

VOL. 8

A FIELD GUIDE TO END WAR

PREEMPTIVE LOVE



We believe in a love that knows no borders.

A love that defies division, builds bridges, and restores relationships.

A love that reminds us that we **belong to each other**.

When we forget this truth,

War breaks out
Misinformation spreads
Dictators rise to power
People are forced to leave home.

When we forget that we belong to each other, we demonize and dehumanize the displaced.

To believe in a love that knows no borders means to see “them” as “us.”

When we belong to each other, we

Take time to listen
Relentlessly humanize
Offer an embrace.

Even in a world that loves to label—to define who’s in and who’s out—we will endlessly exclaim:

Love knows no borders.

They say the shortest distance between two people is a story. This journal is a bridge builder, an in-between-and-across-borders tool for telling our friends’ stories. Relief work mends the wounds of war, but a commitment to relentlessly humanize one another can stop the next war before it starts. Our stories can wage peace.

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Behind the cover
Illustrator Guillermo Flores (Orbeh Studio) found inspiration for the cover from the poem "Migración" by Pablo Neruda—using birds from across the world such as scarlet ibis, gyrfalcon, belted kingfisher, killdeer, smew, and red phalarope.

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Displaced families lose many of the connections that made life easier. The landlord who might be lenient on the rent. The grocer who might extend credit. The neighbors they've known for decades. It's so easy to fall through every crack. *Photo by Sohrab Omar*

“While I was pregnant, I watched in horror as Syrian refugees fled their country. I remember seeing a news story about a mother who gave birth in a tent. I began researching how to help, and I came across Preemptive Love.”

—ANGEL H., *peacemaker, Clemmons, North Carolina*

ILLUSTRATION BY MERCEDES DEBELLARD

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WHY DO

PEOPLE



On Deborah's most recent trip to Mexico, she delivered food packs to a group of Haitian families. They expressed their sense of solace at being able to share with her in their native tongue about their trying journey through the Darien Gap.
Photo by Pablo Cervantes

LEAVE HOME?

For many, that final decision is only the last

of many agonizing choices. What would *you* do if armed gangs took over your neighborhood, making daily life untenable, and you couldn't afford to simply move to a safer neighborhood—or if no safer place existed nearby?

What if, instead of armed gangs, you heard the whistle of bombs or watched the slow slipping away of possibilities in a crumbling economy?

For a while, you might hunker down and try to keep living what is a new normal, because this is your community; these are your people; this is your *life*.

But eventually, you watch family, friends, and neighbors begin the slow exodus. You make do with less. You keep your children closer to home. You bury your dreams.

As days, months, maybe years pass and basic items become scarcer, you question your decision to stay. When illness hollows out your children's faces and fears haunt your every step, and you can only scrape up enough food for one meal a day, what then?

Then, the idea of leaving home no longer feels unimaginable. *Staying* home does.

For many in our Preemptive Love community, migration becomes the choice of last resort. Who *wants* to leave the community they love and the people they know, for an unknown life surrounded by strangers speaking an unfamiliar tongue?

As wars and unstable governments push many more out of their homes, climate change will only accelerate the need for safety—drastically altering once-safe landscapes and devastating agricultural economies.

We see migration patterns in nature too. In fact, many of us have witnessed fascinating formations of migratory birds—some covering tens of thousands of miles. Did you know that the reason birds migrate is to escape a place with little resources and relocate to a region with better resources, such as food and nesting sites? It makes sense and is a means of survival.

Bird-watchers remind us to observe this phenomenon with awe, but when humans make the same choice, they are met with rejection, racism, and xenophobia.

Migratory birds make their journey every year, and many of our friends will be forced to make their own painful decision next week, next month, and for many years to come as natural disasters and conflict continue to dismantle neighborhoods. As they make and remake these painful decisions, we will continue to show up, listen, and share in their dreams—dreams that a new home will offer the peace and sense of belonging we all deserve.

Not all who embark on the journey will make it to the final destination. And we honor them as well. We will not let them be forgotten.

Deborah David, Regional Programs Director – Latin America

"Recognize yourself in he and she
who are not like you and me."

– Carlos Fuentes

CHAPTER

1



FOOD / MEDICINE / SHELTER / WATER

We go to the epicenters of violence, because
it's the only way to stop the spread
of war. If families are forsaken and left
to fend for themselves, then the story of
the next war is already being written. We help
mend the wounds of war before it's too late.

KEEP

THE LIGHT

ALIVE

HOW A SIMPLE HOME
AT THE BORDER SHELTERS FRIENDS
ON THEIR JOURNEY

BY BELEM
BARRERA-GONZÁLEZ

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I remember holding a small candle in my tiny hands one winter night during a religious event—its soft yellow flame illuminating my fingers. I remember covering the flame with care from threads of wind. I did not want the light to die.

Respect, rest, and nourishment

I also remember the brightening sky over an orange shelter on the humid Mexico-Guatemala border. Preemptive Love helped equip this room with colorful hammocks, a bathroom, and a kitchen with a big stove.

I remember the shining smile of a brown friend in his early 20s, standing proudly by the yellow doves he has painted on one wall. “I made them! I’m a painter. I’ve also painted more things . . . come!”

He takes me to the kitchen, where I can see he’s painted abbreviations of Latin American countries: Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala. . . . Zohammar later tells me that he wants each friend arriving at the shelter to feel at home. Another friend quietly observes from the door of the shelter. Kevin has also helped paint the walls. He, 19, and Zohammar, 22, traveled together from Honduras to Mexico, heading for the US.

After sitting together under a cacao tree and eating a plate full of *pupusas* (a corn bread from Honduras and El Salvador), I talk more with Zohammar and Kevin. They’ve lived in the shelter since the beginning of February and will

stay until March. “What do you like about this place?” I ask.

Zohammar mentions how everyone treats them. “They all look at us the same,” he says, with a tear reaching his cheek. “I come from a place where I wasn’t treated as others.”

Kevin chimes in, mentioning hospitality, kindness, and generosity. When the hosts say, “We’re a family,” Kevin and Zohammar believe it. “The shelter’s [hosts] have always loved and respected us,” Kevin adds. “We’ve always felt supported.”

About 20 years ago, the family who runs this shelter could no longer ignore the regular flow of hungry migrants past their door, deep in the volcanic Chiapanecan region of Mexico’s southern border. As these migrants entered Mexico and continued their journey north, they searched for somewhere safe to stop, to rest, and to nurse the long, deep cuts on their feet. This

family did not have much, but they began sharing both water and food.

When Mexican authorities increased persecutions against the migrants, these desperate travelers hid in the family’s garden—private property where the owners can welcome guests but where officials cannot trespass. Dozens of new friends started arriving daily to rest for a few hours. Soon, they were even sleeping on the floor and waiting long hours to use the kitchen or toilet. That’s when Preemptive Love decided to help improve the facilities with hammocks for sleeping, and a better bathroom and kitchen.

A difficult journey to reach the place of light

As we speak, I watch Zohammar’s and Kevin’s brown and luminous eyes. I notice how their arms calm.

“Things are bad in my country, in Honduras,” Zohammar says, his voice breaking. “Many gangs



Kevin (above) traveled for weeks to reach a safe house on the Mexico-Guatemala border. There, hammocks (below) rest against newly painted walls—a vibrant gift from Kevin and Zohammar.



wanna recruit young people . . . force you in. ‘Either you join us or we attack your family.’ . . . I didn’t wanna get involved in anything!”

Where Zohammar was raised, he felt the care of his uncle but the rejection of his aunt. Then, seven months ago, his uncle died after cancer spread throughout his body. So Zohammar decided to leave. “Before my uncle died, I promised to myself to go to the US, where he was one day.”

Kevin’s father had died in a car accident while trying to get extra money for his humble family. Kevin was only 9. “I had to be, as said in Honduras, the little man of the house.”

Even at that young age, to support his family, Kevin started jumping alone onto buses and selling homemade cupcakes and cakes to passengers. He especially felt responsible for his younger brother, who from birth needed regular, expensive botox injections for a medical condition. Then one day, Kevin explains, “the doctors confused the diagnosis and intubated him when he was a baby;

they caused hydrocephalus. Now, one part of his body works, the other doesn’t.”

Eventually, Kevin chose to leave for the US, hoping to find more work there so he can better support his family.

After deciding to leave, Kevin and Zohammar faced multiple difficulties just to reach the Mexico-Guatemala border. In Guatemala, Kevin says, people stole from them and nobody wanted to give them a ride. Without any money, the young men slept in the streets and for three days ate nothing but mangos they found on the road. At that point, Kevin says, “My legs couldn’t handle me anymore.”

Still, they continued. “We’d not eaten for 12 hours when we arrived here, to this shelter,” Zohammar says. “We’d spent 12 hours walking and running without stopping . . . and being afraid.”

Kevin adds: “We arrived at this shelter and begged for water and a place to sleep. We feared that Immigration or the National Guard would come for us. Everyone was afraid. . . . I wanted to cry.”

The initial greeting from the shelter’s hosts still resonates for them: “Come in, sleep, rest. Do you have any illness? Are you bruised? Do you have any injuries?”

“People have given us food, a place to sleep, hammocks,” Kevin says. “It may be little, but it’s a blessing. Thus, while Zohammar asked his uncle and I asked my father in heaven not to abandon us, we were not abandoned.”

Carrying their light forward

Just before I depart, Zohammar and Kevin reiterate to me their dream to reach the US. Zohammar wants to continue his studies; Kevin longs to support his mom and young brother and build a house for them. They choose to wait one more month to continue their journey—a journey that they know holds risks of more persecution, crime, and hunger. Until that day, they will help the family that has supported them and will finish painting the shelter walls.

Zohammar and Kevin are full of life and hope. I felt their light. For now, Preemptive Love has provided them a place to help take care of their light as they, in turn, share it with others on the same journey. ♦

FORCED *to* FLEE

PHOTOGRAPH
BY
JORDAN
STERN
|



Haitians flooding Mexico's borders made world headlines in 2021. Decades of poverty, political instability, natural disasters, and extreme violence have intensified the number of Haitians passing through the shelters and other relief programs we partner with in Mexico. However, Haitians have been on the move for centuries.

The year 1791 served as a pivot point. That's when Haitian slaves revolted against their white colonial planters. France's most lucrative colony won its independence in 1804, becoming the first independent, Black-led nation.

Because Haiti was the first nation to abolish slavery, countries whose economies relied on slavery refused to trade with it. The embargo caused Haiti, once the biggest sugar producer in the

A TIMELINE *of* HAITIAN MIGRATION

world, to lose most of its market share. Today, Haiti remains the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

In 1825, French King Charles X demanded that Haiti pay reparations to former slaveholders for the loss of their plantations and slaves. In return, France would recognize Haiti and trade with it. Haiti offered 10 million in gold francs, equal to the cost of the (much larger) Louisiana Purchase, but France ordered 15 times that amount. King Charles sent 14 gunboats armed with 500 guns each to Port-au-Prince to enforce his demands.

Those 150 million gold francs equaled 10 years of Haiti's revenue, yet with 7,000 guns pointed at it, Haiti accepted. Haiti paid off the loan in 1887 but had to borrow more money from French and US banks to repay the interest, which didn't happen until 1947. For 122 years, Haiti could only invest minimally in infrastructure, health care, and education. In today's money, the reparations paid to France equal \$20–30 billion.

European and US powers have exploited Haiti since her independence, making the country poor and turbulent. In response, 16% of her people have fled in search of safety. ♦

1804

Slaves win independence from France in 1804 and change the island's name from Saint-Domingue to Haiti. French plantation owners flee to the US with their slaves.

1912–20

70,000 Haitians migrate to Cuba as contract or guest workers to work in US-owned sugar factories.

1957–71

20% of the population emigrates outside Haiti in political or economic exile. Many move to Canada, drawn to a shared French cultural heritage.

1972–77

200,000 Haitians immigrate to South Florida—specifically to the neighborhood of Little Haiti, where Haitian-owned and -operated businesses thrive.

1980s

40,000 Haitians immigrate to the US, fleeing persecution and seeking political asylum.

1991–98

38,000 Haitians flee in boats bound for the US after a coup ousts the democratically elected President Aristide. Another 30,000 people flee to the Dominican Republic. Between 1995 and 1998, 50,000 Haitians obtain legal status in the US.

