

# A Diasporic Analysis of “We are Displaced” by Malala Yousafzai

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## Abstract

*The study investigates the book “We are Displaced: My Journey and Stories from Refugee Girls Around the World” (2019) by Malala Yousafzai in the milieu of refugees around the world. It qualitatively reconnoiters the text for the representation of the exiles: the treatment of the diaspora by the host country and their traumatic condition. The book is analyzed based on diaspora, a theoretical model given by William Safran in “Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return” (1991). This research discovers the journey of refugee girls, who migrate from their land, have no education, no home, and no country to call their own. This research is to explore the particular text from a diasporic perspective to unveil the hidden realities regarding political and social discussion of ethnic communities, immigrants, and exiles. In most treatments of the relationship between minorities and majorities, little attention has been devoted to the diaspora. The researcher found the impression of diaspora theory on Malala’s “We are Displaced,” the effect of dispersion on people’s lives; they lost their families, relatives, and communities, even their own identification. Many people displaced by violence have no safe place to live; among them were doctors, journalists, lawyers, teachers, poets, priests, and children. Many people have to rebuild their lives in foreign places and have lost so much, even their loved ones, just for learning a new language, a new culture, and a new way of being.*

**Keywords:** *Refugees, Diaspora, Migration, Immigrants, Violence.*

## INTRODUCTION

The book “We are Displaced: My Journey and Stories from Refugee Girls Around the World” (2019) by Malala Yousafzai, one of the Pakistani younger activists, who received several awards for her writings and her contribution to child education and women’s rights in particular. She was born on July 12, 1997, in Mingora, Pakistan, located in the country’s Swat Valley. She also wrote the books “I am Malala” and “We are Displaced”.

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In the book “We are Displaced,” Yousafzai endures her own dreadful story with nine other refugee girls belonging to different regions and communities around the world. She explains the miseries of her own life as well as those girls who are still facing these problems with their family, relatives, community, and culture. Malala raises her voice on behalf of these girls who were displaced from their countries and highlights the causes of their fleeing from their homelands. In this book, she demarcates the situation of women through nine short stories of different girls beginning to different communities and cultures. However, these stories remind us of those girls who are still in worse situations. This study will provide a clear and concise picture of basic women’s rights, including education, food, shelter, etc.

This study examines the field of diaspora studies. ‘From the Greek meaning ‘to disperse’ (OED). Diasporas, the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions, is a central historical fact of colonization’ (Ashcraft et al., 2007). Diaspora study is an academic field established in the late 20th century to study dispersed ethnic populations, which are often termed diaspora individuals. The usage of the term diaspora implies forced migration due to exclusion, victimization, domination, discrimination, or war, especially nationalist, political, as well as social conflicts.

The book “We Are Displaced” discusses the journey of refugee girls (i.e., Zaynab, Marie Claire, Maria, Analisa) who migrate from their land, have no education, no home, and no country to call their own. The book was published in 2019 and opens with the displaced story of Malala’s own and with the nine other refugee girls’ stories who also become part of such a disaster. Whom she has met on her journey girls who have lost their community, relatives, and often the only world they’ve ever known.

### **Research questions**

1. How does diaspora theory function in the account of Malala’s book “we are displaced?”
2. What are the social and political causes for exiles in “We are displaced?”

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

William Safran (1991), one of the first authors to be published in the review *Diaspora* edited by Kachig Tololyan, suggests that in his view, the term diaspora could be considered a “metaphoric designation” and could apply to various populations (expatriates, political refugees and so on).

Cohen (1997) quotes from this perspective: “diasporas are positioned somewhere between “nations-states” and “traveling cultures” in that they involve dwelling in a nation-state in a physical sense but travelling in a celestial or spiritual sense that falls outside the nation-state’s space or time zone.”

The nation-state, as Paul Gilroy (1994) labeled it, is the established means to terminate diaspora dispersal: on one side, through assimilation, and, on the other side, through return. On the other hand, we are also at a convergence point because all these studies lead to the same questions about the connection between nation-states and diasporas.

