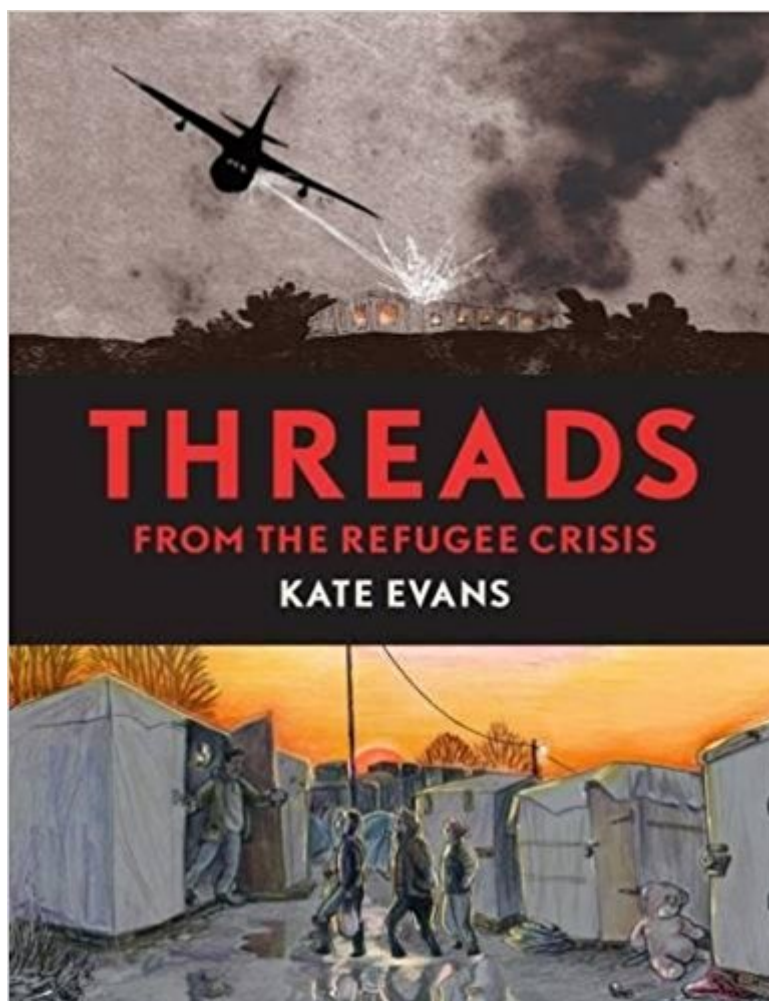


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Threads: From The Refugee Crisis



Synopsis

A heartbreaking, full-color graphic novel of the refugee drama In the French port town of Calais, famous for its historic lace industry, a city within a city arose. This new town, known as the Jungle, was home to thousands of refugees, mainly from the Middle East and Africa, all hoping, somehow, to get to the UK. Into this squalid shantytown of shipping containers and tents, full of rats and trash and devoid of toilets and safety, the artist Kate Evans brought a sketchbook and an open mind. Combining the techniques of eyewitness reportage with the medium of comic-book storytelling, Evans has produced this unforgettable book, filled with poignant images – by turns shocking, infuriating, wry, and heartbreaking. Accompanying the story of Kate's time spent among the refugees – the insights acquired and the lives recounted – is the harsh counterpoint of prejudice and scapegoating arising from the political right. *Threads* addresses one of the most pressing issues of modern times to make a compelling case, through intimate evidence, for the compassionate treatment of refugees and the free movement of peoples. Evans's creativity and passion as an artist, activist, and mother shine through.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“Through Kate Evans's firsthand report from the Calais Jungle we meet the refugees, get a vivid look at their living conditions, and witness the impressive resourcefulness of the volunteer operation that sprang up to help. Evans transforms the human

flood into shimmering droplets as she works and eats with the refugees, getting

to know them as individuals, forging intimate connections while sketching their portraits. Evans both captures the wrenching reality of a seemingly intractable problem and makes an eloquent argument for its solution: open borders.

