One-Handed in a Two-Handed World

Book Review

Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU (CISR)

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal

Part of the Defense and Security Studies Commons, Emergency and Disaster Management Commons, Other Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons, and the Peace and Conflict Studies Commons

Recommended Citation

Available at: https://commons.lib.jmu.edu/cisr-journal/vol11/iss2/17

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Center for International Stabilization and Recovery at JMU Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Conventional Weapons Destruction by an authorized editor of JMU Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact dc_admin@jmu.edu.
A pplying her own life experience to One-Handed in a Two-Handed World, author Tommye-K. Mayer provides readers with a plethora of advice on how to handle everyday life, single-handedly. Offering chapter topics ranging from household maintenance and repairs to work and sports, this personal guidebook aims to cover it all. Mayer opens the book with a personal narrative describing her experience with single-handedness. She describes the mental ups and downs she struggled to overcome. She then offers insight into achieving a positive mindset, reassuring the reader that there are ways to regain self-sufficiency, self-reliance and self-esteem.

One-Handed in a Two-Handed World stresses three secrets that Mayer has classified as the most critical in successfully managing life single-handedly. The first tool to master is body positioning. Body positioning is basically getting out how to use your body to accomplish what you want. This feat may require some reorganizing of the limbs as they are in a position that benefits you. The next secret is recognizing that you do not have just one hand, you have four fingers and a thumb. It is important to consider your four fingers and one thumb as independent entities, capable of working on their own. The last secret Mayer reveals to the reader involves many helpful gadgets that are available to help single-handed people. She provides a few suggestions on which ones she regards as indispensable.

The remaining 214 pages are full of invaluable advice on how to achieve the tasks that were once thought of as easy and routine, requiring little or no thought. The chapter called “Personal Care” addresses the very basics of taking care of your body by yourself. “Office Work,” Mayer’s chapter on how to work around the office single-handedly, is particularly informative and useful. It includes a section dedicated to providing helpful hints on signing your name, and a very detailed and instructive section on the computer and all of its components. Mayer acknowledges that a potential employer might be skeptical that a single-handed person is capable of being an asset to the company in a position working with computers. The section on computers provides tips on maneuvering single-handedly on the keyboard, dispelling that skepticism. In addition, it supplies information on getting to know the basics of the hardware and all of the applications you need to know to be productive with the machine you will be operating.

The design of this book makes it an easy-to-read compilation of over 50 pictures and biographies of landmine victims. The photographs themselves are straightforward and heartfelt in their portrayal of the victims and depict the struggles of their subjects without commentary. Mayer and Souza are real and honest in their stories—a story that exposes the reader to the true impact of ERW.

Making a book like Minada America is a difficult task because the photographers ran the risk of being too forceful in their presentation. All too often journalists get caught up in their own emotions and abuse photographic techniques to prove points about their cause. The result ends up a loss. The documentary is not just criticized for being too preachy; it’s criticized for losing sight of its goal.

However, those photojournalists dodge this bullet gracefully. In Minada America there is no artistic manipulation. Instead, the photojournalists take candid, genuine shots that let their subjects convey the message.

The documentary film provides rich background information and is a perfect complement to the book because it takes the reader deeper into a topic that has already caught his or her interest. It provides more insight into the stories depicted and mixes them with history, opinion and raw facts on the topic of mine action. The details are not only revealing but disturbing. The film explains that the existence of ERW continues to haunt regions of Central America and South America, including the Caribbean. Even more disturbing is that landmines and ERW cause a total of 1,100 casualties every year in Colombia alone. That’s over one a day.

The information provided in the film is its best asset, but the surivee interviewees insight into how being the victim of an explosive remnant of war affects a person’s life. For instance, the interview with Olinda Giron, a survivor who was blinded and physically mutilated by a piece of ERW, is particularly powerful. She discusses her recovery and hope for the future, and how, despite her setbacks, she still believes she can become something in this world. The interview with Claudia Gallaga, a 12-year-old girl who lost her father in a blast, is also heart-wrenching.

On the other hand, Minada America might be powerful and moving, but it is definitely not without its flaws. The film has a few problems that are distracting. It was produced in Spanish with subtitles. The viewer can choose subtitles in Portuguese or English. However, the subtitles are shown quickly, making it frequently hard to understand what is being said. Adding to this is a loud, discordant soundtrack that hurts an otherwise dramatic ending.

Overall, the approach and revealing nature of Minada America is what makes it so effective. The greatest thing about the package is the way it blends an approachable presentation with expert commentary and analysis. The photographs capture beautifully the everyday lives of people affected by a not-so-everyday incident. Although the film has some minor flaws, viewers won’t have a hard time looking past the production blunders and appreciating it for the humanitarian value it provides.