



An Imperfect Offering: Humanitarian Action for the Twenty-First Century

James Orbinski

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"This book is a series of stories in which I ask, again and again, 'how to be in relation to the suffering of others.' It is a personal narrative about the political journey I have taken over the last twenty years as a humanitarian doctor, as a citizen, and as a man. This is a story about a way of seeing that requires humility, so that one can recognize the sameness of self in the other. It is about the mutuality that can exist between us, if we so choose. I have come to see humanitarianism not as separate from politics, but in relation to it, and as a challenge to political choices that too often kill or allow others to be killed. Speaking is the first political act. It is the first act of liberty, and it always implicitly involves another. In speaking, one inherently recognizes that 'I am and I am not alone.' In this space lies our humanity."

Having seen things we hope never to see, confronted suffering, dispassion, and evil we hope never to encounter, and faced deep personal torment, James Orbinski still believes in "the good we can be if we so choose." His chosen medium is stories from his own experience—a form of testimony from the front lines—embodied in which are warnings, hope, and lessons in how we can inject humanitarian activity into our lives. Being political, he has discovered, is not only reserved for politicians; admitting imperfection is essential to compassion. The crystal clarity of Orbinski's voice is matched by the urgency of his message; at a time of great political and moral uncertainty, *An Imperfect Offering* is invaluable reading for anyone who feels he/she can make a difference.

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