

# The Khaled Hosseini Newsletter

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## Introduction

It was a long time in coming, but here it is, the inaugural issue of my newsletter. I have high hopes of issuing the newsletter on a quarterly basis (January, April, July and October). The content will be a mix of information ranging from updates on my projects, news on *The Khaled Hosseini Foundation* and a section where readers can get involved. I hope you enjoy this first issue, as well as the many to come!

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## The Khaled Hosseini Foundation

I am happy and proud to announce the launch of [The Khaled Hosseini Foundation](#) (TKHF). The aim of this foundation is to provide humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable people in Afghanistan. This is a separate endeavor from my involvement with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), though some of the goals will overlap (we will, for instance, focus on aiding returning Afghan refugees).



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### In the words of our Grantees

In this section TKHF Omid Grantees are able to share some of the experiences they have had in Afghanistan. I hope that you are as inspired and moved as I was when reading them.

[Afghan Friends Network](#)

[Trust in Education](#)

### Readers Give Back

I love to hear from you. Your emails and letters are meaningful and serve as a powerful touchpoint. In this vein, I invite you to participate in a contest and share how the themes of the novels have impacted your life in a positive way. [\(Read more\)](#)

## SPOTLIGHT

### UNHCR Shelter Program in Afghanistan: Matching gift program for 2009

The Khaled Hosseini Foundation (TKHF) is sponsoring a matching gift campaign for the UNHCR's Shelter Program in Afghanistan. TKHF will match in total the first \$100,000 donated to its [UNHCR Shelter Program campaign in 2009](#).

### Penguin Group (USA) builds a school for children in war-torn Afghanistan, partnering with the United Nations Refugee Agency

On November 23, 2008 a press release was issued discussing the successful completion of a school in Afghanistan. The building of the school was the culmination of efforts by the UNHCR and Penguin Group (USA). [Read the complete press release.](#)

## Khaled's Corner

This section will be dedicated to various items I would like to share ranging from questions I am most often asked, to books I am currently reading and everything in between.

[News](#)

[The question I get most often](#)

[Khaled's guide to surviving  
\*The Colbert Report\*](#)

[Books](#)

[Movies](#)

## Parting Words

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I hope you enjoyed the inaugural edition of my newsletter. I enjoy hearing from you and do my best to respond. This newsletter is my way of keeping all of you apprised as to what has been on my mind and in my heart in between any projects I am working on. Look for my next newsletter in April 2009!

# The Khaled Hosseini Newsletter

## Khaled's Corner: NEWS

- As you may know, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is now available in paperback, as of Nov. 25th, 2008. I had the chance to go to New York in December and promote it. Part of my tour involved an appearance on *The Colbert Report*. For more on that, see below.
- The film version of *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is still in pre-production. A first draft of the script has been written by Steve Zaillian, who won an Oscar for *Schindler's List*. The search is on for a director. I will share more news when I have it.
- *The Kite Runner* is being staged by the [San Jose Repertory](#). The script was written by Matthew Spangler, who directed the student play with the same script at San Jose State. Performances will begin March 21, 2009, and will include live musical enhancement with Salar Nader, a personal friend who is fast becoming one of the world's foremost *tabla* players. ☞

## Khaled's Corner:

### THE QUESTION I GET MOST OFTEN

This, by far, is the question readers ask me most frequently when I am at readings. It is frequently the first question asked, so I thought I would address it here.

The question is: How autobiographical is *The Kite Runner*?

First, I should say that *The Kite Runner* is not a memoir. It is a novel, a created work of fiction. It reads at time like a memoir, I think, given the intimate first person narrative voice. And don't get me wrong, I am very flattered by the curiosity—it tells me the story reads as if it had actually happened. But sometimes I have a hard time convincing people that I am not Amir. Anyway, here it goes:

The story line of *The Kite Runner* is largely fictional. However, there certainly are, as is always the case with fiction, autobiographical elements woven through the narrative. The descriptions of Kabul circa 1970s, the social set up, the political milieu, are based on my own recollection and observations. The kite fighting and the games Amir and Hassan play mirror the way my brother and I passed our time, as does Amir and Hassan's love for films, Westerns in particular. I grew up in a similar socioeconomic environment as Amir, and like Amir I was an avid reader as a child and a precocious writer of stories. In fact, the story that Amir writes for Hassan (with the magic cup that turns tears into pearls) is a story that I wrote in Kabul likely back in the mid 1970s.

Probably the passages most resembling my own life are the ones in the US, with Amir and Baba trying to build a new life for themselves. I too came to the U.S. as an immigrant and I recall vividly those first few years in California, the brief time we spent on welfare, and the difficult task of assimilating into a new culture. My father and I did work for a while at the flea market and there really were rows of Afghans working there, some of whom I am related to—though I did not meet my wife there, as many readers suspect! The latter part of the book, set in the Taliban-ruled Kabul, is entirely fictional. It had to be re-created with imagination, interviews, and my own readings about Afghanistan and the political turmoil there. ☞

## Khaled's Corner: BOOKS

*The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, by Junot Diaz: Hilarious, engaging, and profoundly moving and sad. He juggles humor and pathos like few writers working today. And what a feast of language!

