



Unveiled: Voices of Women in Afghanistan

Harriet Logan

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"We have been forgotten, and we need the right to speak. If no one hears what we say, nothing will change."

In 1997, during the Taliban's repressive rule, award-winning photographer Harriet Logan went to Afghanistan and encountered a group of extraordinary women whose strong characters and dreams for the future made an indelible impression on her. Despite the peril to her life and theirs, she captured their lives in a series of striking photographs. The women risked their safety by speaking to and being photographed by her because they felt that the outside world needed to know what was happening to them. The images of women from 1997 contrast sharply with those from the 1970s, when they were free to dress as they wished, speak up for their rights, and pursue their educations alongside men.

After the Taliban's defeat at the end of 2001, Logan returned to Afghanistan, where she found many of these women again and met others. These courageous and intelligent women shared with her stories of unimaginable sadness and abiding strength through the long years of war and uncertainty. Zargoona, a widow, reveals that she could not afford to treat her cancer because Taliban law prevented women from earning a living. Nahed, a schoolteacher, has vowed never to marry because even her own brothers beat her, Durkhanai, the daughter of a famous television anchor-woman, tells how she experienced the joys of family life and the pain of lost freedom all at once: "We were like birds in a cage. For me, maybe my cage was good -- my home was full of happiness. We love each other here and we are not hungry. But outside it was terrible." Nine-year-old Sanam rejoices that she can carry her doll without being beaten for idolatry. Latifa lost her foot when she stepped on a mine and subsequently left her house only four times during Taliban rule. She begs of women across the world: "Please help us Afghan women. We have just come out of a dark period into the sunshine. Learn from us so that what we have suffered will never happen again."

Logan's photographs reveal the world of these women, from portraits of them at home to the war-torn landscapes of Kabul and its marketplaces newly brimming with beauty products. This stunning journey in text and image will open the reader's eyes to the Afghanistan of yesterday, today, and tomorrow.



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