

**Forbidden Faces:
Effects of Taliban Rule on Women in Afghanistan**

Overview

In this lesson, students will explore the rise of Taliban power in Afghanistan and the impacts of Taliban rule upon Afghan women.

Grade

9

North Carolina Essential Standards for World History

- WH.8.3 - Explain how liberal democracy, private enterprise and human rights movements have reshaped political, economic and social life in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Europe, the Soviet Union and the United States (e.g., U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, end of Cold War, apartheid, perestroika, glasnost, etc.).
- WH.8.4- Explain why terrorist groups and movements have proliferated and the extent of their impact on politics and society in various countries (e.g., Basque, PLO, IRA, Tamil Tigers, Al Qaeda, Hamas, Hezbollah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, etc.).

Essential Questions

- What is the relationship between Islam and the Taliban?
- How does the Taliban try to control Afghan women?
- How has the experience of Afghan women changed with the Taliban’s emergence?
- What was the United States’ role in the Taliban coming to power?
- How is clothing used as a means of oppression in Afghanistan?

Materials

- Overhead or digital projector
- Post Its (four per student)
- Value statements written on poster or chart paper:
 1. I am concerned about being attacked by terrorists.
 2. America has supported the Taliban coming into power.
 3. All Muslims (people practicing Islam) support the Taliban.
 4. I know someone currently deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan.
- Opinion scale for each value statement (each of the following words can be written on a piece of computer paper and hung underneath or beside each of the above statements):
 - Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree (three sets needed for statements 1-3)
 - Yes/No (one set of this scale needed for statement 4)
- Vocabulary sheet (attached)
- “The Taliban in Afghanistan”, reading and comprehension questions (attached)
- Taliban’s Rules for Women (attached)
- “Effects of Taliban Rule on Women in Afghanistan accompanying Power Point”, available in the Database of Civic Resources

- To view this PDF as a projectable presentation, save the file, click “View” in the top menu bar of the file, and select “Full Screen Mode”
- To request an editable PPT version of this presentation, send a request to cnorris@unc.edu.
- “The Women of Afghanistan” article and comprehension questions (attached)
- My Forbidden Face by Latifa, pages 42-48 (If your school library does not have a copy of this book, it can be purchased at most major bookstores.)
- “Found: After Seventeen Years, An Afghan Refugee’s Story” article (attached)
- Graphic Organizer: Comparing Experiences of Afghan Women (attached)

Duration

Two 90-minute class periods

Teacher Preparation

Prior to class, create signs containing the following statements and post them around the room:

- I am concerned about being attacked by terrorists.
- America has supported the Taliban coming into power.
- All Muslims (people practicing Islam) support the Taliban.
- I know someone currently deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Further, create an opinion scale to post with each statement by writing Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree on four sheets of paper. Each of the first three statements should have their own opinion scale. For the last statement, write “Yes” on a sheet of paper and “No” on a sheet of paper, posting these with the statement.

Procedure

Day 1

Warm-Up: First Impressions and Assumptions

1. As students walk into the room, have the word “Taliban” written largely in front. Give students one minute to independently brainstorm and write down the first words and impressions that come to mind when they hear the word on notebook paper. Once students have had a few moments to think and write, ask volunteers to share the first word(s) that came to their mind. Record their first impressions on the board or chart paper. Explain to students that our first impressions often reflect our initial beliefs and prior knowledge about a subject. Let students know that in today’s lesson, they will be learning about whether their first impressions/initial beliefs of the Taliban are accurate or not, as they will be learning about the Taliban and specifically the effect of Taliban rule on Afghan women.
2. Ask students to look around the room at the various statements posted (see “Teacher Preparation” above), which read:
 - I am concerned about being attacked by terrorists.
 - America has supported the Taliban coming into power.
 - All Muslims (people practicing Islam) support the Taliban.
 - I know someone currently deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan.
3. Distribute four post-it notes to each student and explain that under or beside each statement they will see an opinion scale posted that ranges from strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly

agree, or that offers the choices of yes/no. Tell students that they are to travel to each statement and use a post-it-note to indicate their feelings regarding each statement. When students sit down again, lead the class in looking at the total responses to each statement. Discuss the results as a class, noting where there are outliers and clusters among student responses:

- Are there statements for which our opinions seem fairly similar? For which statements does it appear that only a few people felt a particular way?
- What do you think determined how you responded to these statements? What influences your opinion on these issues? (Students may bring up the media, personal experiences, residual fear from 9/11, stereotyping/bias, etc.)

4. Let students know that they are going to be exploring some of the underlying issues presented in these statements through various readings. Preview upcoming readings and clarify misconceptions around the last two factual statements. For example:

- “I see that many of you strongly disagree that America supported the Taliban’s rise of power in Afghanistan. You might find it surprising in today’s reading where you will learn that the United States *did* support the Taliban’s rise to power.”
- “I see that some of you think that being a Muslim automatically makes someone a supporter of the Taliban. This is incorrect. The Taliban is an extremist group that represents a very small part of the Muslim world. Who can explain what an extremist group is, or offer other examples of extremist groups? The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) is an example of another extremist group. What you might not know is that the KKK justifies their hate crimes in Christianity saying that God calls them to support white supremacy. The KKK exemplifies a very small part of the Christian world that most Christians would strongly disagree with, the same way most Muslims disagree with the Taliban’s agenda. Both the KKK and the Taliban are examples of extremist groups.”

