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# AFGHAN STAR

*Winner, World Cinema  
Documentary  
Audience Award - 2009  
Sundance Film Festival*

*Official Selection  
Human Rights Watch Film  
Festival*

*Winner, World Cinema  
Documentary Directing Award -  
2009  
Sundance Film Festival*

## Synopsis

After 30 years of Taliban and wartime rule, pop culture is creeping back into Afghanistan. Director Havana Marking has captured it in this inspired documentary, *Afghan Star*. An American Idol–type contest set in Afghanistan? What more intriguing inroad into a region usually represented in our news media by death and violence? To understand the magnitude of this film, we must look at the facts—2,000 contestants compete for a chance to be the next Afghan pop idol. Three of them are women. In an unheard-of precedent, all genders, ethnic groups, and age sectors are equal. More than one-third of the country watches the show and votes with text messages. For many this represents their first encounter with any kind of democratic process. Marking follows the dramatic stories of four of the contestants over three months, from regional auditions to the finals in Kabul. All is not safe for her subjects because they must actually risk their lives to sing. In a larger sense, we get a glimpse into the ongoing struggle of a country trying to segue into the modern world and the dangerous underpinnings its citizens must navigate. Though moving and inspiring, what is really brilliant about *Afghan Star* is that by observing a people's relationship to pop culture, we get a different, if not more human, look at this troubled part of the world. *SUNDANCE*

*... it was the first time an Afghan film had made it to Sundance, let alone won both the World Cinema Documentary Audience and Directors award. The people of Afghanistan were over the moon.*

Huffington Post

*I was frustrated that you never see or hear about civilians or young people here. This is a country with 60 percent of the population under 20. They are largely ignored, but clearly they are the future.*

*Havana Marking, Director of Afghan Star*

### Themes and Concepts

Democracy  
Freedom of expression  
Censorship  
Media Literacy  
Journalistic Integrity  
Cultural heritage (tangible and intangible): monuments/artifacts  
Sufism  
Orientalism

## Media Literacy

### **Toward Critical Media Literacy: Core concepts, debates, organizations, and policy.**

By Douglas Kellner and Jeff Share. In [Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education](#), Volume [26](#), Issue [3](#) September 2005 , pages 369 – 386.

*Abstract:* Media literacy education is not as advanced in the USA as in several other English speaking areas, such as Great Britain, Canada, and Australia. Despite decades of struggle since the 1970s by individuals and groups, media education is still only reaching a small percentage of K-12 schools in the US. While some major inroads have been made, such as getting elements of media literacy included in most of the 50 state's educational standards and the launching of two national media education organizations, most teachers and students in the USA are not aware of issues involved in media literacy education. In this paper we set forth some models of media literacy, delineate key concepts of critical media literacy, and then examine some of the most active organizations in the USA and differences in their goals and pedagogy.

Article can be downloaded from [Worldview Blog](#)

### **Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom by Bell Hooks**

In *Teaching Critical Thinking*, renowned cultural critic and progressive educator bell hooks addresses some of the most compelling issues facing teachers in and out of the classroom today. In a series of short, accessible, and enlightening essays, hooks explores the confounding and sometimes controversial topics that teachers and students have urged her to address since the publication of the previous best-selling volumes in her Teaching series, *Teaching to Transgress* and *Teaching Community*. Highlighting the importance of reading, she insists on the primacy of free speech, a democratic education of literacy. Throughout these essays, she celebrates the transformative power of critical thinking.

More about the book: <http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415968201/>

### **Media Literacy through Critical Thinking: Teacher Materials**

**By Chris M. Worsnop**

Produced by NW Center for Excellence in Media Literacy. A comprehensive study for those who are interested in media literacy education and have particular interest in addressing teen health issues from a media literacy perspective.

