

The Power of Faces: Looking at the Global Refugee Crisis

Artists Statement

Between 2015 and 2023, over 117 million people globally have been forced to flee their homes due to conflict or persecution. At that massive rate of violence and destruction, that equates to one person becoming a refugee every two seconds.

Every. Two. Seconds.

For the last nine years. And counting...

Hearing statistics like this is staggering to us. We have a hard time picturing what numbers that massive even mean. And if we can't picture this crisis, how can we work towards solving it? For us, we start one face at a time. There can be a tendency for some of the public to confuse a person who happens to be living in a bad, dirty or dangerous situation as being a bad, dirty or dangerous person, and clearly that is not the case. We show people with their inherent courage, beauty, dignity and grace.

In our global photo project "The Power of Faces," we intentionally crop out the context of the refugee camps because we want to focus on the individuals, not merely their label as "refugee." For a fuller perspective, however, it is important we show the oftentimes inhumane living conditions that displaced people are forced to endure every day, which we hope will encourage progress, provide relief, and mobilize resources to spur immediate action as well as develop long-term solutions to address this humanitarian crisis.

We seek to raise awareness of injustice and inequality around the world through our photography, our words and our actions. We started The Power of Faces portrait project because we realized most refugees have lost all their material possessions, including their treasured family photographs. Rather than just taking from refugees as journalists and advocates – taking their photos, taking their stories – we wanted also to give something back if possible.

Having a physical photo of family or friends to hold in one's hands can be a great comfort in times of need, so we bring portable photo printers and instant cameras into refugee camps and give people proper portraits for them to keep, which in many cases are the only physical photos they own since fleeing their homes. We have distributed thousands of portraits to people detained in refugee camps. Having a photo taken by a third party is, in certain ways, validating. It shows that someone else recognizes the subject as a person, as an individual. We have found it is incredibly powerful to give parents a photo of their children smiling. It is incredibly powerful to give a family what may be the only photo of them together as a family unit, whatever that unit may be.

For those people who give us permission to share their portraits, we use those images to raise awareness, including the images in this exhibit. We believe if a person can look into a stranger's eyes perhaps they will fear that stranger less.

Every person in these portraits has their own story to tell. Every person has suffered their own immeasurable pain and loss. We know we cannot encapsulate any person's plight in a single photograph. What we can do, however, is try to add constructively to the broader conversation about refugees, and encourage the public to engage in informed discussion on how to address this crisis.

Our intention is to bring this portrait project to other refugee camps around the world and continue giving proper portraits to displaced individuals. Our goal is to put a human face to the crisis, and remind

The Power of Faces: Looking at the Global Refugee Crisis Artists Statement (continued)

the world that refugees are not mere numbers or statistics, but individuals each with their own hopes and dreams for a better life in a kinder world.

These individuals matter.

We are not so naïve to think our world will be completely free from conflict, but we seek to shine a light on the innocent and oppressed so they are not ignored, forgotten or erased.

Theresa Menders and Daniel Farber Huang

www.ThePowerOfFaces.com

The Power of Faces: Looking at the Global Refugee Crisis Biography

Daniel Farber Huang and Theresa Menders

Daniel Farber Huang and Theresa Menders are a husband-and-wife team of documentary photographers and independent humanitarian advocates who have collaborated on a broad range of pressing social issues, with a long-term focus on women's and children's issues and the alleviation of poverty locally and around the world. Theresa and Daniel co-founded The Power of Faces, a major portrait project raising awareness of the global refugee crisis. The team has documented refugee camps around the world, and actively raise awareness and mobilize resources to aid vulnerable populations.

Their collaborative work is included in the permanent collections of numerous fine art museums and historic institutions, including the International Center of Photography, the New York Historical Society, the Museum of the City of New York, Museum of Chinese in America, the New York City Fire Museum, the Smithsonian and other cultural institutions. Their documentary work has been exhibited at Amnesty International, the Middle East Institute, and numerous universities and colleges.

In the field, Daniel and Theresa are required – often as Expedition Team Leaders – to mobilize scarce resources and negotiate cooperation from disparate stakeholders (ranging from military authorities to law enforcement to NGOs to tribal leaders to local boots-on-the-ground) to achieve mission objectives. They have documented humanitarian and social topics in the Republic of Vanuatu, Haiti, Colombia, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, India, China, Turkey, Bangladesh and several other countries. They are both authors as well as Fellows at The Explorers Club and the Royal Geographical Society.

Daniel also has deep experience in strategic leadership, risk mitigation, and unconventional problem solving. As a result, he is often called upon by a diverse range of organizations to advise on navigating and thriving in rapidly shifting landscapes and uncertain environments. Daniel earned his Masters degree in Journalism from Harvard University, MBA in Finance from The Wharton School, and BA in Economics from New York University.

Theresa is also Senior Director at a thought-leading global healthcare company. She has deep experience in leading complex, multi-faceted growth initiatives, with prior key roles in both start-up and global institutions. Theresa is currently pursuing a DrPH in Public Health Leadership from University of Illinois Chicago and has earned her MPH in Global and Environmental Health from The George Washington University, MA in Latin American Studies and International Economics from Johns Hopkins University, MBA in Finance and Management from The Wharton School, and BS in Mathematics from Dartmouth College.