



**FORCED TO FLEE**  
**Visual Stories by Refugee Youth from Burma**

© Erika Berg

**Advance Praise**

“Words cannot adequately depict the horrors, fear and grief experienced by refugees, political prisoners and exiles from Burma (Myanmar). In *Forced to Flee*, refugee youth armed with watercolor pencils and drawing paper are able to overcome the limitations of language. If their yellow is a little too bright, and their black a bit too dark, it’s a perfect reflection of the larger-than-life incidents that shaped their reality.” — *Kenneth Wong, writer and illustrator*

“*Forced to Flee* manages to interweave the rich tapestry of Burma’s ethnic and religious diversity together with the story of Burma’s struggle for democracy and human rights through words and pictures that tell human stories of fear, pain, tragedy as well as inspirational courage and hope.” — *Benedict Rogers, author of Burma: A Nation at the Crossroads*

“*Forced to Flee* gives me chills and thrills. Chills for the resistance of human beings against immense violence and injustice under an oppressive culture; thrills for their resilience and continued aspirations for peace and justice ... Thank you for inviting these incredible youth to shed light on their stories and dreams.” — *Khin Ohmar, Coordinator, Burma Partnership*

“I sat down to read *Forced to Flee*, and my heart changed ... Erika Berg leads the reader on a journey through the book, but also a journey through Burma. Along the way we meet people with stories that will stir your heart. When I was done reading the book, I felt as if I had been running a marathon. The emotions it stirred in me led me up on mountaintops and down to the deepest, darkest valleys.” — *Oddny Gumaer, Founder, Partners Relief & Development*

*“Forced to Flee* brings out the true emotions of those who long for peace, love and freedom as well as the pain and atrocities they have had to go through. It is indeed a powerful book as each picture depicts a touching story that serves as an eye opener for those who do not know about the lives of the refugees, while it will deepen the lasting impression it has made on those who already do.” — *Dr. Alana Golmei, Director, Burma Centre Delhi*

“The visual stories in *Forced to Flee* remind us that faith and dignity can transcend all forms of oppression and deprivation. From extraordinarily diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds, a common sense of identity and a desire for a better future shine through. Reconciliation is possible. And refugees have a very important role to play.” — *Jack Dunford, Executive Director, The Border Consortium, 1984-2012*

*“Forced to Flee* illustrates that the ethnic people of Burma have been detained, abused and forcibly displaced by the Burma Army not because of anything they have or haven’t done but because of their native ethnicity and their resource-rich native land. Only when their ethnic diversity is embraced and they are granted equal rights under the constitution will sustainable peace be possible.” — *Khon Ja, Coordinator, Kachin Peace Network*

*“Forced to Flee* illustrates the incredible resilience of Burma’s ethnic youth in the face of horrific human rights abuses ... The country’s leaders could learn so much from the visionary solutions so eloquently expressed here by the youth. They provide such hope for Burma’s future.” — *Rachel Fleming, Advocacy Director, Chin Human Rights Organization*

“This long-awaited collection of watercolor paintings by refugee youth, informative captions, behind-the-scenes photographs and contextual material is profoundly moving ... *Forced to Flee* exudes sacred wisdom, beauty and hope. I remain deeply touched and inspired.” — *Imam Jamal Rahman, speaker on Islam and interfaith relations*

“Visual storytelling is a powerful window into the complex range of issues and emotions that embody Myanmar’s current transition. This book is riveting for those who know the country, and those yet to be captivated by it. The pictures speak many thousands of words.” — *Aela Callan, filmmaker and journalist*

“I was moved to tears by this beautiful and profound book! It is a must-read for those working in the field of migration or mental health. With first-person insights and experiences, it reminds us of what is lost and what remains for those forced to flee.” — *Beth Farmer, Director, Northwest Health and Human Rights*

*“Forced to Flee* was inspired by the stories of youth who have fled persecution in different corners of Myanmar. By documenting their struggles and aspirations with art materials, these brave survivors of injustice challenge Myanmar’s leadership to end impunity and promote human rights, including in remote ethnic areas.” — *Wai Wai Nu, Director, Women Peace Network Arakan*

“In *Forced to Flee*, refugee youths’ real-life stories illustrate complex issues related to ethnic conflicts, religious tension and political persecution in Burma. The book doesn’t just describe the issues; it promotes the voice of refugees who have lived in exile for decades while remaining committed to bringing freedom and peace to their displaced communities.” — *Hayso Thako, Principal, Shalom Arts and Leadership College, Mae La (refugee camp)*

*“Forced to Flee* reflects the real Shan people’s life in Shan State and along the Thai-Burma border. I think people who live in cities throughout Shan State should read this book. Then they would understand that in the more remote rural areas of Shan State people continue to suffer from human rights abuses and can only dream of peace.” — *Larn Tai, Shan Youth Power*

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“This book is a testament to the indomitable spirit of those who have been forced to flee injustice in Burma, and to the transformative power of art ... By highlighting the stories of those who—despite democratic reforms—continue to struggle and suffer in the shadows, the book promises to mobilize greater support for human rights throughout Burma.” — *Tun Khin, President, Burmese Rohingya Organization UK*

“For many years, Erika Berg has worked diligently to open communications between traumatized refugees and the seemingly indifferent communities where they have sought refuge. *Forced to Flee* portrays and honors a genuine, heart-to-heart collaboration.” — *Larry Dohrs, Chairman, U.S. Campaign for Burma*

“The world has been bedazzled by Burma’s opening. This dominant narrative often obscures the stories of persecuted peoples whose plight continues ... *Forced to Flee* highlights their stories, reminding the world of their plight and that, in many ways, Burma’s reforms have truly yet to begin.” — *Dr. Voravit Suwanvanichkij, Public Health and Human Rights, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health*

“*Forced to Flee* will help readers understand the living situation of the more than 125,000 refugees still living along the Thai-Burma border who were forced to flee their homeland and now are growing up in overcrowded camps without enough nutritious food, health care or education. This book captures their struggles, portrayed by refugee youth who experience them daily.” — *Naw K’nyaw Paw, Secretary, Karen Women’s Organization, Burma*

“Human suffering is all too pervasive throughout our world, and it does not diminish when we look away. *Forced to Flee* reminds us that it is the duty of all of us—regardless of who or where we happen to be—to enhance the well-being of the most vulnerable among us and address the roots of their suffering.” — *Garrett Kostin, Director, Burma Study Center*

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