Sumathi (2013) stated that the term "diaspora" is used to describe a new form of literature that emerges from immigrants who have deeply immersed themselves in the culture and society of

their host country. Immigrant literature conveys the emotional experience of relocation in a strange country for the immigrant. The key preoccupations of the contemporary immigrant literature encompass nostalgia, guilt towards the home country, and intergenerational tensions arising between immigrant parents and their American-born offspring. A multitude of studies have emerged on current post-colonial literature, criticism, and theory as a result of the experience of migrating and living in diaspora.

In the case of Malala's approach towards representing refugee girls, Fernanda Santos (2019) indicated that in this universal experience of Malala Yousafzai's *We are Displaced*, an inspiring and timely book that carpets the political baggage from the words "migrant" and "refugee," telling the deeply personal stories of displacement and disruption that were lived by Yousafzai and nine other girls. At times, it feels as if the narrator is sharing her story with trusted new friends. Contextual information at the start of each chapter explaining, for example, the persecution of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, offers easy-to-digest lessons in world affairs.

Mukhopadhyay (2018) conducted a study to offer critical analysis of Stuart Hall's idea of "Diasporic Identity." The study provided a quick definition of diaspora and diasporic identity and an attempt was made to comprehend Stuart Hall's concepts of cultural identity. Knowing the origin of the name "Caribbean," it also attempted to comprehend Hall's description of diaspora identity, specifically the Caribbean identity. Furthermore, the study also examined a few noteworthy pieces written by poets from the Caribbean and attempt to find examples of Hall's concept of diasporic identity in them. Further, Borgohain and Ammari (2022), in their study, analyzed and compared the representation of identity negotiation in Indian literature, both within India and internationally, in the context of cultural encounters, clashes, and amalgamation. The article primarily examined four books: Aravind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008), Bapsi Sidwa's *Water* (2006), Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006), and Bharathi Mukherjee's *Jasmine* (1989). The authors explored the concept of identity within specific cultural frameworks, such as the Bengali community in the USA, the Brahmins in the Indian caste system, the varying levels of privilege among Indian individuals, and the dominant ambitions of the middle class that manifest in politics and result in socio-cultural disparities. Due to the intricate social hierarchy enforced by the Indian caste system, migrants often face restrictions on their identity. This can have a significant impact on their economic prosperity and consequently influence the development of their sense of self. Hence, it is assumed that the benefit derived by the main characters, including both the immigrants and the native inhabitants in their country, includes both financial prosperity and preservation of their cultural heritage. Despite experiencing feelings of alienation, dislocation, and rootlessness, the main characters in the aforementioned works successfully establish a sense of belonging for themselves, whether in their native country or in a foreign one, despite facing social, political, and cultural challenges.

Macwan (2014) examined the dilemma of name and the perception of identity and belongingness among the characters of Indian descent and immigrants in the United States in the novel "The Namesake" by Jhumpa Lahiri. *The Namesake* serves as an excellent resource for understanding the concept of Diaspora in the current day. It effectively portrays the lives of first and second generation immigrants, their quest for identity and sense of belonging, and the significance of the term 'Diaspora' through its plot and characters. Jhumpa Lahiri's status as the offspring of Indian immigrants, coupled with her relocation from England (her birthplace) to America, categorizes her as both a migrant and a Diaspora writer. In her works, she has explored the Indian Diaspora and depicted scenarios that expose the inherent instability of the notions of identity and cultural

divergence within the Diaspora.