Introduction to the Taliban

5. Tell students that they are first going to read some background information regarding the Taliban and share some key vocabulary with students that they will come across in the upcoming reading. Explain that these worlds often get thrown around and used interchangeably, thus it is important to clarify what they mean for class conversations. You can distribute the attached vocabulary sheet or have students copy the words from a projection.

- Al Qaeda
- Taliban
- Terrorist
- Mujahedeen
- Islam
- Muslim
- Arab
- Extremist Group
- Sexist

6. Next, divide the class into partners or small groups of 3-4 and distribute the attached “The Taliban in Afghanistan” reading and response questions. Instruct students to read the article together then discuss and answer the questions provided. Once students are finished, call on groups to share their responses and discuss further as a class:

- How has the United States' relationship with Afghanistan changed from the 1980s to today?
- In what ways did the United States help the Taliban gain power?
- What do you think is the biggest challenge facing the United States' "war on terror" in Afghanistan and why?

Impact of Taliban Rule on Afghan Women

7. Pass out copies of the attached "Taliban's rules for women". Have students read through it individually, then pick two rules they would find hardest to live with. For each rule a student selects, have him/her write why this rule would be difficult to live with and how it would change his/her daily life. Have students pair up and share their responses with a classmate. Afterwards, call on volunteers to share their thoughts with the whole class.
8. Next, project the images from the accompanying PPT (available in the Database of K-12 Resources or by e-mailing a request to cnorris@unc.edu) and discuss:
 - Slide 2 - Examine this map. Based on what you see and what you already know about this region, what might contribute to conflict in Afghanistan?
 - Neighboring countries often in the news for militant activity
 - Neighboring countries have unstable governments, or different types of governments
 - Prevalence of crude oil supply in the Middle East
 - Slides 3-6 - What do you see in this image? What strikes you?
 - How do you see the rules we read and discussed expressed in these pictures?
 - How would your activities and daily life be limited if you were forced to wear a burka like the one pictured here?
 - How do you imagine women feel living under Taliban rule? If you were a woman living under Taliban rule and you broke one of the Taliban's rules, what do you think a punishment might be?
9. **Homework:** Distribute copies of the attached article and response questions, "The Women of Afghanistan". Students will read the article and answer the response questions for homework.

Day 2

Forbidden Faces

10. Begin class by reviewing the article students read for homework.
 - After reading the article, do you feel more hopeful, or less hopeful for the future of Afghan women and why?
 - What predictions would you make about the presence of Afghan women in the 2010 Olympic Games?
11. Project the picture of the young Afghan girl on the cover of National Geographic (slide 7) for the class to see. Ask students to tell you their impressions of the picture:
 - What do you notice first about this photo?
 - What do you imagine the girl in this picture feeling? What evidence makes you think this?
 - Where do you think this girl is from and why?
 - How old do you think she might be?
 - What are two questions you would like to ask her to know more?

12. Explain to students that this picture was taken in 1985 of a young Afghan girl. After the image ran on the cover of National Geographic, she became an iconic image for Afghan refugees, often remembered for her piercing green eyes.
13. Next, project the picture of the younger and older women together (slide 8). Discuss:
 - What do you notice first about these two women?
14. Explain to students that the same woman is in both pictures. Seventeen years later, the same National Geographic photographer was able to track this woman down and learn her life story since photographing her as a young girl. Tell students that they are going to be examining two texts today to further explore the role of women in Afghan society. One of the two texts is the National Geographic article about finding this woman. Explain that the other text students will read is an excerpt from a book called My Forbidden Face, a first-hand account of a sixteen-year-old Afghan girl living in Kabul as the Taliban takes over her country. She writes under the pseudonym, or pen name, Latifa to protect her identity. Before the Taliban's rise, Latifa enjoyed many things that you enjoy: listening to music, checking out movies, hanging out with her friends at school. Her mother was an excellent doctor and her father a successful businessman, but both her parents are forced to give up their jobs when the Taliban takes over. In My Forbidden Face Latifa tells her story of learning to change her way of life to survive the Taliban's regime.
15. Distribute copies of pages 42-48 of My Forbidden Face (teachers will need to acquire this book from the school library or a local book store) and "Found: After Seventeen Years, An Afghan Refugee's Story" (attached). Also provide students with the attached graphic organizer, "Comparing Experience of Afghan Women." Either individually or in partners, have students read the two texts and complete the graphic organizer. To speed up the pace of this activity, consider having half of the class read one text and the other half of the class read the other text; then have students share their findings through discussion.
16. When all students have completed the assignment, review the graphic organizer as a class and culminate with a discussion of the connections students made with the Holocaust and World War II. Also consider integrating connections to other experiences of oppression and discrimination the class has studied.
 - What similarities and differences do you see between the two texts?
 - What connections can you draw between the experience of living under Taliban rule in Afghanistan and other events or periods in history?
 - Can you think of any current events or circumstances in the United States or internationally that mirror the discrimination women face in Afghanistan?

