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Angelina Jolie , Caspian Tredwell-Owen

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From the ever-intriguing and appealing actress Angelina Jolie comes the personal journals she compiled while performing humanitarian relief efforts in such countries as Sierra Leone and Tanzania, Pakistan and Cambodia.

Three years ago, award-winning actress Angelina Jolie took on a radically different role as a Goodwill Ambassador for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Here are her memoirs from her journeys to Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Pakistan, Cambodia, and Ecuador, where she lived and worked and gave her heart to those who suffer the world's most shattering violence and victimization. Here are her revelations of joy and warmth amid utter destitution...compelling snapshots of courageous and inspiring people for whom survival is their daily work, and candid notes from a unique pilgrimage that completely changed the actress's world view — and the world within herself.

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Marianne says

Disclaimer - I like Angelina Jolie. I think that she's an amazing woman, a great actress and classier than certain people who feel the need to name-drop her in every other interview. That's partly why I read this and the other was that it gave me a significant push into Asia that I needed for my challenge.

Anyway, before Brangelina and all the kids Angelina Jolie was recruited as a UN Goodwill Ambassador for Refugees and as part of her duties she went travelling around the world to different areas to talk to displaced people. This book is her diaries during those trips and her thoughts and experiences. Almost from the start you warm to her, even if you didn't like her. The book is written such as we would write - chronicling little things and snippets of conversation as she discovers how different life is. There are little points, barely mentioned, where she realises that a boy she had spoken to was killed, or where she watches children pick litter in the street to earn money, or sees children being sold into the sex trade at the age of 5 or 6 because they can't afford not to or where she's told how gangs would come in and make family members amputate each others limbs, or sees children carrying guns where you can feel how it affects her. It's not done in a gratuitous 'oh woe is me' way, but in a way where, no matter how brief the image is, it sticks with you.

At one point in Cambodia she mentions how she and her friend went to a museum and in it they show pictures of some of the atrocities committed and she lists some of them and explains how she had to leave such was the effect it had on her.

In another account she went to Pakistan to speak with Afghan refugees. This is before 9/11 and she says that afterwards she donated money to the Afghan refugees and as a result she received death-threats because people couldn't differentiate between Afghanistan and the Taliban. That stuck with me because even now I still think that some people fail to make those distinctions.

I know a lot of people don't like her, but I think reading this you can understand her stance on life and why she adopted the kids that she did. I just think it's something people should think about.

Eileen Souza says

Certainly not what you would expect from a Hollywood star. This is the story of Angelina Jolie, the Goodwill Ambassador for the UN. The story is told through journals that she wrote during visits that she took in 2001 and 2002 to Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Cambodia, Pakistan, and Ecuador.

As she says right off the bat, she's not a writer. The journals are short thoughts and memories that she was capturing each day. They are her thoughts as she experienced the interaction and stories of refugees all over the world. Though I would have preferred more detailed accounts of what is going on, there are definitely short stories of what these people have suffered and are suffering.

Because of the subject matter, and the fact that there's not a lot else out there on this subject (trust me, I've been actively looking for books on women of the Congo) I'm giving the book 4 stars. 3 stars would be an

insult to the people it represents, and the importance of the refugee issues. I will preface it by saying that although it was at times repetitive and choppy, it was a quick read (I finished it in one day).

I am certain that I will read this book again, and that I will pass it on to others. People need to know.

Megan Carpenter says

This is a heartfelt journal. The thoughts are raw, not softened by a ghostwriter. A true insiders view to worlds that we cannot imagine, war torn countries and the people that are punished because of it. This is an eye opening experience, one that had me tearing up in places, mad as hell in others, and overall grateful for what I have, and hopeful that I can provide help to an amazing organization in the future. Whatever you think you know of Angelina Jolie, this gives another view, and reminds me that we are all human, that under whatever we do every day, whether we are movie stars or waitresses, we all want the same thing, peace, happiness, and to know that our families have hope.

Bonnie Rose says

I am proud to say I like Angelina Jolie when she was going through her 'weird stage' and some say she still is. In either case, she is someone I put as a role model because of the way she balances her life as a working woman, a mother, a humanitarian, a celebrity, etc. I love what she has done to help others and bring awareness to other places of the world. I love that she has adopted children who needed loving homes. This book is a must read.

Denise says

I enjoyed this book very much, although it tensed me at times, and made me cry at others. It's the story of many refugees around the world, and the humanitarian work Angelina Jolie has done to help them out. It's an account of her early years as Good Will Ambassador for the UNHCR.

I'm so impressed by the things that people can do to each other, and how the survivors of this hatred and spite keep on with their lives after such harsh and traumatic experiences stay tattooed on their souls. By the end of the book I couldn't stop asking myself the same thing that Angelina asked herself all along: how do they survive at all!