IN THE 1810s AND 1820s, HAITI INTERCEPTED SHIPS CARRYING ENSLAVED PEOPLE AND FREED THEM.

DURING ITS 1915–1934 OCCUPATION OF HAITI, THE US INSTALLED PRO-US GOVERNMENTS TO PROTECT ITS INTERESTS—AND APPLIED ITS JIM CROW RACIAL CASTE SYSTEM BY ALLOWING ONLY LIGHT-SKINNED HAITIANS TO HOLD PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE.

FIGHTING AGAINST SLAVERY

Haiti worked to end slavery worldwide and offered safe haven to revolutionaries and formerly enslaved people. Haitian president Alexandre Pétion supported rebellions such as Simon Bolívar's 1816 fight to liberate Gran Colombia (present-day Colombia, Panama, Ecuador, and Venezuela) from Spanish rule. His condition: Bolívar would abolish slavery once the countries were independent. That same year, Haiti agreed to aid Mexico in its fight for independence on the same condition.



BRIDGEMAN IMAGES; GETTY IMAGES

US Intervention

In 1914, the US Marines stormed the island and took half of Haiti's central bank's gold reserves to guarantee that Wall Street banks received debt payments. In 1915, after Haitian President Vilbrun Guillaume Sam was murdered, the US invaded, occupying Haiti until 1934. The US altered the Haitian constitution so foreigners could become landowners. The US also siphoned off 40% of Haiti's national income until Haiti fully paid off its reparation debt in 1947.

IN 1964, PAPA DOC DECLARED HIMSELF "PRESIDENT FOR LIFE." UNDER HIS 14-YEAR REIGN, 90% OF HAITIANS WERE ILLITERATE AND SUFFERED FROM CHRONIC SKIN INFECTIONS, TUBERCULOSIS, AND MALNUTRITION.



TURBULENT LEADERSHIP

In 1957, François Duvalier, also known as Papa Doc, was elected president of Haiti in a rigged election. Two years into his term, Papa Doc created the Tonton Macoutes, a paramilitary group with impunity to torture and kill political opponents, which went on to murder over 60,000 Haitians. After Papa Doc died in 1971, his son, Jean-Claude (Baby Doc) became president. His regime tortured and killed more Haitians, and poverty increased. Jean-Bertrand Aristide became president in 1991. The Haitian military, working with the CIA, overthrew him in September of that year for his anti-imperialistic and nationalistic views. Bill Clinton had Aristide reinstated as president in 1994; in return, Aristide agreed to allow foreign farm products into Haiti, which benefited US farmers but destroyed the Haitian economy. Aristide became president again in 2000, but France and the US instigated a coup to overthrow him in 2004.

2010-17

85,000 Haitians migrate to Brazil to work in construction in preparation for the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Summer Olympics. Another 48,000 arrive seeking asylum.

2015

12,000 Haitians arrive in Chile after the jobs boom in Brazil slows. Chile, considered politically and economically stable, allows Haitians to enter without a visa.

2017

As Brazil's economy stagnates, political corruption increases, and anti-immigrant sentiment grows, Haitians leave Brazil. Over 103,000 immigrate to Chile.

2018

Haitian immigration to Chile slows to 27,000 in total after Chile's new president Sebastian Pinera requires Haitians to obtain a visa.

2019

Increased fuel prices, a lack of jobs and health care, and frustration with government corruption lead to widescale protests and violence in Haiti. 17,000 Haitians arrive in Brazil.

2021

Increasing numbers of Haitians travel north through South and Central America to reach the US. Of the 15,000 Haitians who camp under the Del Rio bridge at the US-Mexico border, the US sends 8,000 back to Mexico and deports 2,000 to Haiti.

Mexico receives 131,000 asylum applications in 2021. Nearly 52,000 of asylees are Haitians and 6,970 are their Chilean-born, Haitian children.



IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS SOMETIMES PUSH HAITIANS BACK INTO GUATEMALA AT NIGHT WITHOUT CONDUCTING ASSESSMENTS, VIOLATING THE RULES OF THE UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES.

4.5 MILLION OF HAITI'S 11.6 MILLION-PLUS CITIZENS SUFFER FROM ACUTE FOOD INSECURITY AMID GROWING INFLATION, FUEL SHORTAGES, AND POLITICAL INSTABILITY.

SOURCE: UN News, March 22, 2022

HAITI TODAY

In the aftermath of President Jovenel Moïse's 2021 assassination, Haiti descended into apocalyptic violence. More than 90 gangs fight for control of the country, using rape and murder to terrorize neighborhoods. Moms and dads risk their lives doing everyday activities such as going to work or taking a child to school. According to the UN World Food Programme, 4.5 million of Haiti's 11.6 million-plus citizens suffer from acute food insecurity amid growing inflation, fuel shortages, and political instability.

DANGER ZONES

Imagine covering yourself in mud so criminal gangs will think you are too dirty to assault. Rape is but one of the dangers migrants face when crossing the Darien Gap—a 100-mile stretch of jungle separating Colombia from Panama. Not only do migrants cross this jungle on foot, often carrying newborns, but they also negotiate rushing rivers with flash flooding, steep and muddy mountains, and unannounced, jagged cliffs. Traffickers, robbers, and armed gangs further menace the journey. In their dangerous search for safety, people who are not murdered might die from snakebites, heart attacks, drowning, or falling.

HAITIANS OUTSIDE HAITI

705,000
UNITED STATES

Countries hosting the most Haitian immigrants

496,000
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

SOURCE: Migration Policy Institute, 2020

237,000
CHILE

146,000
BRAZIL

101,000
CANADA

85,000
FRANCE

2022 HAITIAN MIGRATION CHALLENGES

Mexico's asylum system requires applicants to be processed at their point of entry, so many Haitian migrants become stuck in Tapachula, at the southern Mexico-Guatemala border. The wait time for processing, once three to six months, can now last as long as 18 months, according to the International Rescue Committee. During this wait, migrants lack access to medical care, are targeted by traffickers, and face persistent racism.

AP IMAGES



Natural Disaster and Disease in This Century

Haiti's lack of solid infrastructure, poor construction, dense population, extreme poverty, and absence of quality health care exacerbates the impact of natural disasters.

SEPTEMBER 2004 Hurricanes Ivan and Jeanne strike eight days apart, causing serious flooding that displaces 300,000 people.

2005-2009 Tropical storms, hurricanes, and heavy rains destroy critical infrastructure.

JANUARY 2010 Magnitude 7.0 earthquake kills 200,000-plus people, injures 300,000 more, and leaves 1.5 million homeless. UN peacekeepers bring cholera into Haiti, infecting over 819,000 people.

OCTOBER 2012 Hurricane Sandy leaves 200,000 people homeless.

OCTOBER 2016 Hurricane Matthew destroys 200,000 homes, leaving 1.4 million people in need of humanitarian aid.

AUGUST 2021 On the heels of the president's assassination, a magnitude 7.2 earthquake rocks the country, causing \$1.5 billion in damages (amounting to more than 10% of the country's GDP) and leaving over 650,000 people in need of humanitarian aid.

WE CAREFULLY DROVE ALONG THE outside lane of the freeway for a few kilometers, trying to get ahead of the caravan. Thousands of migrants choose to travel north together out of Tapachula, Mexico, in hope of finding safety in numbers. They seek safety above all else: not only safe travel but also a safe place to live when their hometowns in places like Haiti, Honduras, and El Salvador are far too dangerous.

The parents in this particular caravan carried everything from fans and luggage, to bags of food and water. And their children.

This situation had long bothered a friend of ours in Mexico, who was then traveling with me. As soon as we parked the car, our friend Haidee sprinted into the crowd, approached a mom, and offered something to help. She took out a long strip of fabric, crisscrossed it around the mom's torso, then popped her baby into the fabric. "Oh, well, this is really comfortable," the woman exclaimed.

Haidee provided something moms have used for generations: a baby wrap. Baby wraps allow parents to be in constant motion yet keep their hands free, while their infants and young children feel comfortably supported. During the stressful journey through Mexico, these wraps can actually strengthen the psycho-emotional bond between parents and their children.

Even more, baby wraps help worried parents keep track of their toddlers. Otherwise, it's too easy to lose sight of them in these large caravans that have become a necessity for safe travel to the US border.

Consider the sheer numbers: Officials report that in 2021, almost 131,500 migrants from different countries sought asylum in Mexico or a permit to travel through the country to its northern border. Most (68%) of those requests were made in the southern border city of Tapachula. During the interminable wait there for refugee status or a visitor card, the migrants reach critical mass. But this allows them to travel in large groups, offering a sense of safety on the dangerous journey ahead. So they walk, with children in tow, including newborns.

Migrant Children Wrapped in Care

Comfort and security in one colorful piece of cloth

BY HANIEL LOPEZ



PHOTOGRAPH
BY
XENG LI
FONG

It's not only moms who are interested in baby wraps, but also dads. "Hey, I want to do it!" we heard from some migrants we met at a safe house. Haidee sprang into action and tied baby wraps around them too. The dads were teased by their partners because of the wraps' bright colors, but they didn't mind too much. "Hey, this is comfortable. I like this." This testimony from parents themselves convinced us to provide more.

Haidee lives in Mexico and has been creating baby wraps for some time. We began partnering with her in November 2021 and have since distributed the wraps in such varied spaces as shelters, homes, neighborhoods with vulnerable populations, and the ongoing caravans. As we teach parents how to use the wraps, we make new friends—and then watch those friends walk north and out of Tapachula to pursue their dreams. ♦

FOOD ON THE RUN

BY PREEMPTIVE LOVE STAFF



WHEN YOU'VE LEFT
EVERYTHING FAMILIAR BEHIND,
A SIMPLE OFFER OF
COMFORT FOOD REMINDS
YOU OF HOME.

ILLUSTRATIONS
BY
MICA
HUIGEN

S

around a kitchen table to enjoy it. Often, there is no plastic mat or kitchen table.

For many of us, this place of gathering is a place of connection. We share our day's news, gathered in front of greedy plates. The kitchen table hosts important discussions, a place to solve problems over steaming mugs of tea or coffee. It catches us when we get bad news, offering us comfort through conversation and food.

For families whose members migrate in order to survive, their absence on the plastic mat or at the kitchen table severs connections. In Venezuela, families break up as individuals leave, one by one, in search of work abroad. Older siblings go first, their empty chairs like the gaping holes left by pulled teeth. Extreme poverty forces the parents to follow.

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, over 1 million Venezuelan children lived without their parents, who had migrated abroad to find work. In 2021, almost 77% of Venezuelans lived on less than \$1.90 a day, which drove more adults to leave. Children were passed from grandparent to cousin to neighbor, until each caretaker went abroad or disappeared. In some cases, youngsters were left on their own.

Families migrating together confront different perils. A group of Syrians who hired smugglers to sneak them to Lebanon by bus were attacked and bombed. Their smugglers made them walk without giving them food or water.

In a voice husky with sorrow, one woman in the group feared her 2-year-old daughter would not survive. She watched life slipping out of her toddler as dust formed around her mouth from a lack of food and water. The mother

couldn't ask the others in her caravan for help. Everyone was suffering. Some resorted to eating tree leaves. The mother and daughter eventually found their way to a camp that Preemptive Love supports in the Beqaa Valley.

Haitians and Cubans often cross multiple borders to better their lives. Carrying enough food for the entire journey is impossible. If their destination is Mexico or the US, they walk through the Darien Gap, a mountainous jungle connecting Panama to Colombia—without roads but full of poisonous snakes, flash-flooding water passages, and human and drug traffickers. People eat what grows in the jungle or go days without food or water. Not everyone makes it. Migrants report walking over corpses, rotting where they fell.

On the other side of the Darien Gap, the journey does not ease. Migrants face five more borders

FOR FAMILIES WHOSE MEMBERS MIGRATE IN ORDER TO SURVIVE, THEIR ABSENCE ON THE PLASTIC MAT OR AT THE KITCHEN TABLE SEVERS CONNECTIONS.

and 2,486 more miles if they want to reach the US. On the way, they hustle through Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. Without visas for legal entry, no one has time for a sit-down meal.

Planks tied to inner tubes crisscross the Suchiate River, ferrying migrants from Guatemala into southern Mexico. Fathers, mothers, and children scrabble through tall grass and low shrubs as they evade the National Guard. They scurry across a hanging bridge, roiling on its rickety timber, to a private home offering sanctuary. They've heard about this place from those who have gone before.