McKinley Tretler is a communication manager at Malala fund. On January 8, 2019, McKinley Tretler, a communication manager at Malala Fund, highlighted the importance of not losing sight of the humanity behind the statistics in the current refugee crisis, as believed by Malala. Lucinda Dyer believed that Yousafzai being shot by the Pakistani Taliban for speaking out about a girl's right to an education is familiar to many readers, but it's a powerful one that deserves retelling. Violence, including bombings, the brutal killing of women and children, and rapes, serves as a constant backdrop, but none of the incidents are vividly described. By using inspiring personal stories 13 to highlight the global refugee crisis, Yousafzai more than fulfilled her mission in writing the book: to help people "understand that refugees are ordinary people" (Malala xi).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The theoretical framework chosen for the investigation of the novel under study is chief of the journal nationalism and ethnic politics. William Safran (1991), professor of political science, proposes six characteristics for the diaspora. In his work, "Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return" (1991), included in the journal diaspora. According to him, individuals of a diaspora maintain a collective memory of their initial homeland, idealize their familial home, dedicate themselves to restoring "the original homeland," and continue to establish connections with "that homeland" in various ways. The data is then manually analyzed, and the textual lines are loaded with representations of refugees before being analyzed to provide answers to the research objectives.

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

The examination of the book proved to be an interesting task due to the fact that it was discovered to be abundant with evidence that matched the philosophical approach that Safran (1991) takes towards diaspora studies. He demonstrates the ethnic representations, the reasons and conditions for dispersal, their traumatic pasts, and their emotional attachment to the homeland. According to him, people of a diaspora preserved a collective memory of their homeland; they idealized their familial home, were dedicated to the restoration of 'the original homeland,' and continued in a variety of ways to 'relate to that homeland (Safran, 1991). In the case of Zaynab, the victim of war and traumatic experiences in her homeland, Yemen, besides all the miseries she faced, she has an emotional bond with her homeland, Yemen. Malala narrates her painful story right after she won in her book.

Yemen was in the state of a civil war due to unstable conditions in the year 2010-11; 'the revolution officially began at the beginning of 2011. It was influenced by uprisings in Tunisia that led to regime change. Inspired by the results, activists in other Arab countries took note, and protests spread quickly to Syria, Yemen, Egypt, and Libya. In Yemen, the people wanted its president, who had been in power for thirteen years, to step down (Malala, 58). The narrator further says that the situation became worse when stories circulated of innocent people being killed, even children coming home from schools. No one was safe (59). As Safran suggests in his theoretical ideas, "the residents have and show a collective memory of the homeland they have been dispersed from, their physical location history, and achievements". In the case of Zaynab, whose traumatic biography was narrated by Malala, she also has the same strong connections with her homeland. In all this

miserable state of war in Yemen, like others, Zaynab got an opportunity to flee from Yemen to the United States. She never wished to leave her country due to her past memories. "The only place I had ever known, my home, had become dangerous. Yemen had become terrifying, but at least it was familiar. It was my home. It was also the last place I saw my grandmother alive. Leaving Yemen somehow felt as if I were leaving her" (61). She took all things which smelled like her grandmother, her clothes, her pictures, documents, and poetry books wrapped in a bad sheet of her grandmother on which she has died. That was the symbol of her, whom she hugged tightly and placed in the bag.

Safran further exaggerates his ideas and states that "the population has a notion that they will never fully be accepted in the host country they arrive and reside in, therefore they isolate or alienate from it" (1991). He demonstrates that people who migrate to other countries are not fully accepted by their host country, the same situation faced by Marie Claire, a refugee girl who left the Congo during the rare moments between unspeakable violence (p. 142). She migrated from the Congo to Zambia, where she censoriously spent a few years of her life, then left for Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Thousands of families have been impacted, and the humanitarian situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has worsened as a result of the armed conflict and bloodshed that have taken place there. Malala states, "I remember Marie Claire not only for the story she told but also for the story she didn't. She was full of strength, but I could hear the pain in her heart and see the tears in her eyes. When she spoke, I felt her trauma as well as her triumph. The picture of this moment, as she revealed her past, is still in my head" (p. 139). The brutal clashes between parties have resulted in the death, injury, and trauma of many individuals, as well as the burning down of villages, damage to farms, and major population displacement. Malala narrates her traumatic story of the refugee she met in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, during an annual program in honor of refugees and their host communities (p. 139).

