

Entry Title: Our World

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Entry:

Our Country

They sit at the back of the classroom mutely. Ignored by everyone around them.

I wonder what their story is?

They are cornered by people when they're walking down the street.

Take off your Hijab! Where did you come from? Go back to where you came from! No one wants you here!

I want you here, I think. But I am too scared to say that. Too scared to speak up for them.

They sit crying in a corner. Alone. People walk past them as if they do not matter at all.

I want to sit next to them, to comfort them but I don't know how.

Why did you have to leave your home? Did you have to leave anyone behind? Will you have to go back? Can you stay here forever?

The questions burn inside me.

I want to know the answers, but I am too afraid to ask.

People warn me to stay away.

They don't belong here. They're nothing but trouble. They're taking out jobs our homes. It's their fault that everything's going wrong. Don't go near them. They're bad luck. They got here illegally. Their country didn't want them so now their here to mess up ours.

I don't know what to believe.

These are things people have told me all my life, but they don't look like someone who is here to ruin things.

They look sad. They look alone.

Looks can be deceiving they warn me. Don't trust them they say.

I want to trust them. To me, they look like people. People who need help. People who are treated unfairly. People who are ignored. People who deserve a home.

I am too scared to ask the questions that are burning inside my mind but if you never ask, you'll never know.

I sit down beside them. They flinch away from me as if fearful I will hurt them.

Are we really that bad? I wonder. Do we really treat them so badly they fear us?

They start to move away.

"Wait," I say, "please".

They pause and their eyes flicker up to meet mine.

"Are you ok?"

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They say I'm too young. They say I don't understand. I'm not. I know more than they do. They did not choose to leave their homes. They did not choose to be treated so badly by others. They did nothing wrong. We did. You just have to take the time to talk. To sit near them. To try and understand.

People don't try.

They make their judgments without taking the time know if their right.

It's safer to say the same thing as everyone else, to stay invisible at the back of the crowd.

To do nothing is the same as to do everything. To watch them be treated badly is the same as to treat them badly yourself. To keep yourself safe makes thing less safe for them.

Refugees and asylum seekers are people just like everyone else. This is not my country or their country. It is our country, and we must share it.