

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Reaching Out Internationally: Daughter from Danang, A Billion Lives..., My Forbidden Face...,

United Nations Programs: We Are Together

American Experience: Daughter From Danang

DVD (Barnes & Noble)

Winner of the Grand Jury Prize at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival, Daughter From Danang is a moving and troubling documentary about Heidi Bub, the daughter of an American serviceman and a poor Vietnamese woman, born in Danang and raised in Tennessee, who returns to Vietnam to see her mother for the first time in over two decades. It's clear from early on in the film that Bub, who was raised as an American by her adoptive mother in Pulaski, the birthplace of the Ku Klux Klan, is ill prepared for the reunion with her Vietnamese family. Filmmakers Gail Dolgin and Vicente Franco (who also shot the film) do a good job of presenting the history of the misguided Operation Babylift, and include fascinating archival footage of the program. Through contemporary interviews and old photos, they also capture the all-American atmosphere in which Bub was raised, and how quickly and thoroughly she assimilated. The film then takes viewers on an emotional roller coaster as Bub meets Mai Thi Kim, her birth mother. At first, it's a joyous event, and Bub tells of the relief she feels upon feeling loved and accepted, explaining that her adoptive mother was never affectionate toward her. As Bub sees the relative squalor in which her Vietnamese mother and siblings live, and as their cultural differences become more and more obvious, eventually causing a complete breakdown in communication, the film takes on a tragic tone. While viewers will be tempted to blame either mother or daughter for the way things work out, Dolgin and Franco present the situation fairly objectively, making viewers care deeply about both parties, and making a simple assessment of blame impossible. --Josh Ralske Barnes & Noble

A Billion Lives: An Eyewitness Report from the Frontlines of Humanity by Jan Egeland

Called "the world's conscience" and one of the 100 most influential people of our time by Time magazine, Jan Egeland has been the public face of the United Nations. As Undersecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, he was in charge of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for three and a half years.

One of the bravest and most adventuresome figures on the international scene, Egeland takes us to the frontlines of war and chaos in Iraq, to scenes of ethnic cleansing in Darfur, to the ground zeroes of famine, earthquakes, and tsunamis. He challenges the first world to act. *A Billion Lives* is his on-the-ground account of his work in the most dangerous places in the world, where he has led relief efforts, negotiated truces with warlords, and intervened in what many had thought to be hopeless situations.

As one of Secretary-General Kofi Annan's closest advisers, Jan Egeland was at the heart of crises during a difficult period in UN history, when the organization was plagued by the divisive aftermath of the Iraq war, the Oil-for-Food scandal, and terror attacks against UN workers. On the day Egeland came to New York to take up his job, the UN building in Baghdad was destroyed by a huge bomb, killing one of his predecessors, Sergio de Mello. Two months later Annan sent Egeland to Iraq to judge whether the UN could keep a presence there.

Since that first mission to Baghdad, Egeland has been envoy to such places as Darfur, Eastern Congo, Lebanon, Gaza, Northern Israel, Northern Uganda, and Colombia. He coordinated the massive international relief efforts after the Indian Ocean tsunami and South Asian earthquake. As a negotiator and activist, Egeland is famous for direct language, whether he's addressing warlords, guerrilla leaders, generals, or heads of state. *A Billion Lives* is his passionate, adventure-filled eyewitness account of the catastrophes the world faces. And so Egeland writes that he has met the best and worst among us, has "confronted warlords, mass murderers, and tyrants, but [has] met many more peacemakers, relief workers, and human rights activists who risk their lives at humanity's first line of defense."

In spite of the desperate need of so many, Egeland is convinced that, "For the vast majority of people, the world is getting better, that there is more peace, more people fed and educated, and fewer forced to become refugees than a generation ago. So there is reason for optimism," he concludes in this groundbreaking book that does not flinch but holds out reasons for hope.