Between 30 and 40 migrants a day pass through this home run by a family with limited means. The family feeds its starving guests fast-to-cook, energy-giving food such as rice, beans, and eggs. Preemptive Love supports this safe house with food staples, water, and

hygiene products. (See "Keep the Light Alive," on page 10.)

"I have helped those I can, but I have little to give them," says the mother of the family. "They are very hungry.

"They get here barefoot, with their feet this size," she adds, holding her hands a bread loaf apart. "Blown out, swollen from so much walking." Often, flip-flops fly off when migrants run away from the National Guard.

Although they are welcome to stay as long as they need, most migrants bathe, eat a little, rest, and keep walking.

The city of Juárez along the US-Mexico border teems with migrants waiting for asylum hearings. Brimming to capacity, shelters provide a long-needed opportunity for respite. Preemptive Love supports a number of shelters here with food packs filled with olive oil, rice, beans, eggs, and fresh fruit. We've learned not to bring canned food, because none of these migrants eat it in their home countries and so do not know how to cook it. We provide familiar food staples to help foreign places feel more like home.

The food packs offer something less tangible but equally sustaining: a chance to re-connect around a kitchen table. In a shelter where migrants have their own apartments, they cook their own food and sit at tables with their families. Mealtime is once again a time to catch up and tune in.

In other shelters, migrants take turns cooking and then eat together at communal tables. They create a different kind of family, trading past stories and sharing future dreams, indefatigable. Piecemeals become peace meals as strangers forge bonds of hope to face the uncertainties lying ahead. ♦



YOU ARE

PHOTOGRAPHY
BY
SOHRAB
OMAR

NOT ALONE

YOU'VE LIVED TO A RIPE OLD AGE, one of the few in Afghanistan to be so privileged. You've survived long enough to see Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States wage war on your land. You've known your homeland as a kingdom, a republic, a state, and an emirate. Good times and bad.

And now, with the fundamentalist Islamic Taliban in control for a second time, you see the impact of so many decades of war: your country is a hollowed-out husk of its former self.

War has displaced nearly one in five fellow Afghans around you. If you lived in the United States, this would



Families displaced by war build temporary shelters outside cities in Afghanistan.



be like losing every resident of Florida, New York, and Ohio. You and your neighbors are hungry, some days starving. Without work, you spend most hours trying to keep your family safe from violence. Some days it's hard to go on.

For children displaced inside Afghanistan (left), life is lived on the fringes. There is never enough to meet their needs—not enough work, food, or medical care. Other families (lower right) live in housing stepped up and down the slopes of rocky mountains.

FOLKS LIKE THIS, with long memories and hungry bellies, receive monthly food packs from the Preemptive Love community. They live both in the fast-growing city of Kabul and in rural villages—local families as well as the displaced. They all need affordable housing, drinking water, and a lot more. But these monthly food packs, along with heavy blankets for cold nights—this is a start.

The food packs convey a tangible message to Afghan families: you are not alone; there are friends around the world who love you. ♦



On the Caminante Route



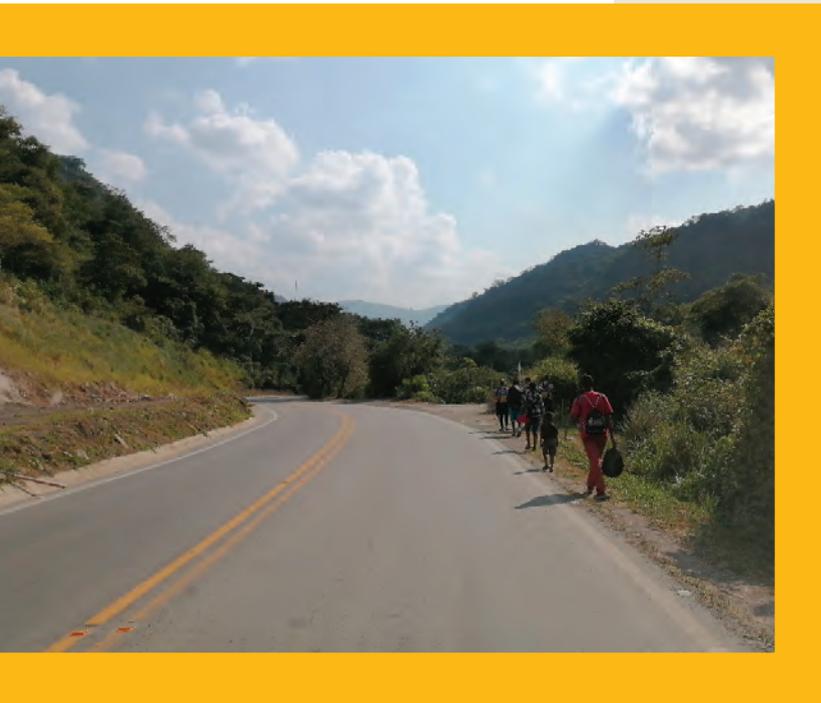
ILLUSTRATIONS
BY
JOËL
PENKMAN

HOW CHILD CARE KITS BRING SMILES AND DIGNITY TO FAMILIES ON THE MOVE

BY PREEMPTIVE LOVE STAFF

Six-year-old Yeferson cradles his pet turtle Rosalia in the palm of his hand. He wears grey plastic sandals coated in milky dust. Rosalia's orange-spotted feet dangle between Yeferson's fingers, swimming in the air.

Rosalia, Yeferson, and Yeferson's mother are *caminantes*—Venezuelans who walk from their homes over mountains, on narrow, twisty highways with no shoulders, and along burnt sienna-colored chalky roads through Colombia in search of a better life.



Venezuela was once a prosperous member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Since mid-2014, a combination of a decline in oil prices, economic mismanagement, international sanctions, and political corruption have left three out of four Venezuelans living in extreme poverty. Without employment or access to basic public services, Venezuelans who have the means will leave.

In the past, most *caminantes* were men. Now, they are pregnant mothers, elderly grandparents, solo teens, or children as young as 8 who abandon their homes and neighborhoods in order to survive. Teens and kids form groups and travel together for safety.

Once migrants cross into Colombia, one of the main routes they take starts in Cúcuta, the biggest city on the Venezuelan-Colombian border. From there, migrants walk up into the surrounding hills and on to Pamplona, the first major town, 47 miles away. Onward, most *caminantes* hike mountains as high as 10,000 feet above sea level, where the temperature falls below freezing, to Bogotá, 300-plus miles from Pamplona. People not prepared for the cold die along the way.

Different aid organizations provide food and hygiene service points along the route, but the distance between those preset points is great. Preemptive Love looks for other intermediate access points to deliver kits with water, high-energy snacks, and hygiene products. We've learned that being able to wash up or brush your teeth restores a feeling of dignity.

Two Preemptive Love program officers, Laura and Sofía, purchase and pack up the kit items into a

van, then go looking for walkers who might need help. They drive slowly along roads often without shoulders, some banked by steep cliffs without guard rails. When they see a group of people, they pull over and approach.

Laura and Sofía introduce themselves using their first names. They know *los caminantes* already carry a heavy burden, so the women first ask the walkers if they'd like help. If so, the women offer a kit and chat for five or 10 minutes, mindful not to slow the walkers down but eager to listen. Only then might our program officers ask permission to take a photo.

After Laura and Sofía had been handing out the kits for a few months, they realized that children didn't have much fun while on the road. The youngsters also couldn't

**WHEN CHILDREN SEE
KID-FRIENDLY ITEMS,
THEY GET EXCITED,
WHICH MAKES THEIR
PARENTS SMILE TOO.**

PHOTOGRAPHY
BY
LAURA
FORERO

Rosalia the turtle provides companionship for Yeferson on his journey north.



attend school, so they weren't learning. The women decided to make the kits more appealing and suitable for kids.

"Our friends need hygiene articles for the road," Sofía says, "but they also need a toy they can play with while they are waiting for the sun to go down and continue walking [on the hot stretch of the route before the mountains.] They need some fun for the road and to have something that enables them to learn."

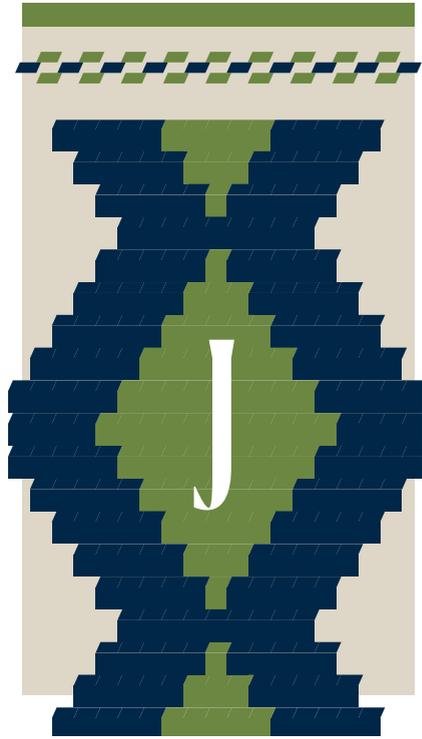
The child care kits always included standard hygiene products: toilet paper, shampoo, antibacterial gel, soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, water bottles, and high-energy snacks. Now, children also find stuffed animals, color pens, notebooks, and knit hats for cold weather. When we give out kits, we encourage children to explore the lightweight, drawstring backpacks. When they see kid-friendly items, they get excited, which makes their parents smile too. Seeing a little girl stop crying when Sofía hands her a stuffed animal is a big win.

We know we are unlikely to see the same *caminantes* more than once. Their survival depends on continually moving. Luckily, most of us will never have to walk in the *caminantes'* shoes, but for a little while, on a dusty road, we can stand beside them. ♦

When 'HOME' MOVES

What does it look like to build sustainability for an indigenous nation rooted in two countries?

BY RONAL LABRADOR



PHOTOGRAPHY
BY
RONAL
LABRADOR

ILLUSTRATIONS
BY
MLC

JOSÉ HERDS GOATS, cows, and sheep when someone hires him, which isn't often. Where he lives in the Zulia region of Venezuela, work is scarce. And when there's no work, there's no food.

"I herd animals, prune trees, work in whatever, but there are not many opportunities," José says. "When there is not something to earn money, I have to go begging on the main avenue.

"I do not like to come home empty-handed," adds this father of a 1-year-old and 3-year-old. "My children depend on me. My wife and my mother too."

José hasn't always lived in this harsh environment, where on average 30 infants each month die of malnutrition and disease. He used to live in the mountainous region of Sierra de Perijá, Colombia, where the wind whistling through

José lives in this modest home in Venezuela with his wife, Catalina, their two children, and his mother. (Traditional Wayuu weaving—as represented on page 1—also informed the design on these five pages.)

the mountains was "sweet as honey from the trees, fresh, appetizing," he says. "It was like drops of a turbulent river that give life to the thirstiest."

Criminal gangs and an economic crisis drove José from his mountain home into neighboring Venezuela.

"Dying little by little"

José is a member of the Wayuu, an Amerindian ethnic group whose homeland lies on both sides of the border between Venezuela and



José and his family are stuck on the Venezuelan side in Zulia, with hunger and malnutrition as their way of life. Children eat once a day, adults less often—sometimes going three days without a meal. José and his family lack access to basic services such as water, electricity, and cooking gas. They live in nothingness.

"We are with our faces to the ground," José laments. "We feel that we are dying little by little."

Catalina, José's wife, describes the tragedy of living in a house built with cardboard, tin, and sticks. "My house is improvised with garbage, with fabrics that we found in the street," she says. "Look, our beds are old mattresses that we got in the garbage. We have no bathroom. We have no place to store water. We live like animals.

"My baby is bitten by mosquitoes in the early morning, so I try to cover her. The early morning breeze makes us sleep, but there are nights of unbearable heat. There are nights of rain where we feel that the roof is coming down on us."

Most Wayuu in Zulia labor as farmers, but with hyperinflation and fuel shortages, farming becomes almost impossible. Unable to afford fertilizer and to maintain their equipment, young people who used to work the land are migrating to other countries.

"My children went to Colombia," recalls Maria, a Wayuu grandmother living in Zulia. "Others are in Peru. They left walking. . . They carried their children. . . I thought they were going to die on the way."