• Alison Bechdel, author of *Are You My Mother?* and *Fun Home* “It’s impossible to read *Threads* without feeling an emotional response, from outrage to tenderness to deep frustration.

• James Yeh, Vice “*Threads* is helpful, and even necessary: as existentialists like Camus and Sartre pointed out, we really feel compassion and empathy when we see the suffering of others. Which makes visual-oriented journalism, like this *comics journalism*, so powerful: we see the people Evans saw and met.

• John Yohe, *Comics Bulletin* “This colorful, large format graphic novel, which Verso is publishing in June, takes readers into the heart of the jungle; the troubled, overcrowded refugee camp in Calais, France, that was home to many African and Middle Eastern refugees until it was evacuated in 2016. British cartoon-artist Kate Evans fashions a moving, visceral record of the families and conversations she witnessed there, which she juxtaposes with images of anti-immigrant rhetoric displayed on cell phones.

• Eleanor Sheehan, *PopSugar* “A moving first-person account of a volunteer in the refugee camp at Calais, France.

• Publishers Weekly “[*Threads*] focuses on a specific place and individual experiences, but they form a universal composite of suffering that has been met with varying degrees of sympathy, panic and fatigue from host societies in Europe and North America | Evans challenges the idea of where we consider the legitimate crossing of boundaries to begin: *Migritude* is the way of the world today, it can be resisted or embraced, but regardless, it is part of us.

• Michelle Chen, *Culturestrike* “With a heavy heart and bearing artistic gifts, Kate Evans draws the faces of refugees coming from Syria, Africa, and elsewhere to *The Jungle*, a makeshift camp in Calais, France, and in doing so Evans captures the refugees’ full humanity, intelligence, and suffering as they search for family, home, and dignity. An antidote to the anti-immigrant populism that is raging across the world, *Threads* is the real story that puts a human face on a very topical news item.

• Book Riot “Evans’ latest graphic novel recounts her time volunteering at one of the many refugee camps that have sprung up along the French coastline to house Africans and Middle Easterners who have fled their home countries. Using her talents as an artist to draw portraits of the camp’s inhabitants, Evans gets to know some of them and their stories | [*Threads*] has an agenda, but it’s an important one, and Evans’ account of the refugee crisis is moving nonetheless.

• Eva Volin, *Booklist* “Emphasizes the power of comics journalism to not simply

depict, but to interpretively transform. — PopMatters

Kate Evans is a cartoonist, artist, and activist. She is the author of numerous books and zines, including *Red Rosa: A Graphic Biography of Rosa Luxemburg*; *Bump: How to Make, Grow and Birth a Baby*; and *Funny Weather: Everything You Didn't Want to Know about Climate Change but Probably Should Find Out*. She was awarded the John C. Laurence Award in 2016.

Kate Evans is a British volunteer at a refugee camp called "The Jungle" in Calais, France. She is an artist. Besides helping with donations and inventory, and she spent time drawing the people she met. It was a brilliant thing to do, because these people can't be photographed. If they are identified in the Jungle, it will ruin their chance of moving on to somewhere else. Without pictures, people don't know what refugees are really like. Kate Evans has taken on the job of introducing us to these people and showing us what their lives are like. She has used her talent to produce a kind of sketchbook documentary. It's like no other book I have ever seen. She introduces us to some wonderful characters, like a small child with a soccer ball, a pizza shop owner, a yoga instructor, and a midwife. A single mother is preparing childbirth in primitive conditions. Everybody is just doing the best they can to retain the trappings of a normal human life, like making tea and sharing it with their friends. Pretending things are going to get better, that someone in some government somewhere will care enough to help. Some donations come in. Things get a little better. Then they get worse. Then more people arrive. The locals are sick of it. The cops harass the refugees. People are beaten and killed. Tiny dwellings are bulldozed. Losing everything you have, and then losing it again, tortures people's minds. It shouldn't be happening. Modern women should not be giving birth on the mud floor of a hut. It's inhuman. We should not let fellow members of our species be degraded like this. There is a lot of harmful rhetoric being spread around these days about refugees. That's the only side of the story most people hear. The refugees' side of the story gets barely any press. There is not much opportunity for the refugees to speak up for themselves. They are always afraid. They don't vote, and they have no representation. They have no power and don't want to be identified. They are practically invisible. Kate Evans has given the refugees in the Calais Jungle faces and voices. She makes us see them as people like us. It's a lot harder to look away after you have seen what they look like, and how they act, and what they have to say about how things are for them. Don't look away. Read the book and share it with people. Kate Evans has shined a light on something that was previously hidden from view. Now it's time we all take a good long look, and then do something about it.