Key Term	Definition
Islam	The faith of Muslim people based upon the teaching of the Prophet
Muslim	A believer or follower of Islam (a individual person)
Arab	A member of a Semitic people originally from the Arabian Peninsula and surrounding territories who speaks Arabic and who inhabits much of the Middle East and northern Africa
extremist group	The actions or ideologies of individuals or groups outside the perceived center of a society; or otherwise claimed to violate common moral standards
Al Qaeda	A worldwide terrorist network of Islamic extremist.
Taliban	A fundamentalist Islamic militia that took over political power in Afghanistan in 1995
terrorist	A radical who uses terror for political gains
mujahedeen	Islamic militia group; In Afghanistan the mujahedeen later became the Taliban. The Mujahedeen were the major opposition to Soviet rule in Afghanistan
sexist	Belief, attitude or action that one gender is inferior to another
burka (burka or chadri)	An outer garment worn by women in some Islamic traditions to hide her body from view. It is worn over the usual daily clothing and removed when the woman returns to the privacy of her home.
mahram	An immediate male family member of an Afghan woman. A woman's mahram serves as her public chaperone.

The Taliban in Afghanistan

By Greg Bruno and Eben Kaplan

August 3, 2009

Introduction

The Taliban, a Muslim fundamentalist group, took control of Afghanistan's government in 1996 and ruled until the 2001 U.S.-led invasion drove it from power. Despite U.S. invasion, however, remnants of the Taliban have maintained influence in rural regions south and east of Kabul. The group is known for having provided safe haven to Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda as well as for its rigid interpretation of Islamic law, under which it publicly executed criminals and outlawed the education of women. Though the group has been out of power for several years, it remains a cultural force in the region that operates parallel governance structures aimed at undermining the U.S.-backed central government. Clashes between Taliban-linked fighters and coalition forces increased in the first half of 2008 and continued in 2009, highlighting the Taliban's resurgence and complicating efforts by NATO and U.S. forces to stabilize the country. The Pakistani army, meanwhile, is tackling its own Taliban insurgency.

Rise of the Taliban

The Taliban was initially a mixture of mujahideen who fought against the Soviet invasion of the 1980s, and a group of Pashtun tribesmen who spent time in Pakistani religious schools and received assistance from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI). The group's leaders practiced an orthodox form of Sunni Islam similar to that practiced in Saudi Arabia. The Taliban emerged as a force in Afghan politics in 1994 in the midst of a civil war between forces in northern and southern Afghanistan. They gained an initial territorial foothold in the southern city of Kandahar, and over the next two years expanded their influence through a mixture of force, negotiation, and payoffs. In 1996, the Taliban captured Kabul, the Afghan capital, and took control of the national government.

Taliban rule was characterized by a strict form of Islamic law, requiring women to wear head-to-toe veils, banning television, and jailing men whose beards were deemed too short. One act in particular, the destruction of the giant Buddha statues in Bamiyan, seemed to symbolize the intolerance of the regime. The feared Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice authorized the use of force to uphold bans on un-Islamic activities.

Before being ousted by U.S.-led forces in 2001, the Taliban controlled some 90 percent of Afghanistan's territory, although it was never officially recognized by the United Nations. After its toppling, the Taliban has proven resilient. In November 2007 it was estimated that the Taliban maintained a permanent presence in 54 percent of Afghanistan, and continued to exert influence on regions outside the central government's sphere of control, predominantly in southern and eastern provinces. By December 2008, the Taliban had expanded its sphere of influence to 72 percent of the country. Confident in their expansion beyond the rural south the Taliban is at the gates of the capital and infiltrating the city at will.

Western military analysts say it is difficult to gauge the number of Taliban fighters under arms in Afghanistan. In October 2007, the *New York Times* reported the group might field as many as ten thousand fighters, but a much smaller fraction--less than three thousand--are full-time insurgents. Those numbers inched up in June 2008, when coordinated suicide bombings freed roughly four hundred Taliban fighters from a prison in Kandahar. Analysts also note that the Taliban and its core of fighters have become increasingly fragmented, and are driven to battle for a variety of competing reasons.

Early Supporters

Prior to the group's expulsion in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the Taliban's main supporters were Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Along with the United Arab Emirates, they were the only countries to recognize Taliban-led Afghanistan. During the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan cooperated in efforts by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency to arm the anti-Communist mujahideen that evolved into the Taliban. After the Soviet withdrawal, Afghanistan ceased to be a priority for U.S. strategists, but Saudi Arabia and Pakistan continued their support. After the

9/11 terrorist attacks, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia became partners in the U.S.-led "war on terrorism" and halted their official support of the Taliban.