Maria's children send her money once or twice a year, but she has not seen them or some of her grandchildren in years.

WE BROUGHT OUR HEARTS AND EARS, SO WE COULD LEAN IN AND LISTEN TO THE WAYUU'S PRIORITIES.

Colombia. The Wayuu do not consider themselves either Colombian or Venezuelan; therefore, they do not qualify for essential services in either country. Before oil prices dropped and slowed the Venezuelan economy, Wayuu fleeing poverty and violence in Colombia would resettle on their ancestral lands in Venezuela. By 2017, when most Venezuelans were suffering constant blackouts and chronic food shortages, the migration patterns of the Wayuu had reversed. Those with means moved to Colombia.



Wayuu children like this young boy face a tough future. Venezuela has the highest rate of malnutrition in South America.

Leaning in to listen

As a community of peacemakers around the world, Preemptive Love brought a small food distribution on our first visit to the Wayuu community in Venezuela and fed 200 people. More than food, we brought our hearts and ears, so we could lean in and listen to the Wayuu's priorities. We came with questions, in the form of a needs assessment. These survey results will determine our future programming in Zulia.

Meanwhile, we're also listening to the Wayuu just over the border in Colombia. There, the Wayuus cite their most pressing problems as economic hardship, lack of potable drinking water, and limited access to medical care. Although Colombia offers universal health care to its citizens, the Wayuu do not qualify because they do not possess Colombian national identity cards. The investment of our community of peacemakers enables us and our partners to deliver medical attention, potable water, and training for

community health workers—their most urgent needs.

We linked arms with a partner already at work in the Colombian Wayuu settlements to bring in medical services, which includes frequent exchanges of Western and ancestral knowledge. We make sure the communities know that we are not trying to change anything they are doing—only strengthen it. This medical team offers basic consultations, referrals, and treatments. What's more, we train Wayuu community members as health workers, so they can help identify and prevent common medical issues such as malnutrition and infections.

In addition, we're bringing clean water to Wayuu settlements in Colombia—installing water tanks and paying to keep those tanks filled, until the Wayuu themselves can secure a long-term solution.

As part of our partner's innovative project to help build sustainable livelihoods, we are implementing a recycling program. This program addresses the issue of excessive plastic debris—there is no waste collection in the settlements—and also provides an opportunity to earn compensation. We teach what kind of plastic is recyclable, how to collect it, and how to separate it. In return for recycling plastic, community members receive points they can redeem for the food items they want to eat.

The Wayuu nation extends beyond borders, as do the poverty and violence that plague it. With our partners and the compassion of our community of peacemakers, we are showing up for families like José and Catalina's and Maria's with food, clean water, and medical care—building sustainability in a tribe stretching across borders. ♦

WALKING IN EACH OTHER'S SHOES



Every day on the news, it seems, we watch people fleeing the only homes they know, chased by violence, fear, desperation. Rather than change the channel, let's go deeper. Consider these questions with people in your own circle:

- You must leave your homeland for a country you've never seen, knowing you may never return. You have only one hour to fill one suitcase. What do you include?
- You walk for days. Everything you carry is precious, but as the miles lengthen, you start to drop items. What is the one thing you hang onto, no matter what?
- You finally arrive in a safe place. What is the first thing you do to make *this place* feel like home? ♦

Things We Carry on the Sea

by Wang Ping

we carry tears in our eyes: good-bye
 father, good-bye mother
 we carry soil in small bags: may home never
 fade from our hearts
 we carry names, stories, memories of our
 village, our civilization
 we carry scars from proxy wars of greed
 we carry carnage of mining, droughts,
 floods, genocides
 we carry dust of our families incinerated
 in mushroom clouds
 we carry our islands sinking under the sea
 we carry our hands, feet, bones, hearts and
 best minds to start a new life
 we carry diplomas: medicine, engineer,
 nurse, education, math, poetry, even if
 they mean nothing to the other shore
 we carry railroads, plantations,
 laundromats, bodegas, taco trucks,
 farms, factories, nursing homes,
 hospitals, schools, temples ...
 built on our ancestors' backs

we carry old homes along the spine, new
 dreams in our chests
 we carry yesterday, today and tomorrow
 we're orphans of the wars forced upon us
 we're refugees of the sea drowning in
 plastic wastes
 we came from the same mother in Africa
 we're your children, sisters and brothers,
 father and mother
 our tongues carry the same weight
 as we chant
 爱 (ai), حب (hubb), عبل (libe), amour, love
 平安 (ping'an), مآلس (salaam), shalom,
 paz, peace
 希望 (xi'wang), آمآ (amal), hoffnung,
 esperanza, hope, hope, hope
 as we drift ... from dream to dream ...
 sea to sea ...

— From *My Name Is Immigrant*, published by Hanging Loose Press, 2021

CHAPTER

2



DIGITAL WORK / AGRICULTURE / SMALL BUSINESS / MAKERS

Refugees and war-torn families are more than victims.
 They are courageous and resourceful. They have
 everything they need inside of them to flourish.
 We partner with them to learn new skills and
 start new businesses. Because when people have
 the jobs they need, the risk of violence fades.

Most Likely to Succeed

HOW THE PREEMPTIVE LOVE COMMUNITY HELPS
HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS PURSUE THEIR DREAMS
BY ERIN WILSON

ILLUSTRATIONS
BY
MERCEDES
deBELLARD



Angela dreams of gathering her family all together again, from all over the world where they fled because of war.



Mariam would love to be a surgeon and make people better. "The happiest part of my life would be after a surgery or something when I go tell the patient's parents that they're OK. . . . I'd like to draw this smile on their faces and make them happy."

"I'm a weirdo," Mariam says matter-of-factly in perfect English as she smiles. "I think differently."

A teenager, a wicked-bright high school senior, and a self-assured young woman, Mariam is also a refugee—a Syrian whose family fled to Iraq because of war.

For a lot of kids forced to leave Syria during more than a decade of war, their education ended at that moment. School just isn't possible when you're being chased by bombs. Even finding a place to land doesn't guarantee a return to school. Too often—as is the case in northern Iraq—local schools, funded by local governments, are open to local kids and not refugees.

Even when the UN provides education solutions, for many, those solutions come too late. Poverty forces families into making difficult decisions: sending kids to work to help feed the family or arranging marriages while daughters are young, to lessen the burden on the household.

Mariam was lucky. She enrolled in school at a refugee camp near her new home in Iraq. But her luck very nearly ran out as she was about to enter 12th grade.

"I ALWAYS WANTED to be a journalist and photographer," Helil tells us through a translator. We sit together in the high school library at that same refugee camp in northern Iraq. Outside, boys take turns kicking a ball, which lands, more often than not, with a loud bang on the metal roof above us.

It's no small thing for a Syrian to declare her love for journalism. Over the course of Syria's 10-year-plus civil war, around 700 journalists have been killed and many more jailed. The situation is better in Iraq, but

even here, journalists are jailed in the course of carrying out their profession.

"I would love to study [journalism] and have all the information and be able to get the news *out* of the camp," Helil says. "There are many miserable people and kids, but there is no one to expose it to the outer society. I would like to make people from the outside see what people in the camp are going through."

Brave words for a high school senior.

It's too early to say if Helil will become a journalist, but we know she'll have one of the main requirements for continuing her education: a high school diploma. That's only happening because Preemptive Love's community of peacemakers stepped in to fill a gap—a potentially life-changing intervention.

F OR EVERY STUDENT at this school, their dreams hinge on graduating. That's true, too, for Mahi, who longs to transform the education system; for Angela, who nurtures the goal of becoming an astronaut *and* ballet dancer; for Zainab, who dreams of becoming a doctor; and for Dalya, who hopes to study IT or law and travels four hours by bus each day to attend school in the camp.

For other young women, those who must work to support their family rather than study, future prospects remain extremely limited. Young men will always have more options, so it's the future steps for women that we wanted to highlight here. Most will marry young, to relieve their parents of the burden of an extra mouth to feed. Most will start families young, too, because that's socially

expected. A few in real poverty will work outside the home to help support daily needs, in a job that pays lower than minimum wage. Virtually none will pursue the careers and projects they dreamed about while growing up.

Preemptive Love's Iraq team was approached with an urgent request from the principal of the high school at a local refugee camp. The school is modest but kept bright and clean, made of the same ubiquitous metal sheeting found in many refugee camps.

The school faced cutbacks of its teaching staff, the principal told us. Without immediate funding, he'd have to fire teachers, which meant that 200 Syrian teens would see their educations terminated—students who had already survived war and displacement and had somehow managed to hold onto their dreams.

The Preemptive Love community is pretty amazing. Some choose to give their donations as “unrestricted funds.” If you've ever wondered about that term, it means that even though we didn't know about this need at the beginning of our fiscal year, we could tell the principal that he didn't have to release his teaching staff. We would step in, and together we would make sure those 200 teenagers finish high school.

WITH HER VORACIOUS curiosity, Mahi practically sparkles as she talks of post-high school dreams. First, Mahi wants to perfect her already good English, so she can better understand a language that will connect her to the world. Then she wants to study medicine. “I'd love to know what happens in the human body,” she tells us. “And what happens, especially in

our mind. Because the mind is the center for control.”

Along the way, Mahi hopes to also study computer science, international studies . . . and much more.

The camp has improved exponentially since construction first began in 2013. Over the years, tents and deeply rutted dirt roads have made way for small concrete block homes and a few paved roads, paid for by the UN. Within its guarded perimeter fence and razor wire, the camp contains a main business street, a medical clinic, and even a small fire department. In fact, it looks very much like a small town now, but life here is still precarious.

Many of the parents and grandparents in this camp community fled from rural Syria, never having learned to read and write. That wasn't an issue back home, where they supported themselves by working the land. But now in Iraq, without land of their own, specialized skills, connections, or a lot of luck, many men work at low-paying daily labor jobs and struggle to feed their families. They bank on their children having more. An education opens up so many possibilities.

“ANGELA, what is special about the Syrian people?” We pose the question to each girl, but Angela sums up their answers best.

“It's their strength,” Angela replies, sometimes in English and sometimes through a translator. “It's our strength and our courage to continue what we want to be, and to pursue our dreams and make sure that they happen.”

She believes that many Syrians gave up on their dreams when they were forced to leave home in the midst of war. “We have experienced



A HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA OFFERS A SOLID STEPPING STONE FOR THE FUTURE.

some very, very hard experiences,” she says. “During the time when we fled from our home, we even had to kind of walk on bodies, dead bodies, as we left. We saw some of our own killed.”

And now? “A lot of us, we don't think about the future. We think about what is now, and how to survive.”

And yet: “We want to pursue our dreams.”

ANGELA'S CLASSMATE ZAINAB continues to cling to her own dreams of becoming a doctor, even though she understands that her family's current needs take precedence.

“Maybe I want to work to help my father in the house because we don't have much money,” she says quietly. “Because we are five children in the house. And only my father, he works. So I have to work to take care of my parents and my sisters and brother.”

In this high school, located in northern Iraq—in a refugee camp for Syrian families displaced by civil war—grade-12 students work hard to continue fanning their future dreams.
Photo by Erin Wilson

Though Zainab fears she won't be able to pursue medicine, she still studies every chance she gets, to be ready for any opportunity.

And despite the heaviness of her life, Zainab hasn't lost herself under the pressure. “I love learning,” she says with a smile. “I love cooking and I love dancing. Yeah, I love swimming. Everything. I want to. . . .”

“Wait. . . .”

Zainab takes a moment to choose just the right English words, to make sure we understand: “I'd love to learn everything. You know?”

IT'S A BUSY TIME for these seniors. They've learned that a local private university offers five scholarships for students from their class, and everyone is putting in the work to earn one of those coveted positions. An opportunity like that won't only change their *own* future; it could change the future for generations to come.

Even without a scholarship, each young woman will possess infinitely more opportunities once she's earned her high school diploma. True, a diploma won't undo any of the trauma or reunite families scattered across the globe. But it will offer a solid stepping stone for the future.

“Mariam,” we ask, “when you were a little girl back in Syria, what did you imagine your life would look like when you were grown up?”