When Marie Claire was just a young child, civil war broke out in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where Marie Claire's family was originally from, and they were forced to escape for their safety. They moved to the next country, Zambia, as unregistered refugees, but they found that living there was difficult and brutal because refugees faced hatred everywhere. Marie endured verbal abuse, physical assault with rocks, and spitting from other students while she was at school. "Go back to your country! Why are you here?" Kids would insult me and my sibling at school, even throwing rocks and shouting, "You don't belong here" (p. 143). The effect of the war in Congo ruins the lives of people who migrated to other countries where they were mistreated by their neighbors. Even in school, children tease them and call them names. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reports that even today, 4.25 million people are internally displaced in the Congo and that more than 600,000 people are refugees in sub-Saharan Africa. Many people are still suffering as a result of the displacement crisis (p. 143). The war fought between the rebel forces and the government, as in Syria and Yemen, was the cause of the constant stream of refugees fleeing from their own country to other places to save themselves and their little children.

According to Clifford 305, one of the most significant aspects of the diasporic experience is a profound attachment to and yearning for a literal return to a homeland that has been properly preserved. The idea of "home" in the context of diaspora is complicated and multifaceted, encompassing a variety of different dwellings and a variety of different possessions. William explains that "the residents have and show a collective memory of the homeland they have been dispersed from, their physical location history, and achievements" (1991). Due to the indeterminate nature of distribution between two distinct homes, the connection between diasporas and their native place of

origin is characterized by uncertainty and psychological worries. People have a special attachment to their homeland; they have memories brought together where they migrate. In some cases, refugee people show great affection and love for their country. Malala also narrates their stories in her book "We are Displaced," including their condition in which they had to leave their country and their memories with it. Due to the ongoing civil strife in Colombia, which has displaced 7.2 million people over the course of forty years (p. 111), Maria, one of the refugee girls, was forced to leave her homeland and relocate to Cali, the second largest city in Colombia.

Maria is one of them, she was only 4 years old and has a lot of hazy memories of her father, based on images and her mother's description of what they lost. Her father was violently killed before a day of migration, and in that fear, they left their city. Maria spent her childhood on a farm in the countryside of Colombia. Her childhood was filled with plenty of room to run and play, as well as the company of animals such as chickens and pigs. The trees in the family garden provided an abundant supply of both fresh mangoes and oranges at all times. However, there, they resided in a temporary camp filled with 24 people who had been forced from their homes as a result of the violence that was occurring around the country. It was a struggle to survive there. Poverty and criminal activity permeated every aspect of life, and gangs held authority. The sound of gunshots was heard frequently, making it a constant concern to prevent being hit by stray bullets. In addition to that, there was the issue of racism. Due to the fact that Maria and her family had a dark complexion and spoke with a rural accent, they were subjected to horrible treatment from other people. When Maria was seven years old, her mother moved the family into a house with the assistance of a community organization. Despite the fact that it was in bad shape and rain frequently seeped in through the roof, this was a step in the right direction. Her mother also enrolled Maria and her siblings in a weekend theatre program, which resulted in the production of a play entitled "Nobody Can Take Away What We Carry Inside," which was based on the children's personal accounts of being uprooted. When life gets too much for Maria, she turns to her artistic side; for instance, when she was 16 years old, she filmed a documentary about her experience of being uprooted.

*"So when I dream of home, I dream of mangoes I can pick off the trees. I dream of quiet and grass. I dream of peace. And nobody can take that away from me"* (p. 117).

Maria has moved several times since she lived in that broken-down house, but she has only ever felt at home in one location: the place in her recollections where she could pick fresh mangoes and run in the fields. To this day, Maria has only ever felt at home in this one location. Malala herself tells her wonderful memories of her homeland in her book "We are Displaced" along with stories from refugee girls around the world. When her family flew to the United Kingdom, she said, "I am incredibly grateful to the United Kingdom for the warm welcome my family and I received, but not a day goes by when I don't miss my home. I miss my friends and the taste of Pakistani tea that has been boiled with milk on a stove and sweetened with sugar. My mom makes rice and chicken here, my favorite dish, but it tastes different in Pakistan; I cannot explain it other than to say it is tastier there (p. 46)." The narrator further expresses her feelings, "Everyone but me! I miss the sounds of Pashto being spoken in the streets and the smell of the earth after heavy rain in a mountain village where my grandparents live. I miss the lush green Swat Valley, the place I called home for the first fifteen years of my life (p. 46).

