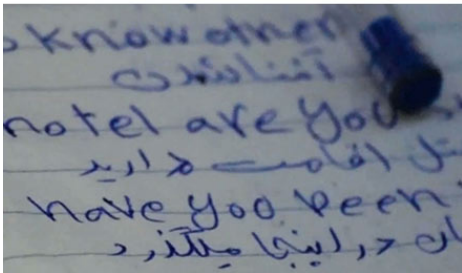


Sheltering Strangers

English Transcript



Sheltering Strangers (2018) was produced by Angelos Bougas and Marilyn Smith for Guestbook Project's Documentary initiative.

Co-Producers

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Participants

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SHELTERING STRANGERS

Eleni T Every morning—believe me—every morning was so many life jackets. Yellow, all the beach was yellow! Well if you see these people that suffers, we have here hospitality for everybody. Why not also for these people?

Hamed M My name is Sayed "Hamed" Mosawi—my complete name. So people call me Hamed. And I'm 22 years old. When the Taliban took our city on 2016, I was an English teacher—I was teaching English at that time. And it is really risky, and it is really dangerous for me once they knew if I was teaching English. They think that I'm doing a sin. They have a different type of mentality. They think that—ok, I'm just making them ready to work for the Americans.

So, the Taliban had a different mentality. I had different a mentality. I was serving the society, I was serving my people to be able to make their future.

ET From my side, we always gave food and clothes. That happened in my property. That makes me understand that these young boys was in jeopardy, really in jeopardy, and they were in the middle of nowhere at somebody else's coast. The reason that these children was here was not their mistake. Somebody else did the mistake and put them in the chaos.

At that time, many people from Kos, they tried to feed them. They try to give food and clothes for free. And we support them for a few months, but they still coming. So many. Then the government has to take it over. It was not the amount that we can manage it locally.

HM I didn't know anything about my future. I was so bored. I was so...like, I was...you know, the other problem is that I was away from the family. I get homesick and I miss my family. It was hard for me to handle everything right away. I was like...what happens for me if I would get a negative result?

So, finally the translator came to me and is like, "oh your case is accepted."

My hands were just shaking. My body was just shaking. I couldn't believe it because it was, you know, the lady told me, "okay, do your signature over here." My hands were just shaking, it was like such a such an emotional moment for me. I was like, "I can't believe it. Is it true that I'm accepted?" Finally I got my Asylum, and then I was trying to get ready for other parts of life, you know, other adventures of life which is which was finding a job.

ET Well, accommodation was for 32 kids. We had place for staying, we fixed a place as a dining room and also for playroom. And we kept one room always for the children that they came directly from the police or the when they found at the beach until the doctors will check them because during they stay we had many ill kids. We had kids with no arms. We had kids that have been walking more than seven days in Turkey. Some of them they lost their families. Some of them...they had bad experience during their stay in Turkey until they approach Kos.

And I think these children, they came close to us. We have a very good connection every day, and I had the chance to hear a few stories because every child has different story. And even they call me Mommy. Well, it was more than one and a half year that I have everyday a connection with them, approaching them. Because at the beginning they were very closed, they didn't speak to nobody. But slowly, slowly they became open and start eating like the other children and play.

Well, it was like a big family for me. They kept them busy, very clean. Once a week they visit the mosque in Kos town. They have support from many ways.

HM Like, seeing children smiling around and hanging around, you know...

They're children. They don't know about difficulties. They can see that what is happening outside and inside—they can see that. But when I look at them—okay—like when there is a riot, or when there is a fight or fire, I realized they're still smiling and laughing, you know? When I look at them it makes me so happy, and sometimes I feel like I wish I could be a child. If you were a child, you wouldn't—you wouldn't realize the difficulties of—the difficulties of life. You would just like be a child and smile around them and laugh. Because I get frustrated, but when I look at them I just—it motivates me, and it inspires me to just struggle a lot, to... to fight, you know? To fight with difficulties.

I started doing jump rope just because I didn't have anything to do during the day. I was bored. I was doing nothing. I was like trying to think okay... You don't have anything to do. Why are you not doing something? Why are you not learning something to make it, you know, to make your life better? And also it's... it's kind of service for people, you know? It's kind of serving people because that was—from the day that I started teaching, my aim or my goal was serving people. And in the future I want to serve people in a way that I could be effective and productive.

ET I hope all these children to find a warm nest, families or good future.

HM I hope one day everything finishes, and even I was thinking that one day I would be that last person that I would be able to lock the door of this camp and then leave the camp. I hope that one day everything ends and people would have a life full of happiness and joy, and they don't have to worry about living, they don't have to worry about war, they don't have to worry about throwing rocks, they don't have to worry about rain, they don't have to worry about their shelter.

[Narrator] No man is an island, but it may take just one with a lion heart to bridge the sea between two islands.

This document has been provided by the Guestbook Project, an international project committed to transforming hostility into hospitality, enmity into empathy, and conflict into conversation.

Sheltering Strangers was produced as part of the Guestbook Project's Documentary initiative, creating opportunities for young people to reflect on communities that have been polarized by religion, race, ethnicity, or culture to come together to exchange stories and produce digital videos exploring the nature of that which divides them.

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