



**BEYOND
LABELS**

**DISCOVER THE STORIES
OF THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS
YOU HAVEN'T MET YET**

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Introduction

At JRS, we believe that every person deserves to be seen for who they are: *a unique individual with a story, a future, and immense potential*. Yet, all too often, refugees and internally displaced people are reduced to mere labels—stripped of their identity and reduced to statistics. Behind the label “refugee” lie lives filled with resilience, talent, and dreams.

Beyond Labels is an invitation to *see these individuals as brothers and sisters who belong to our human family* — people who, despite immense challenges, have found inspiring ways to rebuild their lives.

As you turn these pages, remember: **these people are not strangers**. They are your brothers and sisters, separated by different circumstances, perhaps, but connected by something far deeper: the unbreakable bond of humanity. Their stories are now part of yours. And together, we have the power to see each other, beyond labels.

Discover the stories of the brothers and sisters that you haven’t met yet.

READ THEIR STORIES

Chapter 1

FROM REFUGEE TO ACTIVIST: ANGIE'S MISSION TO EMPOWER WOMEN IN EXILE

LEADING THE FIGHT FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS
ACROSS BORDERS.

At 15, Angie was forced to leave her home in Colombia, fleeing the long-standing armed conflict. She found refuge in Ecuador, but one encounter changed her perspective forever.

"I met a mother who had fled like me, with her children. She was struggling — no job, no support, living in terrible conditions. I realized I had to keep fighting, not just for myself, but for people like her."

Determined to advocate for displaced women, Angie channeled her pain into activism. After receiving training from NGOs, including JRS, she became a voice for migrant women's rights, leading seminars in schools and working to set up pathways of support for women survivors of gender-based violence.

"As women and refugees, we face double discrimination. We need to know our rights, fight for them, and make sure they're respected."

Today, Angie works to raise awareness about women's rights, especially in refugee communities, and calls for equal opportunities. **She advocates for the end of gender stereotypes** and pushes for global recognition of refugee women's voices.

ANGIE
Colombia
ACTIVIST



**"LET'S NOT GIVE UP, LET'S
KEEP FIGHTING, AND IN
SMALL STEPS WE WILL
ACHIEVE BIG CHANGES.
REVOLUTIONS ARE BUILT
IN SMALL STEPS, WALKING
SIDE BY SIDE."**



YASSIN
Sudan
RAPPER

Chapter 2

RAP AGAINST ADVERSITY: YASSIN'S FIGHT FOR FREEDOM AND JUSTICE THROUGH MUSIC

TRANSFORMING PAIN INTO POWER:
HOW RAP BECAME A VOICE FOR REFUGEES

"I asked myself, what is humanity? My mind answered: peace, justice, freedom, love. But why do we suffer?"

Through his rap, Yassin addresses the struggles of refugees, the pain of displacement, and the hope for a better future. His lyrics resonate with thousands of other refugees, offering them a sense of solidarity and a way to express themselves. Collaborating with JRS, **Yassin not only performs but also teaches young people** how to use rap to channel their emotions and tell their own stories.

Yassin's story shows us that art can be a powerful tool for healing and activism. He refuses to let the label "refugee" define him. Instead, he uses his voice to challenge stereotypes and push for change.

**"RAP, FOR ME,
IS A MESSAGE:
IT DOESN'T NECESSARILY
CALL FOR VIOLENCE AS
SOME PEOPLE THINK;
IT CAN BE A MESSAGE
OF PEACE."**

Chapter 3

FROM WAR TO WARMTH: HOW OLENA TURNED HER DREAM INTO A COSY CAFÉ

SURVIVING SHELLS, SERVING SMILES:
A UKRAINIAN MOTHER'S PATH TO BUSINESS
SUCCESS

Olena's journey from Ukraine to Poland wasn't just a physical escape — it was a journey of rediscovering her purpose. Fleeing Kherson with her child during the violent onset of war, **she didn't know if she would survive.** *“When we fled, we ran over a grenade. How it didn't explode, I still don't know,”* she recalls.

In Poland, Olena struggled to find work in her previous field as an education specialist. But with support from JRS Poland and the *One Proposal*, a project led by JRS Europe, **she learned Polish and found work in a café.** From that first job, she nurtured a lifelong dream of owning her own café.

Now, Olena is the proud owner of SofiLen Café, a cozy space in Nowy Sacz that welcomes students, tourists, and locals alike. **Her café isn't just a business — it's a symbol of her perseverance, a place where she poured her heart and soul.**

“I treat my café with my whole soul. I want everyone who enters to feel welcome, to feel at home.”

OLENA
Ukraine
**CAFETERIA
OWNER**

**OLENA'S STORY
IS PROOF THAT EVEN
IN THE DARKEST TIMES,
DREAMS CAN STILL
BLOOM.**

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Chapter 4

NAILS, DREAMS, AND DETERMINATION: WILIKON'S JOURNEY FROM REFUGEE TO ENTREPRENEUR

FROM THE STREETS TO SUCCESS:
BUILDING A FUTURE ONE NAIL AT A TIME

When Wilikon fled the Central African Republic and arrived in Cameroon, **he carried little more than his skills as a nail technician.** His journey, marked by violence and loss, didn't dampen his entrepreneurial spirit. After starting out by walking the streets with a small basket of supplies, **Wilikon attended business school, with the support of JRS.**

With a small grant from JRS, **he was able to open his own nail salon and officially register his business.** "I went from carrying my basket around the streets to owning my shop," he proudly shares. His salon has since become a hub of beauty and confidence, with clients returning regularly, drawn not just by his skill, but by his warmth.

Balancing work with evening classes in Communications and Marketing, Wilikon dreams of expanding his business and mentoring others. **He hopes to open another salon and train his siblings and other refugees.** "I want to give back. I want to help others, just like JRS helped me."

WILIKON
Central African
Republic
NAIL TECHNICIAN

**WILIKON'S STORY
IS A POWERFUL REMINDER
THAT EVEN IN THE FACE
OF DISPLACEMENT,
IT IS POSSIBLE TO MAKE
A LIFE OUT OF A PASSION.**


Conclusion

The stories of Angie, Yassin, Olena, and Wilikon show us that **behind every label is a person — an activist, an artist, a dreamer, an entrepreneur.** They remind us that talent, courage, and potential are not defined by borders or circumstances.

Join us in supporting JRS and help more people like Angie, Yassin, Olena, and Wilikon not just survive, but thrive.

Together, we can break the barriers of labels and create a world where everyone is seen for who they truly are.

WE HOPE YOU CAN MEET THE BROTHER OR SISTER YOU HAVEN'T MET YET.



Support people like Angie, Yassin, Olena, and Wilikon, so they can rebuild their lives and contribute to their communities.

<https://jrs.net/en/donate/>



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