state of refugees and publishes an annual Global Trends Report, which serves as a resource to the public.

www.unhcr.org

REFUGEE COUNCIL USA (RCUSA)

RCUSA, a coalition of 25 U.S.-based non-governmental organizations, is dedicated to refugee protection, welcome, and excellence in the U.S. refugee resettlement program. RCUSA advocates for the rights of refugees in the U.S. and around the world.

www.rcusa.org

CENTER FOR MIGRATION STUDIES OF NEW YORK (CMS)

CMS is a think tank and an educational institute devoted to the study of international migration, to the promotion of understanding between immigrants and receiving communities, and to public policies that safeguard the dignity and rights of migrants, refugees, and newcomers. CMS publishes timely and evidence-based research on refugees, migration, and the role of Catholic institutions in immigrant integration.

cmsny.org

INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT MONITORING CENTER (IDMC)

IDMC is a research organization dedicated to producing expert analysis on internal displacement. Its mission is to provide high-quality data, analysis, and expertise on internal displacement with the aim of informing policy and operational decisions that can reduce the risk of future displacement and improve the lives of internally displaced persons (IDPs) worldwide. The IDMC provides a Global Internal Displacement Database and publishes reports on the drivers of internal displacement across the world.

www.internal-displacement.org

Jesuit Refugee Service/USA

1627 K Street, NW - Suite 1100

Washington, DC 20006

(202) 629-5200 | www.jrsusa.org

ADDRESS SERVICE

REQUESTED



Jesuit Refugee Service is an international Catholic organization serving refugees and other forcibly displaced people. Founded as a work of the Society of Jesus (Jesuits) in 1980, in direct response to the humanitarian crisis of the Vietnamese boat people, JRS today works in more than 50 countries worldwide to meet the educational, health, and social needs of more than one million refugees every year.

JRS/USA is the U.S. office for JRS based in Washington, DC. JRS/USA provides support to the broader JRS network - through funding, oversight, monitoring, and evaluation - to JRS projects and programming throughout the world. JRS/USA also serves forcibly displaced migrants in the U.S. through our Detention Chaplaincy Program.



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