Some experts, however, believe the Taliban is still receiving support from the Pakistani government. "In Pakistan, the military always hedges its bets," says Kathy Gannon, the former Associated Press bureau chief for Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistani officials have repeatedly denied offering support to the Taliban and point to a buildup of tens of thousands of forces on their border with Afghanistan as proof of their commitment to stopping infiltrations. In 2008, cooperation by NATO and Pakistani troops in hunting pro-Taliban militants hinted at a new phase in the regional fight against the group. Pakistan redoubled its campaign against Taliban militants in its tribal regions in early 2009.

Beyond Pakistan, U.S. officials have accused Iran of assisting the Taliban by supplying militants with Iranian-made weapons--including deadly roadside bombs that have killed a disproportionate number of American service members. Experts disagree on the extent of Iranian involvement.

Afghan Public Opinion of the Taliban

Public reaction to the Taliban's rule was not all negative. While the rigid social standards fostered resentment, the Taliban cracked down on the corruption that had run rampant through the government for years. The new leaders also brought stability to Afghanistan, greatly reducing the fighting between warlords that had devastated the civilian population. Seven years after their political ousting, the Taliban continues to provide a sense of stability in regions where coalition and government officials have been unable to restore order and provide basic services.

Opposition, Then and Now

Western governments and anti-Taliban elements inside Afghanistan have countered the group through varying tactics since 2001. Factions opposed to the Taliban's policies in northern Afghanistan united around their mutual disdain for the fundamentalists, and formed the so-called Northern Alliance. The alliance opposed the Taliban after its formation and assisted U.S. forces in routing the group after 9/11. The Northern Alliance suffered a blow on September 9, 2001, however, when top commander Ahmed Shah Massoud was assassinated. Intelligence officials immediately suspected the killing was carried out by supporters of bin Laden, who feared Massoud threatened their sanctuary in Afghanistan.

Prior to September 11, 2001, Western dealings with the Taliban involved a mix of diplomacy and soft power. In its final years the Taliban became increasingly isolated and faced severe UN Security Council sanctions. The administration of U.S. President Bill Clinton held direct talks with the group, though Washington never recognized the Taliban as the official government of Afghanistan. A series of UN Security Council resolutions urged the Taliban to end its abusive treatment of women, and in August 1997, the U.S. State Department ordered the Afghan embassy in Washington closed. In October 1999, the UN Security Council imposed sanctions against the Taliban and al-Qaeda, freezing funds and restricting travel of the groups' members. The sanctions have been updated seven times since. Domestically, Afghan President Hamid Karzai has taken a more diplomatic tact by reaching out to Pashtuns, many of whom were members of the Taliban. This type of targeted reconciliation might be possible because the Taliban has evolved into a disparate network of factions driven by competing motivations--from ideology to quests for power or money. Because the Taliban in Afghanistan is so heterogeneous there are opportunities to try and drive wedges between elements of that coalition and split it, and peel off particular factions, or particular warlords, or particular leaders.

The Road Ahead

The whereabouts of Afghanistan's exiled Taliban leaders are not fully known. Some have been captured and detained by U.S. forces as enemies in the "war on terror." Experts say many of the Taliban were able to melt back into predominantly Pashtun areas of Afghanistan in the south and east; they have occasionally linked up with others to mount attacks, and some are working to overthrow the current government. Many others have reassembled in neighboring Pakistan, where the Taliban movement was born, and launch attacks from there. Beginning in mid-2006, the Afghan Taliban stepped up its attacks on coalition forces, with fighters adapting Iraq-like suicide and roadside bombing tactics. For its part, the Afghan government asserts the spike in attacks is the result of Pakistan providing the Taliban safe haven across the border. One

unintended consequence of knocking out senior Taliban leaders has been the rapid rise of inexperienced younger leaders, some of whom have been radicalized by al-Qaeda.

Yet not all former Taliban members have joined this fight. Many heeded a call by Afghanistan President Karzai to disarm and have assumed normal lives as members of Afghan society. Some even won seats in Afghanistan's 2005 parliamentary election, including the former Taliban governor of Bamiyan Province, who was in office when the Bamiyan Buddhas were destroyed. Leaders who remain engaged militarily are also intent on repairing a tattered image. In mid-2009 the Taliban released a manual on the proper treatment of prisoners, and issued guidance on limiting civilian casualties when attacking coalition forces. Analysts say the manual is meant to help renew popular support among the Afghan public while legitimizing its often brutal tactics. "This is part of their strategic thinking," Yonah Alexander, a specialist on counterterrorism with the Potomac Institute, told the *Washington Times*. "This is an old trick to play both ends of the stick and to gain time."

Source: Abridged from original article from the Council on Foreign Relations
http://www.cfr.org/publication/10551/taliban_resurgence_in_afghanistan.html

Discuss & Answer on Notebook Paper:

1. Describe US interactions with Afghanistan in the 1980s.
2. Which two groups originally populated the Afghan Taliban?
3. At the Taliban's peak of power, what percent of Afghanistan did they control?
 - a. What year was Taliban control the highest?
 - b. What year was Taliban control the lowest?
 - c. What is the most recent estimation (2008) of the percent of Afghanistan under Taliban control?
4. Describe the United States' current position on Afghanistan and the Taliban.
5. Describe three challenges the United States faces in trying to end Taliban control in Afghanistan.