Mariam hardly pauses. “Actually, a bright life,” she answers. “Being a successful person. And the most important thing is being proud of myself and making my parents and the people around me proud. So I imagined having a bright life. And I still do.” ♦

PHOTOGRAPHY
BY
ERIN
WILSON
|

A QUILLET



REVOLUTION

WOMEN AS BUSINESS OWNERS IN SOUTHERN IRAQ

BY ERIN WILSON



Ghadeer (previous page) and Zahrah (lower right) face multiple challenges as young, female business owners—including disruptive sandstorms, such as the thick air hovering over the river near Zahrah's flock (above).

W

WE PICK OUR WAY across a narrow wooden bridge to the grazing pasture, crisscrossed with earthen berms designed to preserve every bit of rainfall. Sheep happily munch on grass—dusty like everything else on this second day of yet another sandstorm. Apart from the weather, the situation seems idyllic. Onlookers might miss the fact that Ghadeer and other women we set up in business in rural Iraq are actually revolutionaries.

In this part of Iraq—southern, rural, traditional—not many women own businesses. Instead, men own and staff the stores, restaurants, and repair shops. For a woman to own a business is almost like announcing to the entire community: “My family doesn’t take care of me; they don’t protect me.” That kind of shaming could ruin a family.

Ghadeer lives in one of the poorest parts of the country.

No large oil reserves lie below the surface here—the resource that built up other parts of Iraq over the last century. No major industries provide steady employment. Economic security used to come in the form of government jobs, but those are now so hard to come by, prospective employees *pay* for such positions. And frustrated, unemployed men have taken to the streets in protest, hoping their government will see their plight and be moved to respond. To date, they still lack jobs, opportunities, and hope.

Communities here were also decimated during the war against ISIS, even though ISIS never came anywhere near. But many men moved by deep loyalty to their country traveled to fight, to protect their fellow citizens and their families. Violence ripped the country apart, leaving behind thousands of widows and orphans who now must rely on relatives. The extra burden is simply too much for many.

Unable to work because of social pressures, many women beg on the streets—a dignity-stripping prospect that no one could have imagined just a few short years ago.

As conditions in southern Iraq have grown more desperate, some are ready to consider breaking with tradition.

Traditional livelihood, nontraditional solution

We navigate down rough concrete steps, starting at street level. A combination of tall reeds, short palms, and scrubby bushes line the bank of a slow-moving river, except for a clearing made for a few animal pens. The haze of a sandstorm isolates this section of river, nearly blotting out the city beyond. We pass the neigh-

bor’s geese—loud, bossy, and clearly in charge. Next, we reach a shy flock of sheep. The ewes compete for the farthest corner of the pen while a 3-week-old lamb ignores our presence.

Zahrah, the young woman who owns this flock, wears a crisp, white lab coat over her clothes, the traditional uniform for graduates of the university’s agricultural program. The lab coat signals her years of study. Yet a degree in agriculture is a far different matter from working in agriculture. In this part of the country, families might encourage their daughters to study and earn a degree, with no expectation they will work in

their chosen field. Especially once they are married.

Zahrah is different. She wanted to raise sheep, yet her family didn’t own a farm and she couldn’t afford to buy a flock. And agriculture has become a complicated way to make a living here.

For thousands of years, Iraqi families relied on working the land. That is, until water levels in the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers and their tributaries steadily dropped with each damming project that Turkey and Iran put in place upstream. Rising temperatures also evaporate precious water sources in shallow lakes and streams, causing two large lakes

Zahrah is excited to multiply her starter flock—the result of a partnership with Preemptive Love and a local landowner. Providing business opportunities for women helps create a healthy economy.





to disappear in the last few years. With less water available for irrigation, the land turns drier, saltier, and unable to sustain crops.

Farmers need to hang onto whatever still-arable land they own—which makes it harder for this new generation to start businesses of their own, particularly if their family doesn't already own land.

Zahrah solved her dilemma by partnering with someone who owns riverside property. Preemptive Love's community of peacemakers then provided Zahrah with a starter flock of sheep that graze on the riverbank vegetation to supplement their feed. The landowner helps keep an eye on the sheep and receives a percentage of the profits as sheep are sold. This nontraditional solution works for everyone.

Iraq used to suffer from one or two sandstorms a season; it has recently experienced over 10 in two months, shutting everything down.

Contagious generosity

Ghadeer faces many of the same challenges as Zahrah. But now she worries about Congo fever, a deadly disease seeing a resurgence in some parts of the country. Congo fever, also known as Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever, doesn't seem fatal in sheep, but it can be in humans. Like Zahrah, Ghadeer is a graduate with a degree in agriculture. She keeps a close watch on her flock to detect any possible

symptoms of the disease, so her sheep can be treated as early as possible, keeping both them and her family safe.

We talk about the current sandstorm, which makes the air around us thick in our lungs. It's the eighth of the year so far, and our weather app informs us of another on the way. Sheep don't seem particularly bothered by the airborne dust, but for humans, it can prove deadly. Local hospitals have been packed with extra cases of asthma and other lung issues.

GHADEER HAS PLEDGED TO DONATE A LAMB TO SOMEONE ELSE WANTING TO START A BUSINESS. SHE IS ALREADY PAYING FORWARD THE GENEROSITY SHE HAS BEEN BLESSED WITH.

There are countless easier ways to live in Iraq than raising sheep. Especially for a woman. Zahrah and Ghadeer both wanted to own businesses. They approached us about the opportunity to own flocks. But like most other things in Iraq, you can't do this work alone. Zahrah's family encourages her, and she's found a good business partnership. Ghadeer enjoys the constant support of her father.

"There is no difference between boys and girls," Ghadeer's father tells us. He has always pushed his children to study hard. Ghadeer's older sister earned her Ph.D.—not a common achievement in a traditional, poverty-stricken, agricultural community. Ghadeer's father suspects that other fathers in his community think like him, but he is one of the first to make sure his public life aligns with his thoughts. He is making space for change not just for his own daughter, but for all daughters. "I will be happy to

see other parents doing this for their daughters," he says.

Generosity is so often contagious.

Members of Preemptive Love's community of peacemakers invest in life-changing businesses in parts of the world torn apart by violence and war. Because of her father's generosity of thought, Ghadeer transformed an investment made by peacemakers around the world into a growing flock of sheep. Like Zahrah, she hopes to eventually sell her sheep at the local market.

Thus, Ghadeer models what's possible for other young women in her community. She wants them to experience the challenges of owning a business with the support of someone who cares.

With her small starter flock growing, Ghadeer is looking toward expansion. She and her dad talk about a larger flock, but before that happens, Ghadeer has pledged to donate a lamb to someone else wanting to start a business. She is already paying forward the generosity she has been blessed with in multiple ways.

Through their success, these business women's lives speak loudly without uttering a word. Not the message some of their neighbors fear—not a message of family neglect. Their lives speak of deep caring. Of their families' care toward them, and of their care for their community.

Ghadeer and Zahrah are quiet revolutionaries, carrying out the simple act of providing for their families. In Iraq, agricultural work will continue to be a challenge for the foreseeable future. But as we see generosity ripple outward from these pastures, successes will follow. ♦

At the Border, 1979*by Choman Hardi*

'It is your last check-in point in
this country!'
We grabbed a drink -
soon everything would taste different.

The land under our feet continued
divided by a thick iron chain.

My sister put her leg across it.
'Look over here,' she said to us,
'my right leg is in this country
and my left leg in the other.'
The border guards told her off.

My mother informed me: We are going home
She said that the roads are much cleaner
the landscape is more beautiful
and people are much kinder.

Dozens of families waited in the rain.
'I can inhale home,' somebody said.
Now our mothers were crying. I was five
years old
standing by the check-in point
comparing both sides of the border.

The autumn soil continued on the other side
with the same colour, the same texture.
It rained on both sides of the chain.

We waited while our papers were checked,
our faces thoroughly inspected.
Then the chain was removed to let us
through.

A man bent down and kissed his muddy
homeland.
The same chain of mountains encompassed
all of us.

- From *Life for Us* (Bloodaxe Books, 2004) www.bloodaxebooks.com



CHAPTER



GATHERINGS / CHAPTERS / WORKSHOPS / EDUCATION

War is not just an "over there" problem.
War begins in our heads and
hearts, long before it reaches our hands.
But that also means the solution can
begin with us. Community-based peacemaking
is built into everything we do.

WHY I STAY

INTERVIEW BY ERIN WILSON

PHOTOGRAPH
BY
THOMAS
DAWAF

The Other Side *of* Migration



When Dona Rita Nassour heard the explosion at Beirut's commercial port in 2020, she hopped into her car and drove toward the blast. For two months, she worked with Preemptive Love to help repair damaged homes.

On the night before the May 2022 elections, you posted online that you were returning from a trip abroad—was this to clarify that you wanted to be in Lebanon to vote?

DONA: Yeah, of course, it's very important for me. I don't believe that anywhere in the world, things are the way they are because one day you just woke up and there were human rights, or women's ability to vote, or woman's ability to go to school, or unions. I think that's what people forget.

They just assume that first-world countries one day woke up and it was created that way. No, they had to fight their way to it. And they still fight—environmentalists fight, and women still fight for their rights. Minorities still fight.

When people leave, I understand it. Because it is a struggle here. No matter how much you put work in, sometimes there's still nothing. Like, you can't fill up your gas tank to go into your job. It's exhausting. So I do understand that.

But I also understand the responsibility of voting, because nothing will change if we just walk away from the situation. I voted for the first time in Lebanon four years ago, because before that I was in Canada, and there was barely anybody going up against any of [the traditional politicians].

There was this guy who was always speaking against [the pro-Iranian party] Hizbollah, and the next day, boom, he was dead. When they challenge the system, these people know their lives are in danger. They know that tomorrow they might not live.

B

EIRUT'S PORT BLAST WAS the most graphic devastation in Lebanon over the past several years: killing 220, injuring at least 6,500, and leaving around 300,000 residents instantly homeless. A string of more quiet catastrophes from 2019 to the present—financial and banking crises—have also helped bring the country to its knees.

Dona was born in Lebanon, and the majority of her family remains there. She has lived around the world and could choose to be anywhere. But she remains in Lebanon. We spoke with Dona about some of the challenges of living in Beirut now, and why she chooses to stay with her business, Equibalance. After all, she is one of the Lebanese with options . . . who could leave. This interview was edited for clarity and space.

It's admirable. It's inspiring. Change is going to happen. It's just going to be an uphill battle. A lot of people are going to give up. And a lot of people are going to go hungry before they see a loaf of bread, that's for sure.

Tell us some of the other challenges that make it hard living day-to-day right now.

DONA: For example, I haven't had air conditioning in . . . I don't know. I haven't slept in a week because it's too hot. Right now as I'm talking to you, there's no electricity. So at any moment, my laptop could turn off. Gas is increasingly expensive.

I'm trying to sell my electric bike because there's no electricity to charge it, in order to buy another bike that will take me longer distances. It's hard.

Your social life changes. Or you have to be in debt. You can't go to work as you used to. Yesterday I had a business meeting and he ghosted me [didn't show up]. It wasn't that that bothered me. It was the fact that I spent that gas. Yeah. It hurts. It's very tough.

There are a lot of people on the streets. Before, there used to be Syrians [refugees] begging. Now they're Lebanese people begging.

I was on the highway driving, and I saw this old lady trying to hail a van, but none of them stopped. And then I could see her start to cry. I had passed her because I was in the left lane, so then I drove all around, and I told myself, *If she's still there, I'm going to pick her up.*

And this woman, she's in her 70s. She's an educated person who cannot drive because of glaucoma. She has no family.

Nobody. She's not poor; there's just no infrastructure. She has to sit there and cry because there's no transportation.

So now, I call her to see if she needs a ride. I take her where she needs to go. But you can't do that for everyone. There are millions of people in this country, you know? And then it starts hurting your own pocket, but you feel like it's OK, *alhamdulillah* [thank God], you're better off than a lot of people.

Why do you stay?

DONA: Maybe because I had the luxury to be away at a younger age. I had the opportunity to live abroad—to miss my home, get security and safety and money, and realize that life is much more than that. It was very difficult to be away. And I didn't see it until I came back and my parents had aged 10 years. It was fine when they were in their 40s, and it was fine when they were in their 50s. But when they hit their 70s, I thought, *I wasted all of this time for what? To pack away a couple of thousand dollars?*

I wanted a home, culture, roots, all of that.