*What is the What*, by Dave Eggers: Ok, I know, I have plugged this book before. Countless times. But it's that good. This is a chronicling of the hardships, disillusion, and hopes of the long-suffering people of southern Sudan. It is impossible to read this book and not be humbled, enlightened, transformed.

*City of Thieves*, by David Benioff: David Benioff is an amazingly versatile writer. He is already established as one of the top screenwriters in Hollywood today. And now this harrowing and beautiful book, which he wrote as a tribute to his grandfather. This is a riveting war novel and an engaging coming of age story. *City of Thieves* is tender, illuminating, and, be warned, often shocking.

*Unaccustomed Earth*, by Jhumpa Lahiri: I loved her first two books and this one did not disappoint at all. Gorgeous, effortless prose; characters haunted by regret, isolation, loss, and tragedies big and small. A quiet, emerging sense of humanity.

## Khaled's Corner: MOVIES

I recently saw *The Band's Visit*, an Israeli foreign language film about an Egyptian ceremonial police orchestra that, because of a misunderstanding, has to spend the night in a small, remote Israeli town. The film is simple and charming and funny and virtually free of political or religious overtones.

I also loved *The Visitor*, about the budding friendship between an aging, lonely college professor and a pair of illegal immigrants from Syria and Senegal. The film beautifully explores the unexpected ways in which people connect to each other and is capped by a terrific, understated performance by Richard Jenkins.

Highly recommended also is *Brothers*, a Danish film about the changing relationship between two brothers when one of them is sent off to Afghanistan and is believed dead. Be warned that the film contains one harrowing scene of violence that comes totally unexpected. But the film is genuine in every way, in its depiction of family, loss, and the profound effects of war on those who survive. I understand this will be an American remake, penned by my friend David Benioff who also wrote the screenplay for film version of *The Kite Runner*.

**PRESS RELEASE** (continued)

**Penguin Group (USA) builds a school for children in war-torn Afghanistan, partnering with the United Nations Refugee Agency**

Penguin Group (USA) announced yesterday that it has built a primary school in Afghanistan, in partnership with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the United States Association for UNHCR. The school (pictured [here](#)) is located in Arababshirali, roughly 150 miles from Kabul, in Kunduz Province. The school, which recently opened its doors to 270 students, grades one through six, is a tribute to American booksellers, librarians, and educators who supported Khaled Hosseini's #1 *New York Times*-bestselling and internationally acclaimed novels, *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, published by Riverhead Books.

In 2006, Khaled Hosseini was honored by the UN Refugee Agency and named a U.S. envoy to the UNHCR. In this role, he traveled to war-torn villages in the northern region of his native Afghanistan in 2007. During this trip he witnessed firsthand the overwhelming desire of Afghan people to provide an education and a better future for their children. Now, in 2008, Penguin Group (USA) is proud to play a key role in turning that desire into a reality.

Susan Petersen Kennedy, President of Penguin Group (USA), commented: "Changing the world can sometimes start with a single act of kindness. Our hope is that this new school is one of those acts. We know that the children it serves will contribute to their world and ours, and we wanted to help provide a place where they can learn, grow, and dream. For us, education matters, books matter, and these children matter." ☞

**READERS GIVE BACK** (continued)

I am keenly interested to learn how the novels may have inspired you to help others. Please submit all entries either typed or in legible printing to the address below. The entries should be no more than 1,000 words in length. All entries must be received by September 30, 2009.

The committee will review all entries and select the winners. Five readers will receive a personalized autographed novel as well as their name published in the next newsletter as a winner. The grand prize winner will also receive a personalized autographed novel. In addition, we will publish the winner's entry in the Quarter 1, 2010 edition of the newsletter\*.

**Address for contest.**

TKR Publications, LLC  
Attn.: Readers Give Back, Q2 2009 ed.  
4848 San Felipe Road #150-221  
San Jose, CA 95135

*\*Submission of entries is implicit authorization to publish the entry should it be selected as the grand prize entry. All other entries are providing authorization that the author's names may be published should the entries be contest winners.*

Please include an address so that we may contact you should you be selected as a winner. Entries without complete names and addresses will not be judged. ☞

**Khaled's Corner: KHALED'S GUIDE TO SURVIVING THE COLBERT REPORT**

When I heard that I was going to be on *The Colbert Report*, I received the news with equal measures of giddiness and anxiety. The man is a force. The only time I have seen him frazzled was when Jane Fonda turned the tables on him by sitting on his lap and locking lips with him. Prior to the taping, Mr. Colbert visited with me in the green room and asked some questions. He is clearly a well-read, insightful and intelligent man. His producer advised me to basically ignore his jokes and say three things that I wanted to get across. Easier said than done. Once the camera is on, the jokes come fast and often. The temptation is to crack jokes back. Ill-advised. This is like challenging Stephen Hawking on wormholes. Anyway, the producer's advice was probably sensible. I did my best to ignore the wisecracks (my favorite: Afghanistan is too grim, why don't we call it Laugh-ghanistan?) and try and talk about the situation in Afghanistan. I hope I did not make too much of a fool of myself. At any rate, it was fun (when it was over!) and he was very gracious. All in all, if asked again, I would definitely go back.

*Link to my appearance on The Colbert Report:*

<http://www.colbertnation.com/the-colbert-report-videos/212897/december-01-2008/khaled-hosseini>