Taliban Rules for Women

The following list offers only an abbreviated glimpse of the lives Afghan women are forced to lead under the Taliban, and cannot begin to reflect the depth of female deprivations and sufferings. Taliban treat women worse than they treat animals. In fact, even as Taliban declare the keeping of caged birds and animals illegal, they imprison Afghan women within the four walls of their own houses.

Taliban restrictions and mistreatment of women include the:

1. Complete ban on women's work outside the home, which also applies to female teachers, engineers and most professionals. Only a few female doctors and nurses are allowed to work in some hospitals in Kabul.
2. Complete ban on women's activity outside the home unless accompanied by a *mahram*
3. Ban on women dealing with male shopkeepers.
4. Ban on women being treated by male doctors.
5. Ban on women studying at schools, universities or any other educational institution. (Taliban have converted girls' schools into religious seminaries.)
6. Requirement that women wear a long veil (burqa), which covers them from head to toe.
7. Whipping, beating and verbal abuse of women not clothed in accordance with Taliban rules, or of women unaccompanied by a mahram.
8. Whipping of women in public for having non-covered ankles.
9. Public stoning of women accused of having sex outside marriage.
10. Ban on the use of cosmetics. (Many women with painted nails have had fingers cut off).
11. Ban on women talking or shaking hands with non-*mahram* males.
12. Ban on women laughing loudly. (No stranger should hear a woman's voice).
13. Ban on women wearing high heel shoes, which would produce sound while walking. (A man must not hear a woman's footsteps.)
14. Ban on women riding in a taxi without a mahram.
15. Ban on women's presence in radio, television or public gatherings of any kind.
16. Ban on women playing sports or entering a sport center or club.
17. Ban on women riding bicycles or motorcycles, even with their *mahrams*.
18. Ban on women's wearing brightly colored clothes. In Taliban terms, these are "sexually attracting colors."
19. Ban on women gathering for festive occasions or for any recreational purpose.
20. Ban on women washing clothes next to rivers or in a public place.
21. Modification of all place names including the word "women." For example, "women's garden" has been renamed "spring garden".
22. Ban on women appearing on the balconies of their apartments or houses.
23. Compulsory painting of all windows, so women cannot be seen from outside their homes.
24. Ban on male tailors taking women's measurements or sewing women's clothes.
25. Ban on males and females traveling on the same bus.
26. Ban on flared (wide) pant-legs, even under a burqa.
27. Ban on the photographing or filming of women.
28. Ban on women's pictures printed in newspapers and books, or hung on the walls of houses and shops.

Source: Modified from the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan www.rawa.org

The women of Afghanistan

CBC News Online | March 1, 2005

Robina Muqimyar said she felt like a winner, even though she had the second-slowest time among 63 women in the 100-metre trials at the Athens Olympics. The 18-year-old, who ran 14.14 seconds, set an Afghan record in the event. More importantly, Muqimyar and Friba Razayee (a judo competitor) were the first Afghan women to compete in the Games.

"I hope I can open the way for the Afghan women," said Muqimyar through an interpreter at a news conference. "I will never ever forget this moment in my life."

The accomplishments of the two women are enormous considering the conditions Afghan women endured under the Taliban regime from 1996 to 2001.



Afghanistan's judo athlete Friba Razayee, 18, poses for a photo at the end of her team's welcome ceremony at the Olympic Games 2004 in Athens.

The Taliban, an extremist Muslim militia of men, stripped women of many of their basic human rights. The Taliban:

- Banned women from working.
- Closed schools for girls and barred women from universities.
- Prohibited women from leaving their homes unless escorted by a close male relative.
- Forced women to wear the burqa – a long robe covering them from head to toe, except for a small mesh opening at the eyes.
- Beat, publicly flogged or killed women for violating Taliban decrees.

Prior to the Taliban, half the students at Kabul University as well as half the government workforce were women. Women comprised 70 per cent of school teachers and 40 per cent of doctors.

The post-Taliban era

The situation for women in the country remains unstable. In August 2004, The United Nations reported it had registered more than 10 million Afghans to vote – 40 per cent of them women. During the registration drive, a bomb exploded on a bus filled with female election workers, killing two of them. The Taliban claimed responsibility.

Women are always at risk in present-day Afghanistan. On one hand, they can go to school and work, yet, according to many aid organizations, these freedoms are largely restricted to the capital of Kabul. Many women still fear reprisals so they wear the burqa and opt to stay at home.

According to the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), an Afghan women's rights organization, incidents of rape and forced marriages of girls under 18 are on the rise again. RAWA says the Ministry of Women's Affairs has no legal jurisdiction and no power to implement any orders.

