



Ishmael Beah's Biography

Ishmael Beah was born in 1980 in Sierra Leone, West Africa. In 1991 a vicious civil war overtook Sierra Leone. The rebels invaded Beah's hometown, and he was forced to flee. Separated from his family, he spent months wandering with a group of other boys. At age 13, he was forcibly recruited into the war.

Beah fought for the government army against the rebels. Three years later, he was rescued by UNICEF, and after rehabilitation, he was placed in the care of his uncle in Freetown. When the war arrived in Freetown in 1997, Beah fled Freetown and found his way to New York City, where he lived with Laura Simms, his foster mother. In New York City, Beah attended the United Nations International School. After high school, he enrolled at Oberlin College and graduated in 2004 with a degree in Political Science.

In May 2000, at the UN Special Session on Children, he served on a panel titled 'Reclaiming Our Children: The UN Responds to the Plight of the Child Soldier'.

In 2007, he founded the Ishmael Beah foundation dedicated to helping children affected by war reintegrate into society and improve their lives. 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.

He is a member of the Human Rights Watch Children's Rights Division Advisory Committee.

Ishmael Beah was appointed UNICEF's first Advocate for Children Affected by War on 20 November 2007. In accepting the position Mr. Beah said, "...it's just a way to give me more strength to continue doing what I've already embarked on,— which is to make sure that what happened to me doesn't continue to happen to other children around the world."

Adapted from: <https://www.ishmaelbeah.com/work/activist/#>:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ishmael_Beah