

## Nana Jean on Children Seeking Safety

*“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”*  
~Leo Buscaglia

Among the many ancient artifacts I saw in museums in Greece, I was moved by the tiny tea sets used as toys by young girls. The cups may have come from a room, in an excavated city, that seemed painted for a child. The fresco of fanciful images, thousands of years old, looked like it came from a Dr. Seuss book. The nearby plaster cast of a small bed makes it easy to imagine a child sleeping in this room with her toys on the shelf.



Frescos of boys boxing and a game-board whose rules we do not know were also found in towns of this same era.

We see small passageways children could navigate, and storefronts where they could help their parents sell items. Evidence of a nurturing family life seems to echo among the ancient blocks of stone.

The streets were wide enough for chariots, and long straight roads led to ports with ships of wondrous design. And I dreamed, as a child of those times might, of faraway destinations and adventures.

In Santorini, Greece, excavations of a town enveloped in ash from a volcano uncovered no human or animal remains. Most likely, after receiving a warning, the population picked up their treasures and fled. The artifacts left behind reminded me that love, family, and loss have existed for humankind through eons of time.

In the present day I feel connected to the many fleeing families I see in the streets of busy cities in other countries or read about in the news. Whatever the cause, children have had to flee, leaving their rooms, their toys, their homes, and their friends.

Natural disasters that cause harm and displace families cause me to sigh and trust that those around such areas will gather devastated people and help them reestablish their lives.

Tragically, many refugees flee their homes not because of natural causes, but because of human strife. Sadly, many times that strife is based on a clash of religions. Yet every faith I have explored is based on some form of unconditional love and giving from a kind heart.

Unfortunately, versions of many faiths exclude and condemn others. It is often these factors that cause families with children to flee for safety. Often those reaching out are not of the same faith, language, or culture. Current Syrian refugees are welcomed into metropolises that have a multitude of cultures such as the ones we saw when we visited cities of Turkey and Greece. Families dressed in Muslim garb received money and food from those exiting Christian churches. Former churches transformed to mosques welcomed visitors from around the world into their sacred spaces. I am reminded that deep faith in spiritual vastness beyond ourselves gives us the grace to treat others with love and forgiveness.

My heart is warmed when I think of countries and families who have opened their homes and borders for young children and their families. I am encouraged. Strange that it took a trip over the ocean and the empty rooms of an ancient town to help me appreciate the current struggles of children all over the planet.

Do we have a way to encourage those around us and those in authority to welcome oppressed people fleeing for safety? Can we offer help to people homeless and hungry in our own state or communities?

And, what can we do in the face of immense tragedy that we have no way to address?

A wise response is for each of us to find a way to be extra kind to people we are near.

Consider the quote at the top as a way to help us on this kindness journey.



*Jean visiting a mosque in Istanbul, Turkey.*