I'm going to admit outright I had no idea about what has been occurring in Calais in regard to the refugees. I know they're out there, but I didn't know anything about their living conditions or what they went through just to get out of their country. I just knew they existed. So, in regard to shining a light on some of what's happened in France and the struggles these people have undergone, I came into *Threads* as a blank slate. Evans does well to not make the book completely depressing. It could tip over into absolute darkness at any time, but she manages to portray both the negatives of the situation and the hopes and dreams of the people throughout. That said, the viewpoint is limited to the author's experiences. There's a sense throughout that we're not able to experience the whole picture which is frustrating yet realistic. Sometimes the tone tips into a call to action rather than being informational and that's when the book falters. Had the author managed to remain more neutral throughout, it might have been less impactful when we see how the police treat the refugees or other instances of abuse. It's hard to not see the refugees as people and the police as machines at times. Still, as an introduction of sorts, *Threads* is useful. It tells of modern day occurrences not long after they have happened, so there's a rawness present. Through it all, there is also hope - even in the darkest moments.

The very first Graphic Novel that I read was Joe Sacco's *Palestine*. It was suggested to me and I was a little jaded about reading a "comic book." But I was struck about how moving it was. Something about that delivery made it a personally involving and moving. It made Joe's experiences in Palestine seem intimate and real. This book did exactly the same thing. It took a very abstract news item that I read a few times become a very personalized, very real story. This book brings the refugee experience to life in a way that news and magazine stories cannot. It is engaging, it is fascinating it is real. Something about this medium makes it feel like a close friend is sharing the story with you and you are right along with her. And for some reason, even the mundane makes it through this narrative. News stories do not tell the stories of the problems of cooking, or finding sterile bottles for babies, nor does it show the humanity and generosity of the people involved, both refugees and volunteers. Something about this media seems to be a truer face to the individuals involved. Artistically, the book is solid. The illustrations are loose but propel the story on. But I think it is the story that really carries it. This is a must read for everyone so they can see the face of the refugee problem in Europe and beyond. ...So many stories shared here.

With a heavy heart and bearing artistic gifts, Kate Evans draws the faces of refugees coming from

Syria, Africa, and elsewhere to "The Jungle," a makeshift camp in Calais, France, and in doing so Evans captures the refugees' full humanity, intelligence, and suffering as they search for family, home, and dignity. An antidote to the anti-immigrant populism that is raging across the world, *Threads* is the real story that puts a human face on a very topical news item. We learn of these families' and individuals' struggles at the hands of police, racist gangs, and human traffickers. We learn of their struggle for food, for blankets, and bread. Much to our dismay, the French police have arbitrary rules like no dry bedding or bread allowed in the camps. The cruelty and immense wave of suffering Evans sees and captures in her art appears to be crushing her but like the generous soul she is, Evans goes deeper and deeper into the camps and finds people opening up and sharing their stories. The art work is excellent, the stories are heart-breaking. This is a must-read for people wanting a human dimension on a policy wonk "current event." Highly recommended.

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