Not everyone chooses to stay here for several reasons. They've only lived in a country that takes from them, that continually struggles. They've seen their parents struggle and they've struggled, and I understand their need to just breathe.

But I understand that I'm living in a country that only got to where it is because its own people stayed and fought for that. So if you want your own kids to have that kind of country, then you have to stay and fight for that too.

I stay because I love the people.

I STAY BECAUSE I BELIEVE THERE ARE BEAUTIFUL PEOPLE HERE IN THIS BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY. AND YOU KNOW, YOU DON'T LET EVIL WIN. IT'S AS SIMPLE AS THAT.

I love “the good” here. And for some reason, I can see it much stronger than “the bad.” OK, so there's no electricity, who cares? Really, I can't explain it to you.

I stay because I believe there are beautiful people here in this beautiful country. And you know, you don't let evil win. It's as simple as that.

Your spirit and your outlook are some of the magical things about Lebanon.

DONA: Here, it's about people. It's about connection. It's about the earth. It's about the cherry tree, the apple tree, the water—it's about all of that. And you see it, and you love it, and everybody who is away, loves Lebanon.

But not everybody can survive here. And it's understandable. But if they could choose—if Lebanon were a place where you could survive—there is no choice to make.

I love the culture. People are the culture. You can have shish kabobs anywhere, but in Lebanon, there's the noise and there's the sitting at the table talking and connecting for hours until dinner comes and you're like, *What, I've been here for this long?* and it's just beautiful. And I can't see myself anywhere else.

That's why it hurts sometimes when it's difficult. It's like you're in this relationship and they're just trying to give you reasons to leave, and you don't want to leave. You're in love with this person.

It's kind of the same thing with Lebanon. It gives you reasons to leave. But you go, “No, I love you. I want to stay, let me stay.” Even when there are so many reasons why you should leave.

It's faith, you know? You've got to believe that it will come. ♦

BEAUTY IN THE STONE

A STORY OF OUR
MARBLE MAKERS
BY BELEM BARRERA-
GONZÁLEZ



ILLUSTRATION
BY
JULES
JULIEN
|

PHOTOGRAPHY
BY
HANIEL
LOPEZ
|



WE ARRIVE IN TECALI one day in April—this town of white streets and white dust not far from Mexico City. The owner of a small marble shop talks about this place, where generations have worked on marble, cutting and polishing the stone to create both art and useful objects. “Most of the community that lives here works on the marble,” she says.

After the local rock became scarce, people started bringing in marble from farther away: green marble from Oaxaca or pink marble from Zacatecas.

The owner brings us to an open workshop covered in white dust where her son works. Osvaldo is a brown-skinned man in his 30s who has worked with marble since he was 10. As a young child, he trailed

Osvaldo's marble workshop, in Tecali, Mexico

after his father in this same workshop and decided to follow his steps. Now, Osvaldo creates beautiful pieces as a maker in our Preemptive Love community, and we help him sell his art around the world.

On shelves around his workshop, we see examples: shining animal figurines, bathroom accessory sets, delicate earrings, and bold mirror frames. Osvaldo says that his body rests and is at peace while he works with the marble.

“I love to see the colors of the stone,” he says. “Before, I worked with stone from Zacatecas; it was a very pretty color.”

He wishes he could keep some of the rare ones, knowing he might not see anything similar again.

Strengthening the Tecali community

According to Osvaldo, more than half of his neighbors work on marble in small workshops scattered across the town. All the artisans harbor “trade secrets” about their methods, yet it’s common to ask a neighbor for advice and help, especially with big orders. “A neighbor came the other day and asked me how many bottle stoppers I could produce,

because he had to deliver many,” Osvaldo says. “He also visited other workshops.”

But Tecali is more than a sleepy, quiet town of congenial artisans. We’d also tried to visit Osvaldo’s shop the day before, but the streets were closed. The community itself had taken that step, Osvaldo’s mother told us, to defend against violence. Thieves frequently target buses—taking everyone’s cell phones and the drivers’ cash. “Last time,” she says, “a driver refused to give the money and the thieves almost killed him.”

After hearing the rumors of yet another robbery, the habitants closed the streets to force the bus to stop. “People here are tired of this,” Osvaldo’s mother continues. “Yesterday, as soon as the community knew that a robbery was happening, they closed the street. The people detained two of the four thieves and waited for the authorities.”

Robbery is not the only kind of crime in Tecali. Officials reported more than 50 cases of domestic violence since last year and at least six murders involving torture.

All across Mexico, Preemptive Love communities of makers face violence in their daily lives. In the mountains of Simojovel, Chiapas, where our makers cut and polish amber, locals formed an armed posse to oppose the criminal group *Los Diablos*. In Sierra Tarahumara, Chihuahua, where our makers produce beautiful baskets, cartels try to force our friends to plant opium poppies or marijuana, or smuggle drugs to the US, or join the cartels.

For Preemptive Love, supporting our makers means providing them the means so they are not economically forced to engage in

crime—so they have another choice. It means helping these communities prevent or denounce crimes and also care for each other, so that they recover more quickly after violent and traumatic events.

Embedding beauty, passing along secrets

Osvaldo begins creating one of his favorite pieces right before our eyes: a black marble sphere. He starts with a small, black marble cube, then cuts it, getting a figure similar to a ball. Then he polishes it—once, to give it a uniform shape, and a second time to make it shine. Finally, he washes it with water and acid and cleans it. Twenty minutes after starting, he offers it to us as a gift.

Most of the products Osvaldo creates for the Preemptive Love store take much longer to perfect: coasters, mortar and pestle sets, and salt cellars. “No product is the same as another,” he says, citing the different marble veins in each piece. “Producing in this workshop is not the same as producing in a factory. Every object is different.”

Osvaldo hopes to one day share his work with his sons—now only ages 1 and 2—in case one of them might wish to follow in his steps and in the steps of his father. For now, he concentrates on putting a part of his time and his life into each piece he creates.

In the same way, embedded into every piece of Tecali marble art, from every local artisan, lie the lessons and “secrets” that this community in Mexico has conveyed from generation to generation. ♦



CHOOSE TO WAGE PEACE



ILLUSTRATION
BY
PARTY
OF ONE
STUDIO

HOW COMMUNITY
GATHERINGS BREAK
DOWN WALLS

BY NICK REA

M

MOTHER TERESA ONCE SAID, “If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other. . . . Peace and war begin at home.”

In over a decade of peacemaking, this truth lies at the heart of our work: Preemptive Love exists to end war—to stop the spread of violence. However, what does it take to achieve this lofty goal? Where do you even *begin*?

Mother Teresa made it clear: peace begins “at home.”

Following the 2016 US presidential election, two Central Florida residents, Saadia and Anna, connected outside their Zumba class. Saadia, a Muslim-American mother, and Anna, a Christian and a pastor’s wife, remembered and embodied an important truth: we belong to each other.

Although tension and division were then at a record high, the two invited a few friends to begin gathering each month. They did not meet to argue or attempt to convert each other. Instead, they met to listen, learn, and grow in their capacity for care and welcome. They gathered in the name of community and belonging.

As Saadia and Anna and their friends learned, embodying peace and growing in community with others actually becomes contagious. And so soon after, gatherings like theirs became a vital part of Preemptive Love’s programming. As of this writing, more than 35 Community Gatherings take place around the world, with participants from 12 different countries.

Together, they address topics such as communication styles, and what it means to love and respect others; and they explore their perspectives on current events. For example, participants might answer questions such as: *Are there people in your world whom you think don’t deserve love? How do you love someone who has hurt you?*

Or in another meeting: *What led to your beliefs about the COVID-19 vaccine? Does anyone in your family see this differently from you, and how does that make you feel?*

The gatherings vary in size, location, needs, and demographics, yet each group pursues peace through listening, understanding, and nurturing relationships, rather than through arguing or trying to prove a point. In doing so, each is helping to stop the spread of violence and end wars before they even begin.

In fact, experts in the fields of conflict and psychology talk about something called “intergroup contact theory.” Their research on conflict resolution in deeply divided societies shows that when you meet with people outside of your “groups,” you can transform previously intractable conflict into relationship, understanding, progress, and restoration.

In other words, seeking genuine relationship and understanding across lines of division can stop the spreading of violence and replace it with the spreading of peace. As the peacemaker Daryl Davis says, “It’s hard to hate up close.”¹

In contrast, other research shows that “when like-minded people gather, they tend to grow more extreme” in their positions.²

Even with their international flavor, most of our Community Gatherings currently take place in the United States—in living rooms, Zoom rooms, coffee shops, and city parks. COVID-19 obviously complicated face-to-face meetings, but now that people can gather in-person again, some still choose to remain virtual, especially those attracting attendees from around the world. Regardless of location, these groups all begin as some combination of longtime friends, friends-of-friends, near-strangers, and complete strangers.

Traditionally, a gathering consists of two co-hosts who are

¹ Daryl Davis shares his story around the world: how he, as a Black man, befriended a Ku Klux Klan member in 1983, infiltrated the Klan itself, and saw many members relinquish their legacy of hate.

² David French, “America Is Being Pulled Apart. Here’s How We Can Start to Heal Our Nation.” *Time Magazine*. Sept. 10, 2020.

SEEKING GENUINE RELATIONSHIP AND UNDERSTANDING ACROSS LINES OF DIVISION CAN STOP THE SPREADING OF VIOLENCE.

different from each other in some way—age, race, gender, politics, religion, etc.—bringing people together to share in intentional conversation, relationship, and community. Thus, each group models that diverse relationships across lines of division *can* and *do* happen.

Today, people seem to crave community more than ever. Co-hosts Miriam and Dahlia of St. John, New Brunswick, Canada, said of their gathering, “The response was extremely positive, like people have been waiting for something like this to start for a long time.”

When Jessica and Melina in Eden, North Carolina, held their first gathering, one member declared it to be her birthday celebration. She had rescheduled a family birthday celebration in order to attend, according to Jessica, “because the group’s vision was so important to her and something she had never had the opportunity to be a part of.”

Anyone can take this small step toward peace, whether they’re

Where Do I Start?

Preemptive Love is looking for people in their own communities to take a stand against violence through meaningful conversations and a desire to build relationships. You don’t need to be an expert. Just show up—one conversation and one relationship at a time.

- Find one person who is different from you in some way—invite that person to join you for meaningful conversations that will explore and respect those differences.
- Ask other friends to join you too—be willing to cast a wide net.
- Contact Preemptive Love’s Community team for resources, guides, conversation kits, and much more: community@preemptivelove.org @_PLCommunity (Instagram)

stay-at-home parents, full-time students, or people with hectic schedules. And the group’s size doesn’t matter, according to Saadia Qureshi, Preemptive Love’s gathering coordinator—even if each co-host invites one friend and only those four people meet. Gatherings usually meet once per month, for no longer than 1–½ hours.

Preemptive Love believes that peacemaking can’t be reserved for some people. It must be for *all*.

Waging peace from the frontlines of *your* community is vital to Preemptive Love’s mission to end war. So our Community team is eager to support and empower your gathering: helping you find a co-host by connecting you with another peacemaker; offering conversation guides, tips, and other resources; inviting you to a Facebook group of other co-hosts; and hosting a quarterly Zoom call, where you’ll hear from experts on everything from “compassion fatigue” to “conflict resolution 101.”

We’ve even encouraged community book clubs around books like *A Language of Healing for a Polarized Nation*, then opened up virtual Q&As with its authors.

Our Community team pours into our gathering hosts, so that they can, in turn, pour into their communities.

You, too, can wage peace, heal all that’s tearing us apart, and (re)create community on the frontlines where you live—because nobody can show up in the world like *you*. ♦



POTATO BOLANI



Recreating a taste from home when you've left home behind.

PHOTOGRAPHY
BY
ANDREW
THOMAS LEE

STYLING
BY
ANGIE
MOSIER

*You flee from country to country,
holding tight to your children while
trying to keep your dreams from
slipping through your fingers.
Dreams of safety, of dignity,
of a new place to call home.*



In those moments, you eat simply to survive. Yet you dream of the meals you will savor once you reach safety and can breathe—perhaps pan-fried Colombian *arepas*, or deep-red Ukrainian *borscht*, or hearty Syrian *mahshi*.

If you hail from Afghanistan, you might long to create the popular street food *bolani*—a flatbread often stuffed with potatoes, leeks, minced meat, or red lentils.