Old ways pervade the new government. In a New York Times article from

Quick Facts

15,000 Afghan women die each year from pregnancy-related causes

One to two per cent of Afghan women have identity cards. That means the rest are without formal papers or citizenship

54 per cent of girls under 18 are married

In Kabul, half of girls under 18 go to school. Outside of Kabul, only nine per cent of girls under 18 go to school

Out of 4 million young Afghans attending school, only one-quarter are girls

40 per cent of the country's 1,038 healthcare facilities have no female health workers

SOURCES: World Health Organization, Management Sciences, UNIFEM, Physicians for Human Rights

Dec. 16, 2003, Sighbatullah Mojadeddi, head of the Afghan Constitutional Loya Jirga, said "Even God has not given [women] equal rights because under his decision, two women are counted as equal to one man." The Loya Jirga is an assembly of tribal elders. It's where decisions are made on issues of national importance.

In areas outside Kabul, restrictions have been reimposed. In Herat, the governor decreed women could not travel with men who are not related to them. Throughout the country, dozens of girls' schools have been set on fire. In May 2004, three girls were poisoned in the southeastern town of Khost for attending school. They had eaten biscuits given to them by a man.

In April 2004, the provincial government in Jalalabad ordered state-run television to stop broadcasting the performances of Afghan women singers. The governor declared female entertainers "un-Islamic." After pressure from the Afghan government, the ban was lifted.

Widespread violence against women

A 2003 report by human rights watchdog Amnesty International listed a litany of concerns by Afghan women. The report said women in rural areas, where 85 per cent of the population lives, feared roving militia groups. Lawlessness in these regions made "their lives worse than during the Taliban era."

The report talked about widespread domestic violence, forced marriages of girls as young as eight to older men, and rape by armed gangs. The report said women who are detained are often subjected to physical examinations of their virginity carried out by male forensic specialists. Female prisoners have protested against sexual abuse by staff.

Amnesty said the justice system in Afghanistan is "too weak to offer effective protection of women's right to life and physical security, and itself subjects them to discrimination and abuse."

Into the future

The Loya Jirga ratified the country's new constitution in January 2004. It requires each of the 32 provinces to send two female delegates to the lower house. The constitution states that "the citizens of Afghanistan – whether man or woman – have equal rights and duties before the law." The constitution also maintains, "No law shall be contrary to the beliefs and practices of Islam." Critics of the constitution say that clause will hamper women's rights in the country.

Despite the barriers, Afghan women remain dogged in their fight for equality. Massouda Jalal became the first Afghan woman to run for president in the October 2004 election. She worked as a doctor and ran an underground school for girls during the Taliban's reign. Despite receiving death threats while she campaigned, she vowed to continue on the trail.

Quick Facts

Afghanistan's Women of Power

Habiba Sorabi - first Minister of Women's Affairs

Dr. Suhaila Seddiqi - Minister of Public Health in post-Taliban government

Dr. Sima Samar - Chair, Independent Human Rights Commission

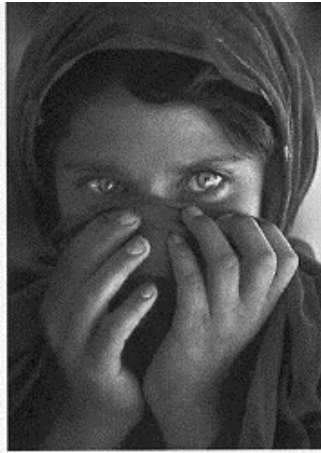
Please answer:

1. Why is Muqimyar's participation in the Olympic Games significant, even if she did not win?
2. How old were you when the Taliban came into power in Afghanistan?
3. How old were you when the Taliban regime ended in Afghanistan?
4. How did life change for Afghan women when the Taliban came into power? (use at least three examples)
5. Why do some women still choose to remain at home even though the Taliban are no longer in official power?
6. Even though the Taliban are not in official power in Afghanistan, what are some examples of sexist acts that are still taking place? (Use at least three examples).
7. What evidence in the article supports hopefulness future of Afghan women? (Use at least two examples).

Graphic Organizer: Comparing Experiences of Afghan Women

Fill in the graphic organizer below providing direct references to the excerpt from My Forbidden Face by Latifa and “Found: After 17 Years An Afghan Refugee’s Story” by Cathy Newman, published in National Geographic.

	<u>My Forbidden Face</u>	“Found: After 17 Years An Afghan Refugee’s Story”
Using evidence from the texts, how has daily life changed for Afghan women under Taliban rule?		
Describe the main character’s feelings and reactions to clothing mandates.		
In each text, how do you see clothing used as a way to limit freedom?		
For each reading, make at least two connections to the experiences of Jewish families during the Holocaust. You can draw upon any readings, clips or discussions from our study of the Holocaust.		



She remembers the moment. The photographer took her picture.

She remembers her anger. The man was a stranger. She had never been photographed before. Until they met again 17 years later, she had not been photographed since.

The photographer remembers the moment too. The light was soft. The refugee camp in Pakistan was a sea of tents. Inside the school tent he noticed her first. Sensing her shyness, he approached her last. She told him he could take her picture. "I didn't think the photograph of the girl would be different from anything else I shot that day," he recalls of that morning in 1984 spent documenting the ordeal of Afghanistan's refugees.