We Are Together

DVD (Barnes & Noble)

As the AIDS epidemic ravages Africa, the ones who succumb to the disease are not the only victims. When tens of thousands of parents die, their children are left to fend for themselves, and the Agape Orphanage in South Africa has become a home for a growing number of children who have lost their mothers and fathers. While the children of Agape have all been touched by tragedy, they've also adopted a unique means to cope -- music. As South African singing star Zwai Bala puts it, "We, South Africans, sing before we eat. We sing when we're happy, sing when we're sad. It's a healing thing." Music has become a balm for the Agape Orphans, and they've formed a choral group whose music has attracted international acclaim. Documentary filmmaker Paul Taylor explores the tragic lives of the residents of the Agape Orphanage as well as the music that gives them strength in *We Are Together* (Thina Simunye), which profiles a handful of children who sing with the Agape group, and follows them as they use their growing reputation to help others like themselves. Featuring cameo appearances by Paul Simon and Alicia Keys, *We*

Are Together (Thina Simunye) received its North American premiere at the 2007 Tribeca Film Festival. Mark Deming, All Movie Guide

My Forbidden Face: Growing up under the Taliban: A Young Woman's Story by Latifa, Shekeba Hachemi, Linda Coverdale (Translator), With Shekeba Hachemi

Bookseller of Kabul by Asne Seierstad, Ingrid Christophersen

Infidel by Ayaan Hirsi Ali

If one text has succeeded in challenging the complacency of the West, indeed of supposedly enlightened people the world over, to the rising threat of fundamentalist Islam, it is *Infidel* by Ayaan Hirsi Ali. From her perspective as a woman who has survived the treacherous grip of Islam over both her body and her mind, Ayaan counters the oft repeated proclamation that Islam is 'a religion of peace.' Narrating her own intimidating journey through oppression and hatred in Islamic Somalia, Saudi Arabia, and the rapidly growing Muslim enclaves of Kenya and Europe, Ali rehashes in masterful and often touching prose her harrowing trials and the series of cruel acts perpetrated against her in the name of the religion she herself so desperately clung to. Young Ayaan survives her mother's descent into insanity, her abusive male relatives, female circumcision, and constant religious and tribal warfare by dreaming of the life she can only read about in Western novels. She is finally forced to choose between her dreams and the harsh reality of life as a subservient Muslim woman when her father promises her hand in marriage to an aging Somali expatriate who has come to seek a proper traditional wife in Kenya. Her choice is flight, but reaching her imagined paradise in liberal Western Europe she discovers that Islam has arrived ahead of her, bringing with it so much of the terror she had naively hoped to have left behind. After a soul wrenching self-examination, Ayaan cuts the final cords to the religion and culture of her birth, to become a one woman crusade against the oppression perpetrated by Islam, and innocently defended by the 'accepting' European Left. For anyone who is left unsatisfied by the all-encompassing doctrine of cultural relativism, Ali is a breath of fresh literary air. When we unquestioningly 'accept' Muslim culture, are we also accepting the horrific abuse of Muslim wives and daughters? What of religious and ethnic minorities suffering throughout the Muslim dominated Arab world and East Africa? Ayaan convincingly argues that in our zeal to be inoffensive, we have allowed for a level of intolerance and violent hatred that would not be tolerated in any other religion. It is time, Ali is telling us, to force an enlightenment in the Muslim world, to bring it up to the same standards by which we judge the Christian West. Quill says: *Infidel* is a must read!

The Road of Lost Innocence by Somaly Mam

Born in a village deep in the Cambodian forest, Somaly Mam was sold into sexual slavery by her grandfather when she was twelve years old. For the next decade she was shuttled through the brothels that make up the sprawling sex trade of Southeast Asia. Trapped in this dangerous and desperate world, she suffered the brutality and horrors of human trafficking—rape, torture, deprivation—until she managed to escape with the help of a French aid worker. Emboldened by her newfound freedom, education, and security, Somaly blossomed but remained haunted by the girls in the brothels she left behind. Written in exquisite, spare, unflinching prose, *The Road of Lost Innocence* recounts the experiences of her early life and tells the story of her awakening as an activist and her harrowing and brave fight against the powerful and corrupt forces that steal the lives of these girls. She has orchestrated raids on brothels and rescued sex workers, some as young as five and six; she has built shelters, started schools, and founded an organization that has so far saved more than four thousand women and children in Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Laos. Her memoir will leave you awestruck by her tenacity and courage and will renew your faith in the power of an individual to bring about change. To learn more about how you can help fight human trafficking, visit the foundation's website: www.somaly.org.