Here we've asked an Afghan cook for her recipe—one that readers can recreate in their own homes as they think of the hundreds of thousands who are on the move, with home only in their hearts.

Recipe creation by Iman Ahmad-Sediqe, at imanistan.com

~~~~~  
SERVES 5 PEOPLE AS AN ENTREE,  
10 AS AN APPETIZER

### Potato Bolani

#### FILLING:

|     |                                                             |
|-----|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3   | RUSSET POTATOES, PEELED<br>AND CUBED                        |
| 2   | TBSP BUTTER                                                 |
| ¼   | CUP MILK                                                    |
| 2-3 | BUNCHES OF GREEN ONIONS,<br>FINELY CHOPPED (ABOUT 1-½ CUPS) |
| 1   | TSP SALT                                                    |
| 1   | TSP CORIANDER                                               |
| ½   | TSP RED PEPPER FLAKES                                       |
| 1   | GARLIC CLOVE (PEELED AND CRUSHED)                           |

#### DOUGH:

|   |                     |
|---|---------------------|
| 3 | CUPS FLOUR          |
| ¾ | CUPS WATER + 1 TBSP |
| 1 | TSP SALT            |
| 1 | TSP OIL             |

#### ADDITIONAL OIL FOR SHALLOW FRYING

~~~~~

First, prepare your filling. Boil your potatoes until soft, then mash them with 2 Tbsp butter and ¼ cup milk in a medium bowl. Add the green onions plus salt, coriander, red pepper flakes, and crushed garlic. Mix well. Set prepared filling aside.

Next, prepare your dough. Mix flour, water, salt, and oil until well incorporated. Begin kneading the dough for approximately 5-7 minutes. Let dough rest for 20 minutes.

After dough has rested, divide it into 5 equal-sized pieces and roll each into a ball. Let the dough balls rest for 10 minutes. If you don't have a large rectangular griddle (called *tawah* in Dari/Farsi) and are using a smaller circular skillet, create 6-8 balls of dough.

With one dough ball at a time, on a lightly floured surface, roll out the dough into an elongated oval that can fit in your griddle or frying pan when it is later folded in half. The thinner the dough the better, but be sure it can hold your filling without tearing.

Add a generous amount of filling onto your dough, about 3-4 Tbsp, spreading it

evenly to cover half of the oval, lengthwise. Leave a ¼-inch border around the edges. Fold the dough in half lengthwise, so that you have an elongated half-moon shape. Press firmly around the edges to seal the filled dough. Repeat this with remaining dough.

Heat ¼ cup of oil on the griddle (or slightly less on a skillet) over medium-high heat until it starts to crackle. Then turn the heat down to medium. Shallow fry the Bolani, about 2-4 minutes on each side, until golden brown on both sides. Place each cooked Bolani on a paper towel-lined platter.

Wipe down the griddle surface after each Bolani to avoid having flour residue damage your next one. Then continue to add oil, as needed, as you cook.

Each Bolani can serve one person. Or, if serving as an appetizer, cut each Bolani from the folded, straight edge toward the curved top into 4-plus pieces. Serve your finished Bolani with mint yogurt—which you can find at the recipe-creator's website: imanistan.com.

Noshejaan! ♦

I Was in a Hurry*by Dunya Mikhail*

Yesterday I lost a country.
 I was in a hurry,
 and didn't notice when it fell from me
 like a broken branch from a forgetful tree.
 Please, if anyone passes by
 and stumbles across it,
 perhaps in a suitcase
 open to the sky,
 or engraved on a rock
 like a gaping wound,
 or wrapped
 in the blankets of emigrants,
 or canceled
 like a losing lottery ticket,
 or helplessly forgotten
 in Purgatory,
 or rushing forward without a goal
 like the questions of children,
 or rising with the smoke of war,

or rolling in a helmet on the sand,
 or stolen in Ali Baba's jar,
 or disguised in the uniform of a policeman
 who stirred up the prisoners
 and fled,
 or squatting in the mind of a woman
 who tries to smile,
 or scattered
 like the dreams
 of new immigrants in America.
 If anyone stumbles across it,
 return it to me, please.
 Please return it, sir.
 Please return it, madam.
 It is my country ...
 I was in a hurry
 when I lost it yesterday.

– By Dunya Mikhail, translated by Elizabeth Winslow, from *THE WAR WORKS HARD*, copyright ©1993,
 1997, 2000, 2005 by Dunya Mikhail. Reprinted by permission of New Directions Publishing Corp.



CHAPTER



PREEMPTIVELOVE.SHOP

The gifts you give can change the world.
 They can help a refugee's small business
 flourish. They can remind a loved one that they matter.
 They carry a message of welcome and peace into
 spaces dominated by fear and mistrust. They're a
 reminder of the more beautiful world that's possible.

APPAREL

Your love is a force. It cannot be silenced or contained. It is brave enough to step across enemy lines. Strong enough to change the way things are. Show the world your love. preemptivelove.shop

“PEOPLE MATTER MOST” HOODIE

\$50

Relaxed fit. Heavyweight, 100% cotton French terry. Heather-white pullover hoodie with raglan sleeves, kangaroo pocket, unlined hood, preshrunk. Sizes: S-XXXL.



At the end of the day, people matter most.

YOU SEE THE WORTH of all people, past income brackets and stereotypes, over border walls and language barriers. You hold out a hand, open your arms, stand shoulder-to-shoulder because you believe—you know—that People Matter Most.

Our merchandise is certified by Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production (WRAP). These garments are sourced and made responsibly as part of our mission to stop the spread of violence.



“PEOPLE MATTER MOST” BEANIES

\$24

One side embroidered with a flower, the other with a “People Matter Most” patch. 100% embroidered acrylic midweight knit with cuffed hem. One size fits all.

- Jade green
- Cream

“PEOPLE MATTER MOST” T-SHIRT

\$27

Heavyweight tee in unisex sizes. Relaxed fit, crew neck, neck ribbing and side-seamed, preshrunk. Jade green available in 100% cotton, sizes S-5XL. Heather white available in 85% cotton, 15% viscose, sizes S-XXXL.

Now available in plus sizes.

- Jade green
- Heather white

“PEOPLE MATTER MOST” JOGGER

\$44

Regular fit. Midweight, 80% cotton, 20% polyester anti-pill fleece with elastic waistband & hem cuffs, 2 side pockets, single pocket at back, and drawcord; preshrunk. Sizes: S-XXXL.



“PEOPLE MATTER MOST” BANNER

\$60

Cut-and-sewn wool felt with screen-printed design, 18" x 24".



“PEOPLE MATTER MOST” WATER BOTTLE

\$24

32 oz. Nalgene brand with a wide mouth and screw-on cap. BPA/BPS-free and dishwasher safe.



“PEOPLE MATTER MOST” NOTEPAD

\$15

Ideal for to-dos, grocery list, or notes, in 70# accent opaque text paper, 6.5" x 9.5", 50 pages.



“PEOPLE MATTER MOST” TOTE BAG

\$12

Refugee-made cotton tote bag with 10-inch handle drop. Other options available online: “Love Anyway” pride, “We Belong to Each Other” rainbow, “We Belong to Each Other” black.



“IMAGINE THE MORE BEAUTIFUL WORLD” TEE

\$27

The business of peacemaking begins with dreaming of a better world—going from what is to what could be. These heavyweight T-shirts encourage you to imagine the more beautiful world our hearts know is possible. Screen-printed on 100% cotton. Sizes S-XXXL. Ethically sourced and environmentally responsible.

- Blue
- White
- Burgundy

“LOVE ANYWAY” SWEATSHIRT

\$48-80

Screen-printed tri-blend, sponge fleece, raglan sweatshirt in unisex sizes. Sizes XS-XXL made of 50% polyester, 37.5% combed and ring-spun cotton, 12.5% rayon. Size XXXL made of 50% polyester, 46% cotton, 4% rayon.

- Dust
- Mauve
- Green
- Gray
- Black
- Embroidered black

“WE BELONG TO EACH OTHER” TEE

\$27

We belong to each other, and together we can stop the spread of violence. Wear this shirt as a reminder of and commitment to our mutual togetherness. Made of 52% combed and ring-spun cotton, 48% polyester. Sizes S-6XL.

Now available in plus sizes.

“PEACEMAKER” TEE

\$27

Our Peacemaker products encourage you to do the work of making peace right where you are. Enjoy this heavyweight black tee in unisex sizes. Relaxed fit, crew neck, neck ribbing and side-seamed, preshrunk. 100% cotton. Sizes S-6XL.

Now available in plus sizes.

“LOVE ANYWAY” HAT

\$24

Simple baseball cap.

- Navy
- Olive green



“LOVE BEYOND BORDERS” TEE

\$27

Fear shrinks the borders around our hearts and minds. Wear this shirt as a reminder that your love goes beyond the borders. Heather black tee in sizes S-XXXL, in 90% combed and ring-spun cotton, 10% poly. Heather gray tee in sizes S-XXL, in 52% combed and ring-spun cotton, 48% poly. Oatmeal tri-blend tee in sizes S-5XL, in 50% poly, 25% combed and ring-spun cotton, 25% rayon.

Now available in plus sizes.

SCARF

\$40

Refugee-made, hand-crocheted scarf, available in a variety of colors. Made with cotton and acrylic yarn (55% cotton, 45% acrylic). Approximate dimensions: 64" x 11". *Extremely limited quantity.*

- Powder pink
- Grey
- Brown
- Navy



SLIPPERS

\$15

Slippers hand-stitched by refugees in Iraq. Keep your feet warm and comfy while supporting survivors of war. Available in two sizes:
Small: 10" x 4"
Large: 11" x 4"

- Green
- Grey
- Beige
- Maroon
- Gold

AMBER JEWELRY

Hand-crafted using amber mined from Mexico's Sierra Madre Mountains by local men and women. Due to the unique nature of amber, no two pieces are alike, with color, pattern, and shape variations.

\$34 Wood & Amber Earrings

Our new wood and amber circle drop earrings combine amber from the Sierra Madre Mountains and local tigerwood from Mexico into a one-of-a-kind accessory.



\$30-34 Amber Earrings

Available in multiple styles (see online) with nickel backing. Care: Spot clean with jewelry cloth.



\$39-44 Amber Necklaces

Necklaces in multiple styles (see online) feature amber beads and a gold-plated chain. Care: Spot clean with jewelry cloth.

HOME & KITCHEN

Home is a place to be known. To be loved. To belong. With these handmade gifts, you can make your home an image of the world you want. A world where everyone rises. preemptivelove.shop



HAND-CARVED WOODEN COOKIE MOLD

\$18

Handmade in Iraq, this mold comes with a recipe card and cotton drawstring bag. Expect variations in color, size, and mold shape.



HONDURAN COFFEE

\$18 (subscribe to save: \$17)

From Copán Ruinas, Honduras. Medium-body and acidity, with notes of apricot, fig, honey, and chocolate. Whole bean, 12-oz bag. Freshly roasted. See details online about our subscribe-to-save program: preemptivelove.shop



HAND-CARVED WOODEN COFFEE SCOOP

\$36

The perfect accessory for scooping your morning coffee beans or favorite spices. Made in the US by Najib, an Afghan refugee who has been working with wood for 23 years. Maple wood. Approximate dimensions: 8" x 2".



Najib with his son Omid, age 4. Najib also creates our art print hangers, featured on page 88.

HANDMADE MARBLE DECOR

Enjoy these marble products handmade by a partner artisan in Tecali, Mexico (see "Beauty in the Stone" on page 60). Variations in color, sizing, and style are expected.

\$48 Mortar & Pestle

This practical cooking tool adds color and texture to your space while you entertain.

\$50 Coasters

Proudly display this set of four coasters, approximate dimensions: 2" x 2".



TEA BLENDS

Preemptive Love has teamed up with Tahmina Tea to offer these delicious tea blends. Each canister contains 12 biodegradable pyramid bags that can be steeped up to three times. Our tins are made from USA recycled steel with airtight closure to ensure freshness.

\$18 Saffron Rooibos Herbal Tea Blend

Organic, caffeine-free tisane of South African Rooibos and honeybush, with lemon, ginger, and Afghan saffron. This whole leaf blend has a sweet and earthy body, finished off with tangy and complex notes.

