



NICK MULVEY
WAKE UP NOW

Photo from Nick Mulvey's Facebook Page

Juan Pablo Hierro D.
A Mother in Gloom

In a pursuit to reach safety somewhere in Europe, more asylum seekers are dying than at any other point in history, yet there are still those who turn the other way while this crisis grows bigger. For every 500 citizens in Europe, only one of them is a refugee or a migrant, while the number of people who are in search for asylum due to war and conflict is the highest in Western and Central Europe since the Balkan Wars. While it remains true that certain people in powerful positions continuously express their unwillingness to help, what is truly needed is an inner understanding of ourselves. By doing so, we can re-orient ourselves and our attitudes towards this catastrophe.

It is exactly that what musician Nick Mulvey searches for in his second album, *Wake Up Now*. While his songs might not be able to change the world for themselves, they achieve a bigger sense of responsibility for his own part in this phase. The sole idea of letting someone know they are not facing this problem unaccompanied sends a powerful message.

Mulvey constructed his record based on firsthand testimonies of refugees who have had to endure through miserable conditions only to feel safe. Rather than simply being portrayed as victims, it is necessary to highlight their strength and resilience, but most importantly, to remember their uniqueness. Giving them a voice was Mulvey's priority, so he set out to look at the archives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to hear the asylum-seekers' own words. By telling their stories, he empowers and humanizes a group of people that have lost their individuality. As an artistic way of presenting this counter narrative, he constructs a character in his song *Myela*, a mother in gloom, screaming for aid. The purpose of this is not to tell people what to do by presenting a moral approach, but rather to recognize how those refugees, those individuals, are not unconnected to us. They are our neighbors.

The change required in face of such a humanitarian tragedy however, should not come out of remorse. As Mulvey explains, the only gift we have been given so far that can help others is our current state, for it allows us to help others who are living in a situation of risk. There is a need to perceive this not as a political issue, but to regard it as a desperate call for help from one human to another. "*Save me from my selfishness and my indifference to my neighbor*" Mulvey sings in his newest album.

It is common to forget how unique each human is during times like this. They are dispossessed from their identity and reduced to a single stereotype, portraying them as numbers. Numbers external to our own reality. As novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie explains, stereotypes can be used to break someone's dignity. Showing people as just one thing, as only one thing, will make them become such thing. After that, *Myela*, *Falak*, or *Wafaa* are no longer called by their names; instead, to the eyes of the world, they are refugees. Just refugees. To insist only on the negative stories is to cut their lives short and to ignore everything else that these people represent. Doing so makes it very difficult to recognize our human equality and it makes us focus more on our differences rather than on our similarities. It might be partially true, but it is incomplete. This record challenges us to believe otherwise. There is more than one story to *Myela*.

The contents of this article were produced as part of Liverpool World Centre's 'Counter Narratives' project and do not necessarily represent the views of Liverpool World Centre.