The portrait by Steve McCurry turned out to be one of those images that sears the heart, and in June 1985 it ran on the cover of this

Then and now: As a girl (above) she was photographed by Steve McCurry in a camp in Pakistan for a story on Afghan refugees that ran in the June 1985 GEOGRAPHIC. Today she is the mother of three daughters, including one-year-old Alia.

magazine. Her eyes are sea green. They are haunted and haunting, and in them you can read the tragedy of a land drained by war. She became known around National Geographic as the "Afghan girl," and for 17 years no one knew her name.

In January a team from National Geographic Television & Film's EXPLORER brought McCurry to Pakistan to search for the girl with green eyes. They showed her picture around Nasir Bagh, the still standing refugee camp near Peshawar where the photograph had been made. A teacher from the school claimed to know her name. A young woman named Alam Bibi was located in a village nearby, but McCurry decided it wasn't her.

No, said a man who got wind of the search.

By **CATHY NEWMAN**

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SENIOR WRITER

Photographs by **STEVE McCURRY**



He knew the girl in the picture. They had lived at the camp together as children. She had returned to Afghanistan years ago, he said, and now lived in the mountains near Tora Bora. He would go get her.

It took three days for her to arrive. Her village is a six-hour drive and three-hour hike across a border that swallows lives. When McCurry saw her walk into the room, he thought to himself: This is her.

Names have power, so let us speak of hers. Her name is Sharbat Gula, and she is Pashtun, that most warlike of Afghan tribes. It is said of the Pashtun that they are only at peace when they are at war, and her eyes—then and now—burn with ferocity. She is 28, perhaps 29, or even 30. No one, not even she, knows for sure. Stories shift like sand in a place where no records exist.

Time and hardship have erased her youth. Her skin looks like leather. The geometry of her jaw has softened. The eyes still glare; that

A family portrait shows, from left to right, three-year-old daughter Zahida, husband Rahmat Gul, Sharbat Gula, Alia, and Sharbat's older brother, Kashar Khan.

To help McCurry and the TV crew locate her, elders from the Nasir Bagh refugee camp (right) circulated McCurry's photograph.

has not softened. "She's had a hard life," said McCurry. "So many here share her story." Consider the numbers. Twenty-three years of war, 1.5 million killed, 3.5 million refugees: This is the story of Afghanistan in the past quarter century.

Now, consider this photograph of a young girl with sea green eyes. Her eyes challenge ours. Most of all, they disturb. We cannot turn away.

"THERE IS NOT ONE FAMILY that has not eaten the bitterness of war," a young Afghan merchant said in the 1985 NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC story that appeared with Sharbat's photograph on the cover. She was a child when her country was caught in the jaws of the Soviet invasion. A carpet of destruction smothered countless villages like hers. She was perhaps six when Soviet bombing killed her parents. By day the sky bled terror. At night the dead were buried. And always, the sound of planes, stabbing her with dread.

"We left Afghanistan because of the fighting," said her brother, Kashar Khan, filling in the narrative of her life. He is a straight line of a man with a raptor face and piercing eyes. "The Russians were everywhere. They were killing people. We had no choice."

Shepherded by their grandmother, he and his four sisters walked to Pakistan. For a week they moved through mountains covered in snow, begging for blankets to keep warm.

"You never knew when the planes would come," he recalled. "We hid in caves."

hope," said Yusufzai. "Each time, the Afghan people have found themselves betrayed by their leaders and by outsiders professing to be their friends and saviors."

In the mid-1990s, during a lull in the fighting, Sharbat Gula went home to her village in the foothills of mountains veiled by snow. To live in this earthen-colored village at the end of a thread of path means to scratch out an existence, nothing more. There are terraces planted with corn, wheat, and rice, some walnut trees, a stream that spills down the mountain

(except in times of drought), but no school, clinic, roads, or running water.

Here is the bare outline of her day. She rises before sunrise and prays. She fetches water from the stream. She cooks, cleans, does laundry. She cares for her children; they are the center of her life. Robina is 13. Zahida is three. Alia, the baby, is one. A fourth daughter died in infancy. Sharbat has never known a happy day, her brother says, except perhaps the day of her marriage.

Her husband, Rahmat Gul, is slight in build, with a smile like the gleam of a lantern at dusk. She remembers being married at 13. No, he says, she was 16. The match was arranged.

He lives in Peshawar (there are few jobs in Afghanistan) and works in a bakery. He bears the burden of medical bills; the dollar a day he earns vanishes like smoke. Her asthma, which cannot tolerate the heat and pollution of Peshawar in summer, limits her time in the city and with her husband to the winter. The rest of the year she lives in the mountains.

At the age of 13, Yusufzai, the journalist, explained, she would have gone into purdah, the secluded existence followed by many Islamic women once they reach puberty. "Women vanish from the public eye," he said. In the street she wears a plum-colored burka,



The journey that began with the loss of their parents and a trek across mountains by foot ended in a refugee camp tent living with strangers.

"Rural people like Sharbat find it difficult to live in the cramped surroundings of a refugee camp," explained Rahimullah Yusufzai, a respected Pakistani journalist who acted as interpreter for McCurry and the television crew. "There is no privacy. You live at the mercy of other people." More than that, you live at the mercy of the politics of other countries. "The Russian invasion destroyed our lives," her brother said.

