

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR *25 MILLION SPARKS*

25 Million Sparks is a powerful story of hope – a beautiful reminder of our equal dignity, common humanity, and brilliant potential for innovation. It sheds light on the brutal injustices of war and violence – while celebrating refugees’ records of uplifting communities, generating transformative ideas, and creating peace even amid disaster. Hanna’s captivating human-centered narration of the stories of three women entrepreneurs in the Za’atari camp allows their voices to be heard clearly. These stories, along with others across the globe, are illustrative of the resilience and the power of refugees – and particularly of refugee women – to heal, lead, and advance communities around the world . . . if only the world recognizes, listens to, and invests in them appropriately.

—Leymah Gbowee
Nobel Peace Prize Laureate



Andrew Leon Hanna takes us inside the inhumanity of this, the largest Syrian refugee camp, to discover humanity at its best: Asma, Malak, and Yasmina, determined to make the most of their talents. More than faces in a massive crowd, they give us a reason to believe in them and the countless others displaced by war.

—Judy Woodruff
Anchor and Managing Editor of the PBS NewsHour

25 Million Sparks evokes hope and inspiration from the most disquieting state of the human condition. Hanna's beautifully and masterfully interwoven narrative unveils the lives of three Syrian women surviving as refugees in the Za'atari camp in Jordan. Hanna's spotlight on their entrepreneurship chronicles the resilience of the human spirit against the inhumanity of war. As a two-time refugee, I am intimately familiar with the tragedy of conflict, the desperation of loss, and the curative effect of self-reinvention. *25 Million Sparks* is a testament to the power of hope and the power of women.

—Heather Ibrahim-Leathers
Founder of the Global Fund for Widows



Hanna tells the inspiring stories of three Syrian refugees, whose creativity and entrepreneurship show the strength of the human spirit to turn even the most difficult adversity into opportunity.

—Jonathan Levin
Dean of Stanford Graduate School of Business



Against the backdrop of the global refugee crisis, *25 Million Sparks* beautifully tells the moving story of three Syrian women working as entrepreneurs in a refugee camp in Jordan. The story of these remarkable women shines through the pages, with their devotion to building a better life for themselves and their families. And it calls us to action to address the disparate needs of more than 25 million refugees.

—John L. Hennessy
Former President of Stanford University

25 MILLION SPARKS

25 Million Sparks takes readers inside the Za'atari refugee camp to follow the stories of three courageous Syrian women entrepreneurs: Yasmina, a wedding shop and salon owner creating moments of celebration; Malak, a young artist infusing color and beauty throughout the camp; and Asma, a social entrepreneur leading a storytelling initiative to enrich children's lives. Anchored by these three inspiring stories, as well as accompanying artwork and poetry by Malak and Asma, the narrative expands beyond Za'atari to explore the broader refugee entrepreneurship phenomenon in more than twenty camps and cities across the globe. What emerges is a tale of power, determination, and dignity – of igniting the brightest sparks of joy, even when the rest of the world sees only the darkness.

A significant portion of the proceeds from this book is being contributed to support refugee entrepreneurs and general refugee causes in Za'atari and around the world.

ANDREW LEON HANNA is a first-generation Egyptian American lawyer, entrepreneur, and author from Jacksonville, Florida. He is cofounder and CEO of DreamxAmerica, a Knight-Hennessy Scholar and Siebel Scholar at Stanford Graduate School of Business, and winner of the *Financial Times* and McKinsey Bracken Bower Prize. Hanna has been named to the *Forbes* 30 Under 30 list and graduated with honors from Harvard Law School, where he was an editor of the *Harvard Law Review*.

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25 Million Sparks

*The Untold Story of Refugee
Entrepreneurs*

ANDREW LEON HANNA

Art by Malak
Poetry by Asma



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*For my mother and father,
who showed me the meaning of dignity.*

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

The stories of Asma, Malak, and Yasmina – the three featured entrepreneurs in the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan – are based on oral histories as told by the trio in my interviews with them. (Pseudonyms or only first names have been used in these and other entrepreneurs' stories for privacy.) Most of the scenes in Za'atari and Syria are reconstructed based on these interviews – all of which were conducted in Arabic in the camp, audio recorded, and archived – while some of the present-day scenes were observed directly in the camp. I prefer this interview-centric methodology because I believe it allows the entrepreneurs' stories to be told with a primary emphasis on their own powerful voices and perspectives.

Additionally, in this spirit of amplifying the entrepreneurs' perspectives, their creative work – Malak's art and Asma's poetry – is featured throughout this book.

Finally, to further connect this book to the movement toward greater socioeconomic opportunity for refugee communities, a significant portion of author proceeds is being contributed to support refugee entrepreneurs in the Za'atari camp and around the world.