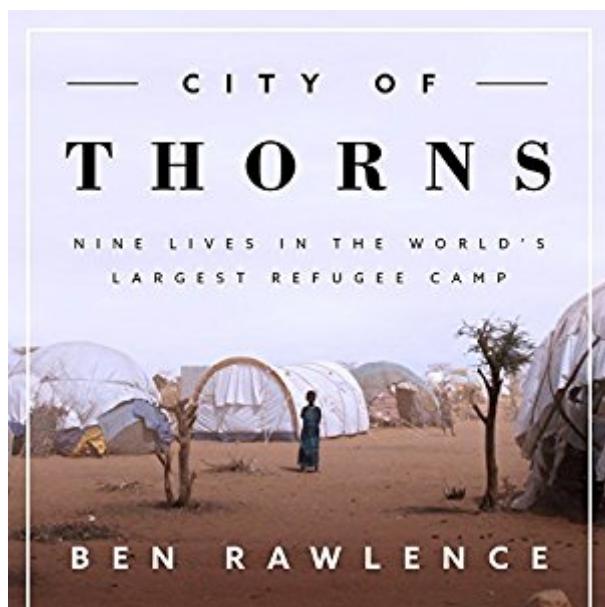


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# City Of Thorns: Nine Lives In The World's Largest Refugee Camp



## **Synopsis**

Situated hundreds of miles from any other settlement, deep within the inhospitable desert of Northern Kenya, Dadaab is a city like no other. Its buildings are made from mud, sticks, or plastic; its entire economy is gray; and its citizens survive on rations and luck. Over the course of four years, Ben Rawlence became a firsthand witness to a strange and desperate limbo-land, getting to know many of those who have come there seeking sanctuary. Among them are Guled, a former child soldier who lives for football; Nisho, who scrapes an existence by pushing a wheelbarrow and dreaming of riches; and schoolgirl Kheyro, whose future hangs upon her education. In *City of Thorns*, Rawlence interweaves the stories of nine individuals to show what life is like in the camp and to sketch the wider political forces that keep the refugees trapped there. Rawlence combines intimate storytelling with broad sociopolitical investigative journalism, doing for Dadaab what Katherine Boo's *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* did for the Mumbai slums. Lucid, vivid, and illuminating, *City of Thorns* is an urgent human story with deep international repercussions, brought to life through the people who call Dadaab home.

## **Book Information**

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 11 hours and 49 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Tantor Audio

Audible.com Release Date: April 26, 2016

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B01E7KK256

Best Sellers Rank: #46 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > Africa #92 in Books > History > Africa > East Africa #278 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > International & World Politics > African

## **Customer Reviews**

Excellent, interesting, and easy to read. I'm a teacher in a school with many Somali refugee students and while taking Somali classes through community ed. the teacher (who was from Dadaab camp) recommended it. I think the book and Rawlence's experiences with the people in the book help most of us who have minimal knowledge of the situation gain some perspective on the

refugee experience and the many challenges we never think about. It's hard to imagine growing up and living in an area the geographical size of New Orleans with 400,000+ others and no building permits near war torn areas where no one wants you, not the Kenyan government or the largely controlled territories of Al-Shabaab. Google image Dadaab to get an idea of what the camps look like. If you want to gain some perspective on the situation in Somalia and refugee experiences in general, this is a must read!

I completed this book left with a feeling of profound sadness. This was an eye-opening account of what these people endure on a daily basis - war surrounding them, lack of food, privacy, the elements, and stuck right in the middle of the inevitable tug of war regarding politics. This should be required reading. Just this week my church sponsored a family of 13, I believe, who had been living in a refugee camp for 19 years. They now have housing thanks to members of the congregation who answered the call for assistance. The culture shock will be something they will all have to come to terms with, but I can only imagine their joy.

This is the first review I have ever written on any anything. This book has changed me and made my world larger in understanding who Jesus says my neighbor is. I love the way this book was written, it does give you facts, but more importantly it gives you real people living in this nightmare and trying to survive and hold on to hope. It made me cry for the horrendous acts of oppression and evil people are capable of doing to each other without a conscience of what their doing. It made me realize that people without hope are people in danger of committing horrible acts against humanity to survive. I gave this book 5 stars because I can never be the same after reading it. Being changed for the good of my fellow man is what makes any book worth reading.

I have worked with resettled refugees in the US and NZ, and with war-affected families in Uganda, so I am very familiar with the memories they cannot escape. Ben Rawlence does an excellent job of capturing the rawness of life in Dadaab. Especially in this time during which unknowledgeable citizens spout off judgmental stereotypes about refugees, this book can enlighten readers about the terrible conditions they face.

For me, it is hard for me to read on my iPhone with the Kindle app, but it is still an interesting book. I would buy it in paper form instead, though. I think it is easier to flip real paper pages back and forth than to flip virtual pages back and forth. That is just my preference and has nothing to do with the

content other than I like to go back and look at the maps as I read about the various places. I imagine that my students and/or their families have had similar experiences to the people in this book and I think it helps me to understand them better. I wish everyone would read it whether they work with refugees or not.

Never have I gotten to know refugee camp residents so well as in this book. I am not an aid worker so I haven't had real-world experience, but as far as what you can get from a book this is the best I have read. I have read other books written by aid workers that describe the experience for them, but Ben Rawlence has made this book 98% about the story of the refugee camp residents - from their perspective. He evidently got to know the people he wrote about very well and very meticulously documented their stories. He then tells their stories very well. He also had each of the people review what he wrote about them (or actually read to them what he wrote) to make sure that his description of their suffering, joys, frustration, pain, and thoughts were all accurate. If you want to know what really goes on in a refugee camp, (and some of the international forces that drive the camp policy), and what compels a people to take refuge in a camp (and to leave it) this is the best book you can read.

A rare glimpse inside Dadaab, perhaps the largest of the many refugee camps in the world, in eastern Kenya. It focuses on the day by day lives of several people living in the camp. It also describes some aspects of camp operations. This book will provide an essential background for anyone from a developed country who wants to support, plan projects for, or engage with refugees in camps.

This is a remarkable work and it is a must for anyone interested in the human condition in our world. Rawlence deftly blends the micro level of individual lives and their experiences with the macro backdrop of the politics in the Horn of Africa, as well as the bureaucratic struggles of the refugee agencies. Reads like a novel, but is sometimes terrifyingly and frustratingly real.

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