It is the ongoing tragedy of Afghanistan. Invasion. Resistance. Invasion. Will it ever end? "Each change of government brings



The eyes have it

To verify that Sharbat Gula was indeed the young Afghan girl photographed by McCurry, Thomas Musheno, a forensic examiner for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (above) did a facial comparison between photographs taken in late 1984 and those taken recently. "I'm 100

percent sure this is the same person," he said.

The inventor of automatic iris recognition, John Daugman, a professor of computer science at Cambridge University, England, mathematically determined that the eyes belong to the same person. Iris patterns, like fingerprints, are unique and can be used for identification.



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHER MARK THIESSEN (ABOVE LEFT); ALEXANDRA BOULAT

which walls her off from the world and from the eyes of any man other than her husband. "It is a beautiful thing to wear, not a curse," she says.

Faced by questions, she retreats into the black shawl wrapped around her face, as if by doing so she might will herself to evaporate. The eyes flash anger. It is not her custom to subject herself to the questions of strangers.

Had she ever felt safe?

"No. But life under the Taliban was better. At least there was peace and order."

Had she ever seen the photograph of herself as a girl?

"No."

She can write her name, but cannot read. She harbors the hope of education for her children. "I want my daughters to have skills," she said. "I wanted to finish school but could not. I was sorry when I had to leave."

Education, it is said, is the light in the eye. There is no such light for her. It is possibly

MORE ON OUR WEBSITE

SIGHTS & SOUNDS Immerse yourself in the quest to find the "Afghan girl" in this narrated multimedia special. Also view video from the National Geographic EXPLORER show. (See local listings for repeat airings on MSNBC and internationally on the National Geographic Channel.) Check out field tales from the TV team and Steve McCurry, and read the June 1985 story at nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0204.

too late for her 13-year-old daughter as well, Sharbat Gula said. The two younger daughters still have a chance.

THE REUNION between the woman with green eyes and the photographer was quiet. On the subject of married women, cultural tradition is strict. She must not look—and certainly must not smile—at a man who is not her husband. She did not smile at McCurry. Her expression, he said, was flat. She cannot understand how her picture has touched so many. She does not

know the power of those eyes.

Such knife-thin odds. That she would be alive. That she could be found. That she could endure such loss. Surely, in the face of such bitterness the spirit could atrophy. How, she was asked, had she survived?

The answer came wrapped in unshakable certitude.

"It was," said Sharbat Gula, "the will of God."

CONTRIBUTING REPORTERS: Lawrence Cumbo, Boyd Matson, and Carrie Regan, all National Geographic Television & Film



PHOTOGRAPHER STEVE McCURRY IN AFGHANISTAN, 1992

By STEVE McCURRY

I could see her eyes through the camera lens. They're still the same.

Her skin is weathered, there are wrinkles now, but she's as striking as the young girl I photographed 17 years ago. Both times our connection was through the lens. This time she found it easier to look into the lens than at me. She is a married woman and must not look at a man who is not her husband.

Our conversation was brief. There was little emotion. I explained that so many had been moved by her photograph. I've received countless letters from people around the world who were inspired by the photograph to volunteer in refugee camps or do aid work in Afghanistan. When she saw the photo for the first time, she was embarrassed by the holes in her red shawl. A cooking fire had burned it, she said. She is glad her picture was an inspiration. But I don't think the photograph means anything to her. The only thing that matters is her husband and children.

I remember the noise and confusion in that refugee camp 17 years ago. I knew that Afghan girls, just a few years away from disappearing behind a traditional veil, might be reluctant to have their picture taken by a male Westerner. So I proceeded carefully. I asked the teacher for permission to enter the girls' school tent and photograph a few of the students. The

shyest of them, Sharbat, said I could take her photograph, and I shot a few frames.

When I saw the film, I was surprised by how still and quiet it appeared. At that point the Soviets had been in Afghanistan for five years. So it was a specific moment in time. Yet it was a timeless moment. There's the idea that this image was emblematic for what was happening in Afghanistan. But a lot of people don't know the picture is related to Afghanistan, and they still respond to that look.

I'm relieved to know that this young woman has survived and has been able to carve out a life for herself. I hope that finding her will be a good thing for her and her family. I'd like her to look back in ten years and be happy this happened. I intend to check in on her for the rest of my life.

It's fortunate we found her now. The local government is going to rip down the refugee camp and build a housing development. If we had tried to do this a year from now, it would have been impossible. Only through contacts in the camp were we able to locate her. Afghanistan has been in a Dark Age for two decades. That she's resurfaced now is perhaps prophetic, a hopeful sign. We'll have to wait and see. □

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY'S AFGHAN GIRLS FUND

Many women in Afghanistan want the same thing for their daughters that Sharbat Gula wants for hers: an education. The National Geographic Society has decided to create the Afghan Girls Fund. The Society will work with select nonprofit organizations to develop educational opportunities for the girls and young women of Afghanistan. You are welcome to participate by going to nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0204 or sending a check directly to the Afghan Girls Fund, Development Office, National Geographic Society, 1145 17th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036.