Angelina starts her journal by saying that she's not different from other people, but she wants to help. To me that alone makes her different. Not everyone cares about other fellow beings. She's different in so many ways and she makes a difference with all her humanitarian work.

I can understand why the UNHCR agency has such high rates of suicide and depression. Reading books about other countries who live in permanent terror like the ones she describes always depresses me, even though I'm thousands of miles away culturally and physically, and safe behind the soft pages of the book. I can't imagine the emotional scars that all those persons are left with when they are lucky enough to keep their lives. Anonymous to the rest of the world and yet still very valuable lives. Dead just seems such a high price to pay for respect and integrity. I can't imagine where they gather the strength to keep smiling.

It would be easier, less risky and less emotionally demanding to just send funds from the comfort of her home, and yet she is willing to share with all these people her time helping out in whatever ways she can. And that's why it's so admirable what she does. It's easy to mourn the dead, but it's hard to help the living. To all those refugees she is just some woman who wants to help. A remarkable woman with noble feelings. She masters beautiful gestures that make people feel good and loved and recognized and valued, and that alone can be more important than having a lot of other things that seem necessary and are necessary for all of them, but not any more so than the grace and beauty of a person whose mere existence makes it possible for them to keep their hopes up.

As I read once, you can train thousands or millions of political theorists and economists and theologians and bureaucrats, but charm and charisma, and the desire to put celebrity to good use: hundreds of years of training can't teach that or invent it. And Angelina has what it takes to make all this happen. I can't help those people because I don't have the economic resources to do so. But I'm grateful that there are people like her out there who are willing to share what they have, and to sacrifice some of her own comfort to help out. It's a good read if you want to sensitize yourself about some world issues.

Sara says

Favorite quotes:

"I think we all want justice and equality. We all want a chance for a life with meaning. All of us would like to believe that if we were in a bad situation someone would help us."

"Someone once said, 'You can learn more about someone in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.'"

Isaura Pereira says

Este livro não estava inicialmente nos meus planos para o mês. Mas aquando numa das muitas visitas à biblioteca vi este livro e achei que seria uma boa leitura adequado ao tema de viagens.

Novamente um livro de não-ficção onde a actriz Angelina Jolie conta um pouco das suas viagens humanitárias à Serra Leoa, à Tanzânia, ao Paquistão, ao Cambodja e ao Equador nos anos de 2001 e 2002.

Os relatos aqui apresentados são duros. As histórias de vida impressionantes, embora não explorasse muito este assunto. Conta como foi conhecer refugiados de lugares muito diferentes, mas com um objectivo em comum: uma vida melhor, sem guerras, nem fome. Conta também um pouco daquilo que sente ao falar com estas pessoas e da pessoa que se tornou depois destas experiências. Reconhecer e dar valor ao que se tem e ajudar o outro tornou-se num lema para esta mulher.

Estes relatos permitem-nos conhecer um pouco mais sobre a situação dos refugiados. E muito embora estas recordações sejam de há 10 anos atrás são bem actuais.

Gostei muito.

Kaitlyn Barrett says

This book should be titled “The education and awakening of Angelina Jolie” since the most interesting thing is the way she grows up between the beginning and the end.

Because she isn’t a writer, the shock and horror she experienced in Africa comes through in a more visceral way. She’s not trying to make us feel what she feels when she looks around at acres of dying refugees, she’s just trying to describe it to herself in some way that makes sense. I’m impressed by the fact that she requested her first humanitarian assignment to Africa and I wish she’d had the presence of mind and introspectiveness to write about what drove her to that decision. It’s all the more impressive that she would take another assignment after Africa because that kind of human suffering is way beyond one person’s ability to make a difference. It’s a rare person that dives in anyway and says that they’ll do what they can even if it makes no appreciable difference because they can’t stand by and do nothing.

The section on Cambodia came as a relief after her experience in Africa. It’s clear she connected with and loved the country and the people of Cambodia in a way that she didn’t with Africa. The horrors are no less real but we, as readers, see the way that she matured as a person and the way that she started to recognize what she has to offer. Tanzania was interesting, Pakistan was kind of grim and Ecuador came as an educational surprise since I read the book while on a trip to Ecuador.

The writing is all over the place. The sections of her journal are broken up in a jolting way by paragraphs explaining the history of humanitarian organizations like the UNHCR and some world history of how refugees came to be congregated in certain areas. It’s clear that if Jolie didn’t have a ghost writer, at least parts of this book were written after the fact. The journal entries in the moment ring the most true and have a lot of emotional depth.

