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Contact: Suzanne Skees, Author
suzanne@suzanneskees.com

MY JOB: Real People at Work Around the World, Book 1

By

Suzanne Skees

FIRST-PERSON, INTIMATE, TRUE STORIES OF PEOPLE IN
FASCINATING JOBS

*“A vocational and sociological travelogue that readers will find to be time
well spent.”*

—KIRKUS REVIEWS

*“Sometimes you wonder about the work lives of people in your country,
or work lives across the planet. As someone who’s committed to finding ways for
people doing good work to connect, MY JOB is a must-read. It brings to life actual work
experiences across the world, showing that we have a lot in common. MY JOB
illustrates that we’re not alone.”*

— Craig Newmark, Founder of Craig’s List

MY JOB, Book 1 features fifteen chapters narrated by unique people from Hawaii to Hong Kong. It takes the reader on a journey from the dusty streets of Dhaka, Bangladesh, where Muhammad pedals hard to pull his rented rickshaw twelve

hours just to feed his family two meals a day; to the rolling foothills of the Appalachian Mountains in Eastern Kentucky where horse-coach Robin leads a trail ride for at-risk teenaged girls; to a sleek stand-up desk in a cavernous Silicon Valley warehouse called Google X, where Matt sketches out his next top-secret project plan with engineers and partners.

These true stories, told in each narrator's unique voice, delve deep into how they ended up in their current job, what it's really like, and what frustrates and motivates them.

There's Darius, who grew up with his single-mom and grandma and works at a Chicago Target full-time, while producing hip-hop music on nights and weekends; Pablo, an Argentinian who works for the American behemoth Xerox but would rather launch his own venture if not for the financial risk to his family; and Purnima, a young award-winning interior designer in Sri Lanka who feels pressure to end her career, marry and stay at home, to please her family.

The *MY JOB* narrators begin with what the world calls them: "equity investment manager," "head hunter," "architect," "online entrepreneur."

Then, to the author's surprise, along the way they reveal themselves as fully three-dimensional human beings with unique perspectives and insights, staunch opinions and endless strength. They reveal their childhood trauma and lifelong dreams that have shaped them into who they are. They share their ambitions to hone their particular skills, or to get just far enough ahead not to worry about monthly bills, and more than that: for someone to love, something to give, a way to imprint our world as no one else has done before.

Some narrators talk about feeling invisible as they work long hours, whether punching a time clock or not, eking out a few dollars with occasional gigs or small-scale sales. They share an unknown kinship with each other, and maybe with hard-workers the world over, in their willingness to strive further when their heads and backs ache; to push harder when a report is due or a design is nearly complete; to give far more than their community or even their closest coworkers and loved ones will ever know.

“When I first decided to pursue the project that became this book,” Skees says, “I believed that most people on this planet work because we have to: We log the hours to get the paycheck to provide a roof over our heads and food for our families.

“I was so wrong. First, I learned that most workers on this planet have no career options: The International Labour Organization estimates that up to *three-fourths* of nonagricultural workers eke out whatever living they can in the informal sector, with no job security or benefits—like hawkers selling goods on the street of whatever country you may have toured, or musicians busking for tips in the subways of a U.S. metropolis.

“Then, for those with some degree of choice, career paths are never straight trajectories. Many people wind their way from the odd jobs of youth to some desk or truck or booth that becomes a specialty, and only when crafting our resume or maybe interviewing for a job, do we attempt to impose a logical narrative onto the path.”

The author spent three years listening to workers in vastly different settings in ten U.S. states and twenty-four countries. She has written hundreds of short pieces on people in their jobs and conducted over fifty interviews for this book.

“I discovered a shared sense of purpose in people from all ages, genders, cultures, and occupations,” Skees reflects. “Virtually everyone said essentially the same thing: ‘I am who I am because of what I do;’ and almost every person uttered some version of this poignant point: ‘Even if I had all the money in the world, I would keep doing what I am doing.’

“Regardless of fame or fortune, everyone strove to be their best, and to create some positive impact beyond their own needs, to improve their village, city, world.”

Building upon the legacy of Studs Terkel’s best-selling book *Working* and Mike Rowe’s *Dirty Jobs* TV series, the [MY JOB book series](#) goes global, reflecting the daily struggles and successes of working storytellers in their own voices.

Skees received critical acclaim for this book, [MY JOB: Real People at Work Around the World](#), then published another series of intimate stories in Book 2 and focused on young professionals in Book 3.

In a personal style that takes you to the heart of each narrator's life, these jobs tell a story of dedication, determination, crossroads and challenges. From a rice microfinancier in Cambodia to a Mideast peace diplomat in New York City, narrators reveal that what we do during our work hours is not what defines us. It's sharing a similar work ethic/consciousness that drives us to do better for ourselves and the ones we love. It's giving back to society in some way through our jobs that turns a job into a vocation.

"The stories of our jobs become the stories of our lives," adds Skees. "They have the power to connect us, narrator to reader, and readers to each other. We all know what it's like to work until midnight while our family sleeps, to strive to bring humor into stressful situations, and to fuel ourselves with coffee as our daily schedule swells."

All author proceeds from the MY JOB book series benefit job-creation programs through the Skees Family Foundation, which hopes these stories bring attention to this international issue of poverty. Since its launch in 2004, the Skees Family Foundation has donated over \$2 million to U.S. and global nonprofit organizations to end poverty through equal opportunity.

SUZANNE SKEES serves as founder/board chair of the Skees Family Foundation, which supports innovative self-help programs in the U.S. and developing countries. She studied English literature at Boston College and world religions at Harvard Divinity School. Writing for online and print media, she travels from schools to slums, prisons to farms, serving as a storyteller for nonprofit workers, social entrepreneurs, and their courageous clients, who toil every day to end poverty and create equality. MY JOB, Book 2 (published in 2019) is available on Amazon.

[*MY JOB: More People at Work Around the World*](#), Book 2 (published in 2019) and [*MY JOB Gen Z: Finding Your Place in Fast-Changing World*](#), Book 3 (coauthored with Gen Zer Sanam Yusuf and published in 2021) also are available on all online bookstores.

Connect with the MY JOB community on the [author's website](#), [Facebook](#), and [Instagram](#). Learn more about the Skees Family Foundation by visiting [their website](#).

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