It is natural to experience a loss of home at home, which embarks upon a search for a location where the diasporic self could belong - a secure socio-political, cultural, and intellectual space one could name as home. The varied and complex experiences of the diasporic self-undergo feeling of

inclusion and exclusion: The notion of the home is much more complex than approaches to diasporas premised on the power of nostalgia would want us to believe. It is intrinsically linked to how the process of inclusion or exclusion operates and is subjectively experienced under given circumstances.

During the 1970's, when assimilation theory and other theories based on the same meaning of integration models demonstrated their fallibility, the notion of diaspora occurred progressively to describe migrants groups: migrants maintaining their ethnic tradition and a strong feeling of collectiveness (Bruneau, 1995; Dorai et al., 1998; Shuval, 2003). So, it was only during the 1980's that the concept of diaspora experienced a period of expansion. But, quickly, some authors, such Alain Medam (1993) or James Clifford (1994), expressed their disinterest in the concept because, in more and more research, the concept was quoted just to describe phenomena characterized only by the dispersion of a population originating from one nation-state in several "host countries." And these authors called for more theorization.

William Safran, one of the first authors to be published in the review *Diaspora* edited by Kachig Tololyan, suggests that, in his view, the term diaspora could be considered a "metaphoric designation" and could apply to various populations (expatriates, political refugee, and so on). According to William Safran's statement, the population has been mentally dispersed from their specific native place to other, two or more "peripheral" or foreign regions (1991). The diaspora was isolated psychologically from their native land to two or more places during their journey. Malala narrates the traumatic stories of girls and highlights the exile condition of women and children all over the world fleeing wars and terrorism, in some regions where violence and oppression are within the community or the home (p. 121). Analisa found herself in that situation and risked everything for what she hoped would be a better and safer life (p. 121). She is one whose traumatic story is narrated by Malala in her book "We are Displaced" (2019). Analisa grew up in a small city in Guatemala and lived with her loving father, who cares for her and takes her to church and also plays with her.

*"And unlike my mother, he never left me home alone. He had a motorcycle, and I went with him everywhere. Those rides made me sleepy, and he worried I would slip off the back of his bike, so he bought a yellow strap, which he tied around my waist to his. He was my safety net" (p. 125).*

Analisa was just fifteen years old when her father died and her brother refused to take her responsibility. She struggled a lot in her life when she was only four years old after her father's death and now her brother Oscar does not want to take care of her.

*I struggled with what to do-I knew I could not live in the same house with Oscar, but I had nowhere else to go (p. 126).*

She moved with her half-brother and lived in the United States. During the journey, she stayed in Mexico, where she spent a night with five other people having the same journey. After continuously traveling for two nights, she reached Texas, where she took in the room called "ice box" in Spanish. *"I was so tired I started to nod off, but a guard poking me awake. One by one, we were taken to be fingerprinted, weighted and to have our photos taken" (p. 132).* After a long investigation, she was taken to a place called "perrera," which means "dog pound" (p. 132). She met other girls of her age who had the same traumatized experiences, stayed two days in that place, and passed the time by talking with them.

*"Finally, after five days split between the ice box and the dog pound, I was taken to a shelter with girls my age. I know now that these are children's shelters run by the office of refugee resettlement" (p. 134).*

Having stayed in many places, she reached her brother safely in the United States. Through this story, Malala tells how refugees face hurdles; they are treated by animals from place to place, having no food to eat, no clothes to wear, and no rest continuously suffer through their journey. And according to the diasporic model of William Safran, the population has a notion of several host countries. As in the case of Analisa, during migration, she stayed in many countries such as Mexico, Texas, Massachusetts, and the United States.