\$18 Saffron Green Sencha Tea Blend

Organic, steamed Chinese green tea with ginger root, lemongrass, peppermint, and saffron. Rich in vitamins and antioxidants, this whole leaf blend has a vegetal body finished off with refreshing notes. Pair with honey.

\$18 Saffron Chai Black Tea Blend

Bold, organic Assam black tea with Indian Chai-style spices and Afghan saffron. This whole leaf blend has a robust body with multiple layers of flavor, finished by smooth, delicate notes of saffron.



TEA TOWELS

\$20

Hand-stitched tea towels, sewn and embroidered by refugees in Iraq. Cotton tea towel with cotton/poly yarn accents. 24" x 18" in multiple styles (see online). *Limited quantity.*

PALM FROND BASKETS

Baskets handwoven by women in southern Iraq from sustainably harvested palm fronds, a tradition passed down for generations. Expect variations in color, sizing, and style.

\$29 Tray: 13" x 13" x 2.5"

\$12 Small oval: 5.75" x 7.5" x 1.25"

\$8 Small round: 5" x 5" x 2.25"



SMALL

LARGE

MINI

MEXICAN WOVEN BASKETS

Handwoven of sotol pine by an indigenous community in the Sierra Madre mountains of Mexico. The double weaving adds texture and unique patterns—no two are alike. Approximate dimensions:

\$14 Mini: 4" x 4" x 22.5" (see available colors online)

\$28 Small: 10" x 10" x 4.5"

\$34 Large: 12.5" x 12.5" x 6"

\$14 Coaster Set Basket: 4" x 4" x 1" (Coasters: 3.5" x 3.5")



COASTERS AND BASKET



**HARDWOOD
SOAP DISH**

\$10

Soap dish of Indonesian hardwood handmade by refugees in Iraq. Expect variations in color and staining.



GARDENIA SOAP SET & CHARCOAL SOAP SET

\$22

Limited edition set including 1 bar of soap (choose from either gardenia or charcoal) and 1 hand-knit, flower-stitched washcloth. All-natural soap made with 100% saponified olive oil, essential oils, and natural ingredients, fragranced with natural oils. Allergen- and paraben-free. 3 oz. each. Colors may vary. Comes in sleek tube packaging. *Limited quantity.*

**BESTSELLING
SOAP TRIO**

\$25

Enjoy the calming scent of lavender, the fresh citrus scent of lemons, and the warm scent of fig and dates in this gift set of our bestselling all-natural soaps, refugee-made in Iraq. Families are rebuilding their lives from the ashes of war. With every bar of soap sold, they are one step closer to home. Allergen-free, made from 100% pure ingredients including saponified olive oil and essential oils. 3 oz. each. Colors may vary. Comes in sleek tube packaging: lavender, lemon zest, fig & date. *Limited quantity.*



**PATCHOULI SOAP
& CANDLE SET**

\$30

Limited edition set including 1 bar of soap, 1 glass candle, and 1 hand-knit, flower-stitched washcloth. Also available in lavender.

ART PRINTS**\$22-30**

Hang or frame a poster as an encouragement to make peace and stretch your love beyond borders. 11" x 14" poster screen-printed on #100 French Paper (poster hanger not included, but see below to order). Printed in the US.

Options: Rose Art, "Peace Begins with Me," "We Belong to Each Other" (not pictured)

**MAGNETIC ART PRINT HANGER****\$24**

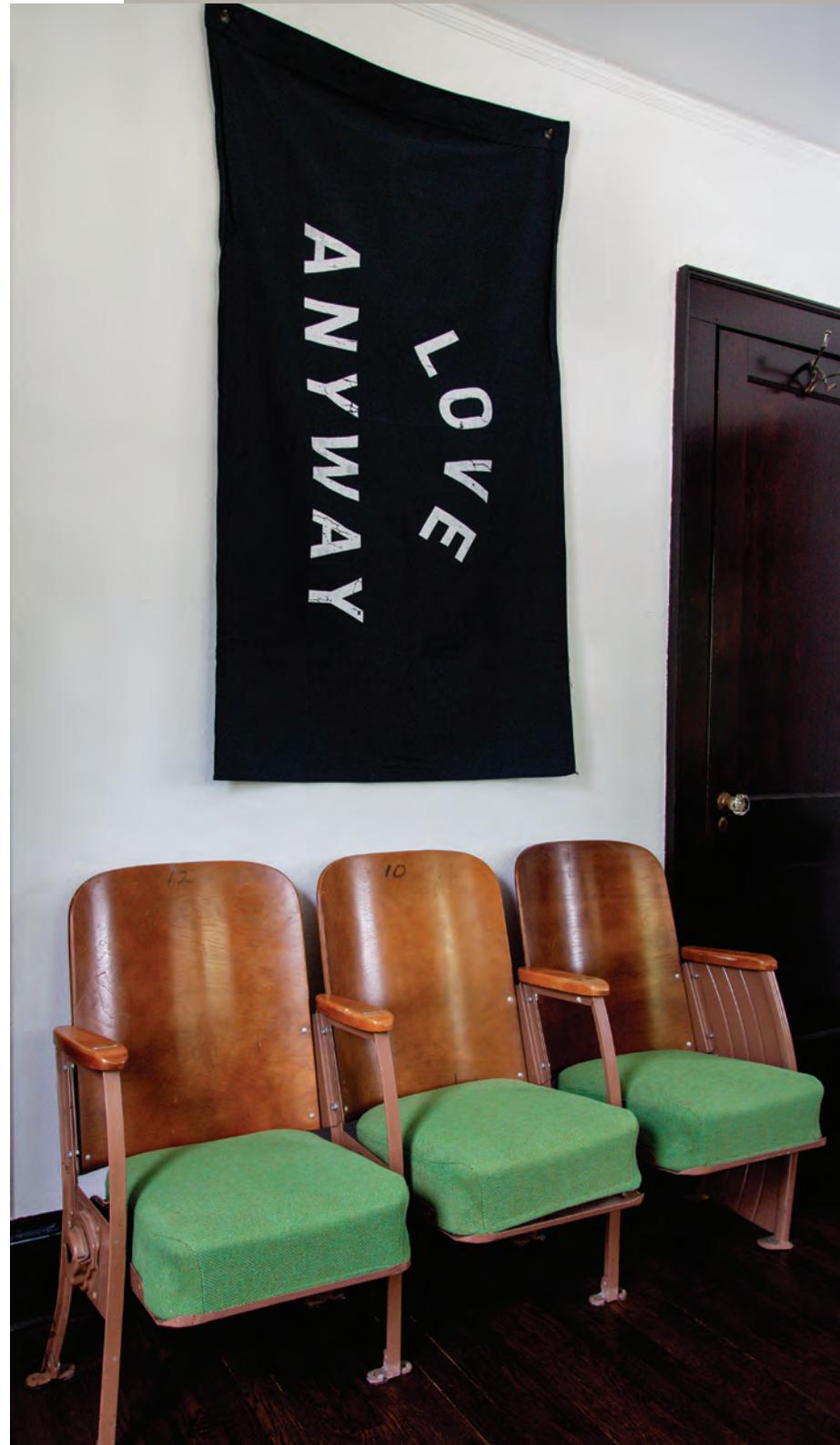
Afghan refugee-made art print holder using wood, leather, and magnets (hanging hardware not included). Dimensions: 11" x 1" x 0.5". Sapele, Bass, or Oakwood.

FLAGS

Flag made of natural fiber cotton, with two grommets for hanging, and featuring "Love Anyway" in bold lettering. Available in black or natural.

\$52 Small: 17" x 27"**\$76 Medium: 23" x 36"****\$99 Large: 34" x 58"**

preemptivelove.org

**PILLOW****\$36**

Handmade in Iraq by our refugee friends, this gray lumbar pillow comes with an insert made of duck down and feathers. Pillowcase: acrylic yarn and cotton. Insert: 90% duck feathers, 10% duck down. Dimensions: 20" x 10". *Extremely limited quantity.*

**COSMETIC BAGS**

Available in three sizes, each closes with a zipper. *Extremely limited quantities.*

\$12 Small, pink: 7.25" x 5.25", zipper length: 5"**\$14 Medium, mustard: 9" x 6.75", zipper length: 6.75"****\$16 Large, green (pictured): 10.75" x 6.75", zipper length: 9"**

REFUGEE-MADE CANDLES

Each candle is handmade by women affected by war in Iraq, and every sale helps fund our peace-making work on the frontlines of conflict: on the US-Mexico border, in Venezuela, Syria, Iraq, and beyond. Each fragrance is made with essential oils.



TERRA COTTA TRIPOD AND JASMINE CANDLES

Our terra cotta bowl candles can be reused after the candle is done. The tripod candle burns with sweet, tropical notes of bay rum and a hint of tobacco. The jasmine candle burns with notes of jasmine, ylang ylang, and rose.

\$34 Tripod: 6" x 6" x 3"

\$18 Small jasmine: 3.25" x 3.25" x 1.75"

\$22 Large jasmine: 4.5" x 4.5" x 2"

AMBER JAR CANDLES

These candles come in two sizes of sleek amber jars and make great gifts. Available scents: lavender, jasmine, vanilla, and black currant & pear.

\$13 Small

\$18 Large



CERAMIC CANDLES

\$32

This decorative ceramic container can serve many other uses after the candle has burned. Available scents: lavender, cinnamon spice.



**SMALL BLUE
CERAMIC CANDLE**

\$21

Scents: lemongrass (fresh, earthy, citrus) or "Spring Garden" (blend of rose, apple, gardenia, and woody notes).



**MINI SALT
CELLAR CANDLE**

\$18

Scents: lavender or musk & bay rum.

MARBLE CANDLE

\$20

Scent: honey vanilla. Colors may vary.

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**DELICATE COP-
PER BOWL WITH
RUFFLES CANDLE**

\$18

Scent: "Sunset," combining the warmth of vanilla and golden peach with base notes of gentle musk.

WOODEN CANDLE

\$35

Each hand-carved wooden vessel is unique, so expect color variations and other slight differences. Candle made of 100% paraffin wax and sunset essential oil. Phthalate-free, meeting California's strict Prop 65 requirements for indoor air quality. Dimensions: 4" x 4" x 3.5".



TIN CANDLES

\$13

These candles are housed in simple, reusable tin containers. Available scents: pine & vanilla, musk & bay rum, or cinnamon spice.

KIDS

Even the youngest among us can be a peacemaker. Kids often see the more beautiful world before our adult eyes catch a glimpse of it. Fuel their imaginations for peace with these gifts. preemptivelove.shop

POSTER

\$30

Peace begins in our hearts and in our homes. As you raise your own peace-makers, this art print (choose from dino or lion design) reminds us all that peace begins within ourselves. Use our refugee-made wooden print hanger to hang your wall art (see page 88).



HAND-STITCHED ANIMALS

\$30

Enjoy the new additions to our hand-stitched animal doll line: dragon, giraffe, sheep, alien unicorn, flamingo, and dinosaur. (Other animals available online as well.) Each doll was hand-stitched by a Syrian woman with love and precision. Dolls may vary in appearance and color. Made with acrylic yarn. *Limited quantities.*

HAND-KNIT BABY CLOTHING

Knitted by refugees using a cotton yarn blend. Each knit you buy represents more than a warm garment for one precious child—it's a love-wrapped future for an entire refugee family. One of our knitters said: "When your baby wears this garment, we pray they are covered in safety and love." *Extremely limited quantity.*



\$32 Dress

- Cream
- Pink



\$32 Overalls

- Brown
- Navy



BABY BEANIE, BOOTY, AND BIB SET

\$32

Dimensions:
Beanie: 7" x 5"
Bib: 7" x 6"
Booty set: 5½" x 2"

- Pink
- Brown



In Honor of Those Lost

Flash-flooding rivers sweep away sons and daughters crossing the Darien Gap. Families stuffed into semitrailers suffocate in stifling heat. Overloaded boats sink, plunging men, women, and children into the sea. ¶ Fleeing poverty or violence, these migrants die without dignity, their bodies forever lost to their loved ones. ¶ We acknowledge their families' irreparable heartache and honor those lost along the way. ¶ We are all migrants, passing through our one, wondrous life. Make the most of this journey. Connect boldly. Love fiercely. Stand with those who possess so little and have endured so much.



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