



Ishmael Beah

Topics

Activism and Social Justice, Common Reads/FYE, Global Affairs, Inspirational Speakers

Travels From

New York

Bio

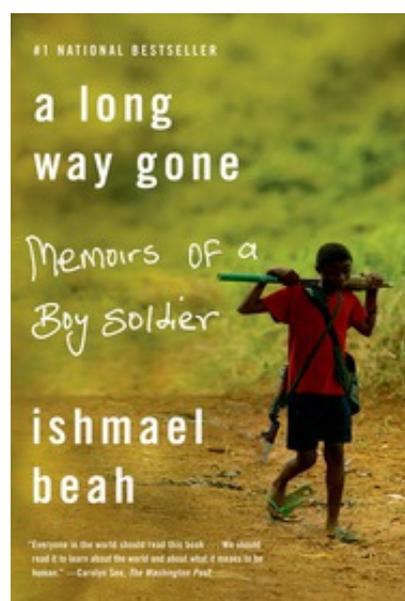
Ishmael Beah is a human rights activist and author of the powerful memoir *A Long Way Gone*, which recounts his childhood journey through war-torn Sierra Leone. The book was a number one *New York Times* bestseller and has been published in over forty languages. In 1991, the outbreak of a brutal civil war in Sierra Leone upended the lives of millions. Ishmael's parents and two brothers were killed and he was forcibly recruited into the war at age 13. After two years, with UNICEF help, he was removed from the army and placed in a rehabilitation home in Freetown. At the 1996 United Nations presentation of the Machel Report on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Children, Ishmael spoke about the devastating effects of war on children in his country. In May 2000, at the UN Special Session on Children, he served on a panel entitled 'Reclaiming Our Children: The UN Responds to the Plight of the Child Soldier.' The panel included then Secretary General Kofi Annan and UN agency heads. Ishmael Beah continues his advocacy to help change the course for the thousands of children still trapped in wars. He is a member of the Human Rights Watch Children's Rights Division Advisory Committee and has testified before the

United States Congress. In 2007, he was appointed UNICEF's first Advocate for Children Affected by War and founded the Ishmael Beah foundation dedicated to helping children affected by war reintegrate into society and improve their lives. By 2009, 50 students from different regions in Sierra Leone, West Africa received grants to continue and improve on their education. In 2011, the Ishmael Beah Foundation opened its first college chapter at Oberlin College. To date, the Ishmael Beah Foundation has helped more than 150 children. In 2008, he co-founded the Network of Young People Affected by War (NYPAW) with a mission to raise awareness of the plight of children in conflict zones, advocate for an end to hostilities, and provide role models for children who are currently struggling to recover from war. Ishmael was born in 1980. He moved to the United States in 1998 and finished his last two years of high school at the United Nations International School in New York. In 2004 he graduated from Oberlin College with a B.A. in political science. He is a member of the Human Rights Watch Children's Rights Division Advisory Committee and has spoken before the United Nations, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Center for Emerging Threats and Opportunities (CETO) at the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory, and many other NGO panels on children affected by the war. His work has appeared in *Vespertine Press* and *LIT* magazine. He lives in New York City. Ishmael's first novel, *Radiance of Tomorrow*, is a haunting and beautiful portrayal of life in post-war Sierra Leone.

SPEECHES

Memoirs of a Boy Soldier Ishmael Beah was picked up by a government army and turned into a child soldier when he was only thirteen. Eventually released by the army, Ishmael struggled to forgive himself for terrible acts he committed as a soldier. Ishmael shares his struggles and eventual success with audiences, giving testimony to the strength of human redemption and hope.

BOOKS



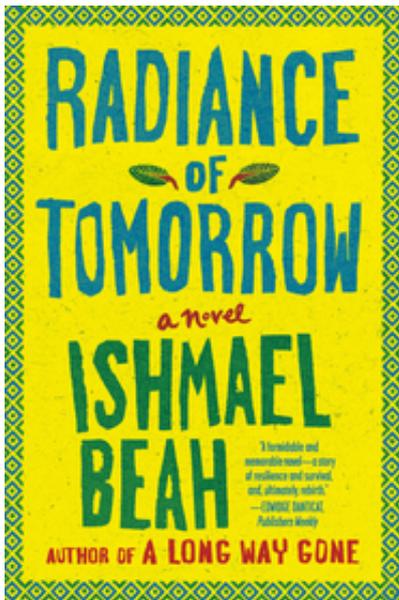
[A Long Way Gone](#) Memoirs of a Boy Soldier

Sarah Crichton Books

What is war like through the eyes of a child soldier? How does one become a killer? How does one stop? Child soldiers have been profiled by journalists, and novelists have struggled to imagine their lives. But until now, there has not been a first-person account from someone who came through this hell and survived. In *A Long Way Gone*, Ishmael Beah, now twenty-five years old, tells a riveting story: how at the age of twelve, he fled attacking rebels and

Trade Paperback

wandered a land rendered unrecognizable by violence. By thirteen, he'd been picked up by the government army, and Beah, at heart a gentle boy, found that he was capable of truly terrible acts.



Hardcover

[Radiance of Tomorrow](#) A Novel

Sarah Crichton Books

When Ishmael Beah's *A Long Way Gone* was published in 2007, it soared to the top of bestseller lists, becoming an instant classic: a harrowing account of Sierra Leone's civil war and the fate of child soldiers that "everyone in the world should read" (*The Washington Post*). Now Beah, whom Dave Eggers has called "arguably the most read African writer in contemporary literature," has returned with his first novel, an affecting, tender parable about postwar life in Sierra Leone.

REVIEWS:

PRAISE FOR ISHMAEL BEAH: "We talked about Mr. Beah the entire period.....and that was in my MATH class!" -Zach Hinson, Student, Columbus Academy