I have a lot of respect for her and this journey that she took to open her eyes and her mind to the world around her. She could have become the kind of celebrity that took a few trips and then donated money to charities but instead she continues to donate her time, which is a far more precious commodity.

Jan says

Jolie's diary notes as Goodwill Ambassador for UNHCR (2002-2003). She went to Mamibia, Thailand, Ecuador, Tanzania, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Kosovo. Angelina didn't travel as a movie star but took the simple path of a UNHCR worker. My husband was Amb. in Cambodia (the fellow mentioned in her chapter on Cambodia) when she was there and can testify to her earnest endeavor to learn all she could. He noted her note taking at the time. Ms Jolie began as a naive, privileged, rich young woman determined to learn. She was in harm's way more than once as she traveled the path of the refugee. She learned. The book is not well written; it will win no prize but it is a prize; it will inform in the classic style, from the eyes of the innocent. Well done, Angelina!

Kathleen says

This is my second read of Angelina's Journals.

Journals. Journals. Journals.

I believe this is something people have missed. I've read reviews stating the writing isn't great and they couldn't get over that fact to read the book. That is incredibly sad as this book is brilliant.

It paints a true picture of Developing Countries and teaches you a few things about them. Her writing is honest and raw and even on the 2nd reading I still love it. Having traveled to some of these countries and volunteered I really enjoyed this book. It will hopefully open the eyes of a lot of people who aren't open to refugees and hate.

"I am tired of crying and feeling so helpless. I want to breathe again-just for a little while. Then I will do whatever I can to help these people. How could I not-once I met them, once I saw for myself."

Jennifer says

Being a HUGE Angelina Jolie fan, I found this book to love her even more! She just proves to the world that she is seriously one of the most active and loving actresses out there. Her daily struggles helping refugees opened my eyes and I think everyone should read this book! Kudos!

Leang Ngov says

I loved this book because I admire Angelina Jolie for what she's doing for the humanity. Of course, it doesn't hurt that I LOVE her as well. Anyway, it was interesting to know what was going on in her position since I've always wanted to be involved with refugee agency (most of my fam are refugees from Cambodia).

Zabeth says

Makes you appreciate her humanitarian work. You will really get to know the other side of AJ, away from the glamor in hollywood, her compassion towards these people, her genuine motives in helping in whatever way she can to tell the world that there are millions out there in the other side of the planet who lives in misery. It makes you stop whatever you're doing and just say, I'm a lucky bitch compared to these people, so what can I do now to help even just on my own little way???

Crystal says

This was a good and interesting book, but not a fast read. Reading Angelina Jolie's notes taken on some of

her earlier trips as an ambassador for the United Nations High Commission on Refugees, reading about all the suffering, loss, and devastation she sees in the places she visits, was almost too much for me. I had to keep taking breaks and reading something lighter, so I could go back and read more later. I wonder how she could stand to actually be there and experience it, actually look in the eyes of people who are suffering beyond anything most Americans could even imagine. Her notes reflect how overwhelming such experiences could be for her. I like that she's so honest about herself, about the horror and the sadness and the pity, but also about her own internal, less noble impulses to flee and forget it all, to go home to all her comforts and not feel sad or guilty anymore. I like that she admits those feelings, and that she feels bad for them. That she admits she's hungry and thirsty and uncomfortable often during the trips, but doesn't, according to her notes, demand special treatment or make a big deal out of it. Instead, she seems willing to give everything that she can, emotionally AND financially.

There will always be cynics who doubt and criticize the motives of celebrities doing good deeds. I am not interested in that, though. She wouldn't have to do what she does, or put as much effort and risk and emotion into the work as she does. She wouldn't have to write low-key notebooks like this to share her experiences and information learned with the world. But she does. I learned a lot reading this book, only a little of which I already knew. I didn't know about the displaced person/ refugee crisis in Columbia. I barely knew about Columbia's political turmoil at all. I didn't know about the harsh climate of at least parts of Pakistan, or the plight of (mostly Afghan) refugees there, and I didn't know enough about the situations in the other countries she wrote about--the land mine crisis in Cambodia, the amputee epidemic in Sierra Leone, etc. Now I do. I also know that Angelina Jolie wears glasses, is lefthanded, and was raised Catholic. I feel like I learned more about her as a person as well as the issues, people, and places she wrote about, and that I have even more respect for her and the work she does. I'm glad that I read this book.

Candace says

Jolie is not a talented writer by any means, but her accounts of her experiences are honest and straightforward. The beauty in the book is that there is no flowery language masking or embellishing what's going on. She simply states what she sees, and how she feels, and from that, our eyes are opened to what is going on in the various parts of the world she visits.