## CONCLUSION

After analyzing Malala Yousfzai's "We are Displaced" journey and stories of refugee girls around the world by applying the theory of diaspora based on the theoretical framework of William Safran's *Myths of Homeland and Return* 1 (1991). Finally, the researcher comes to know the traumatic experiences of refugees, in which condition they have survived having no home, no education, and no country to call their own.

Malala Yousafzai is well-known in a significant portion of the world. Her life has inspired her to become an activist on a global scale and a champion of the rights of women and girls, and her narrative is remarkable. As a result of the bloodshed perpetrated by Afghan Islamists known as the Taliban, Malala was forced to flee her family in Pakistan. However, she never gave up working tirelessly to advocate for the education of women. Despite this, her story is only one of the many that people who have been forced to flee their homes as a result of war, starvation, or natural catastrophes share. Malala has traveled extensively and has had the opportunity to talk to and learn from a wide variety of women and girls. She works to shed light on the complicated web of feelings that many displaced people experience by sharing some of these feelings with others, which range from hopelessness to defiance and grief to thankfulness. These are tales of resiliency in the face of unspeakable adversity, as well as accounts of people creating new lives for themselves while harboring hopes for a better tomorrow.

Regarding the analysis that was done in the previous chapter, the researcher came to the conclusion that in the journey of refugees experienced by Malala in the book "We are Displaced" which is part memoir and part communal storytelling, Malala not only explores her own story, but she also shares the personal stories of some of the incredible girls she has met on her journeys—girls who have lost their community, relatives, and frequently the only world they have ever known. The release of "We Are Displaced" couldn't have come at a better moment, as human rights organizations around the world are currently working to draw attention to the most pressing humanitarian catastrophe of our generation, which is caused by war and the resultant displacement of people. Malala has contributed her time and energy to furthering this cause by sharing the experiences of young refugee girls who were forced to relocate to a location that is not in their own country.

In 2017, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that 70,8 million individuals all over the world had been displaced as a result of forced migration. This number accounts for refugees, those who have been displaced within their own country, and asylum seekers. The vast majority of them were female offspring, and the bulk of the youngsters were girls. Syria, Afghanistan, and South Sudan collectively account for 57 percent of UNHCR's total refugee population. Every day, violence and intimidation compel over 37,000 individuals to abandon their homes and seek refuge elsewhere. From the time they chose to flee their place of origin to the present day in the nation that has taken them in as refugees, these individuals are confronted with a variety

of difficulties. These difficulties consist of, but are not limited to, physical aggression, abuse, denial of fundamental human rights, isolation, sexual abuse, and a great deal more.

The major message that emerges from Malala's book is that the refugee crisis affects people all across the world, but that no population has been more severely impacted than women and girls. Women and girls who have been uprooted as a result of conflict and violence and who have, for the most part, been denied the opportunity to receive an education have not only managed to survive, but a surprising number of them have also realized their ambitions. In addition to this, some people have discovered ways to lend helping hand to others, even when faced with the most terrible of predicaments. The majority of people are aware that there is a situation involving refugees at the moment, but it might be challenging to choose what to do about it. An excellent first step is to educate oneself; helpful online news sources can be found at [unhcr.org](http://unhcr.org), the website of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). You will be ready to take action, such as giving money, beginning a campaign, or volunteering, once you have an understanding of the facts and some context surrounding the issue.

Still, Malala's funds have invested profoundly in girls' education in Pakistan, from opening the first secondary school for girls in Shangla, "home town of Malala," supporting girls education across the country. According to UNCHR, more than 44000 people are forced to flee from their homes in a day; 68.5 million are displaced around the world; 40 million are internally displaced; and 25.4 million refugees come from South Sudan, Afghanistan, and Syria. We can help these refugees by denoting money, time, and attention as Malala traveled through the countries to meet those refugees, encourage them to support them, and serve funds to help them.

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