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War Child: A Child Soldier's Story



Synopsis

In the mid-1980s, Emmanuel Jal was a seven year old Sudanese boy, living in a small village with his parents, aunts, uncles, and siblings. But as Sudan's civil war moved closer, with the Islamic government seizing tribal lands for water, oil, and other resources, Jal's family moved again and again, seeking peace. Then, on one terrible day, Jal was separated from his mother, and later learned she had been killed; his father Simon rose to become a powerful commander in the Christian Sudanese Liberation Army, fighting for the freedom of Sudan. Soon, Jal was conscripted into that army, one of 10,000 child soldiers, and fought through two separate civil wars over nearly a decade. But, remarkably, Jal survived, and his life began to change when he was adopted by a British aid worker. He began the journey that would lead him to change his name and to music: recording and releasing his own album, which produced the number one hip-hop single in Kenya, and from there went on to perform with Moby, Bono, Peter Gabriel, and other international music stars. Shocking, inspiring, and finally hopeful, *War Child* is a memoir by a unique young man, who is determined to tell his story and in so doing bring peace to his homeland.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

As a young kid barely able to carry a gun, Jal, one of the Lost Boys of Sudan, witnessed and perpetrated unspeakable brutality in his country's civil war, but he has not only found refuge in the U.S. but also become an international rap star for peace. His violent memories are graphically relayed in this powerful autobiography. At age 9, he smashed faces with machetes as his friend plunged a bayonet into an enemy's stomach. What is amazing in this story is

how Jal has been able to let go of his rage. His family gone, he was adopted by a British aid worker, who took him to Kenya, where he struggled in school. But eventually, inspired by Gandhi, King, and Mandela, he turned to music and the idea of rapping for peace (Ã¢â¬Å“no tribalism, nepotism, and racism in my motherlandÃ¢â¬Å“). And his songs climbed the charts. With the intense personal story, Jal also brings in political issues not confronted in other books about the Sudanese War, including the crucial role of oil (Ã¢â¬Å“black goldÃ¢â¬Å“) in the ethnic conflict. --Hazel Rochman

--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Ã¢â¬Å“Disturbing and visceral...Jal tells his story in spare, direct, and searing prose that leaves nothing to the imagination and offers a close-up view of the damage done to the psyches of children turned into warriors.Ã¢â¬Å“ Library Journal

Ã¢â¬Å“Frank, unsparing...[A] searing portrait of a war-torn youth turned community advocate and role model.Ã¢â¬Å“ Kirkus Reviews

Ã¢â¬Å“Powerful...[an] intense personal story.Ã¢â¬Å“ Booklist

Ã¢â¬Å“There’s no glamour here, no pitched battles, only unimaginable misery... Utterly grounded, specific and real... You’ll come away from this book loving Emmanuel Jal.Ã¢â¬Å“ Washington Post

Ã¢â¬Å“Fast-paced...stark...a provocative challenge.Ã¢â¬Å“ The New York Times

It is a compelling read, Though it is a heart breaking story, and I had tears in my eye, I did not want to put the book down. His eye for detail is impressive, he creates such vivid pictures, full of imagery and poetic language, Even though he often says that he was angry his tone is mostly gentle and forgiving. I had the opportunity to listen to his interview on BBC, and I was under the impression that he is rather timid, but there was no hint of bitterness which was to be expected of a person who had to endure so much. I have read a number of biographical books written by children who had to endure a hard life, but this one was far more engaging. M.G.Oliveira

I cound't put down Emmanuel's story. He digs deep not only into the detail of his life, but into his emotions throughout. Very good read.

I read this book after watching "The Good Lie." I became more and more interested in the war in Sudan. Reading what this man has witnessed in his life and what hope has helped him overcome, makes me smile. It's hard to imagine what his life was like growing up privileged in America. My hope is to share his story and continue to educate myself on this topic.

This book moved me. It is well written and easy to read as it flows well. It is hard to read because of the emotion it provokes. Leaves the reader with much to contemplate about our very small world and how blind we can be to things outside our protected circles.

I have been wanting to read this book for years and finally purchased a little more than a month ago and was very excited to begin. The first 50 pages or so were difficult but manageable as the horrors that Emmanuel saw were unbelievable, yet something that should be shared. I finally put the book down for good yesterday at page 104 after walking away from it for several weeks distancing myself from the horrors of war that he and other children were forced to endure. Emmanuel did an excellent job of recapturing the horror, fear, and impossibility of his situation. My heart exploded when he watched in horror what was done to his family and knowing that he was not only too young to witness these horrible acts, but also because he was too young to even understand some of the events that were occurring. His descriptions were vivid and life-like...I still remember vividly the horror I felt when he described the events between he and his friend during training. My intent of this review is not to bash the book as it was very well written and drew you in. However, I do wish there were more reviews available before I purchased the book that let me know how emotionally draining and heart-wrenching it was to read. I have never not finished a book that I thought was well-written with a great story line...However, the horrors of this situation truly made reading anymore unbearable.

I would recommend this book to anyone!!! Whether you are interested in the topic of child soldiers or not, this is a book that will make you want to read more about the topic. What Emmanuel Jal has been through is something that most people will never understand, but I believe that this book comes very close.

If you like the book, "A Long Way Gone", this is similar in that in being a well-written memoir. If you have a heart for Africa..interested in learning more about child soldiers/children in warfare, then this would be a great read!

I purchased this book as an assigned reading, hoping that it would give me more insight to the war in Sudan. When I had finished reading it, though, I realized that it was less about the war and more about the way that it affected Jal and his musical career after the war. I was very disappointed by the unsuspected focus of the book, but it was still enjoyable and well-written.

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