[http://depts.washington.edu/nwmedia/sections/nw\\_center/curriculum\\_docs/teach\\_combine.pdf](http://depts.washington.edu/nwmedia/sections/nw_center/curriculum_docs/teach_combine.pdf)

### **Film Analysis Framework**

Film Analysis Framework to assist with how to interpret and analyze the film.

Framework can be uploaded from [Worldview Blog](#) in pdf format.

## Web links to *Afghan Star*

### **Afghan Star – Official Trailer**

Watch the official trailer for the film.

[http://www.afghanstardocumentary.com/watch\\_sm.html](http://www.afghanstardocumentary.com/watch_sm.html)

### **Afghan Star - Interview**

Watch the interview with Havana Marking (the director of the Afghan Star) and Saoud Sediqi –the creator and director of the real Afghan Star competition.

<http://bcove.me/yor1n2le>

### **Afghan Star**

Official web-site for the documentary. View the theatrical trailer, scenes from the film, read the press package (information about the creators, reviews from various sources), and reviews at LA Times, The Observer, Variety, Screen International, Boston Globe, Examiner, Hollywood Reporter, Sundance Insider.

<http://www.afghanstardocumentary.com/>

### **Afghan Stars at Sundance**

Read the director's -Havana Marking - post on Huffington Post at Sundance Film Festival.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/havana-marking/emaafghanem-stars-at-sunda\\_b\\_161401.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/havana-marking/emaafghanem-stars-at-sunda_b_161401.html)

### **Afghan Star: interview with Havana Marking**

Read the interview with the director – Havana Marking – at Director's UK.

[http://www.directors.uk.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=212%3Afeatured&Itemid=21](http://www.directors.uk.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=212%3Afeatured&Itemid=21)

### **INTERVIEW: Filmmaker Havana Marking On The Dangers Of Being An 'Afghan Star' (VIDEO)**

Read the interview with the director – Havana Marking – by Diana Tucker at Huffington Post on June, 16 2009.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/diane-tucker/interview-filmmaker-havan\\_b\\_215493.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/diane-tucker/interview-filmmaker-havan_b_215493.html)

## Music Review

### **Music Review: Afghan Star Original Soundtrack Recording**

Read a review on Afghan Star soundtrack by Zach Freeman posted on September 28, 2009.

<http://www.bloggernews.net/122424>

## Politics and Afghanistan

### **Photographer's Journal: A Portrait of Kabul**

A portrait of Kabul through the photographs of Max Becherer. You can also listen to the story of each photograph from his voice.

[http://www.nytimes.com/packages/khtml/2007/01/19/travel/20070121\\_KABUL\\_FEATU RE.html](http://www.nytimes.com/packages/khtml/2007/01/19/travel/20070121_KABUL_FEATU RE.html)

### **Cultural Profile: Introduction to Afghanistan**

Read an introduction to Afghanistan. The site includes basic information on geography and topography, history, government, economy, population, language, religion, education, festivals and holidays.

[http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan\\_Cultural\\_Profile/-358.html](http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan_Cultural_Profile/-358.html)

### **Country Profile for Afghanistan**

Read a concise review about Afghanistan. The site includes overview, facts, leaders, and media information about the country. The site also has chronology of events in Afghanistan.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/country\\_profiles/1162668.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/country_profiles/1162668.stm)

### **Afghanistan**

Read the country profile of Afghanistan and projects implemented by UNESCO in the country in the fields of Education, Natural Sciences, Social and Human Sciences, Culture, Communication and Information.

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/worldwide/asia-and-the-pacific/afghanistan/>

## Sufism and Islam

### **Sufism Today**

An introductory article on Sufism by Melinda Wightman published in Middle East Studies Bulletin in Spring 2009.

Chapter can be downloaded from [Worldview Blog](#) in pdf format.

### **Sufism and Islam**

Read the chapter "Sufism and Islam" from *The Sufi Doctrine of Rumi* by William C. Chittick (2005).

Chapter can be downloaded from [Worldview Blog](#) in pdf format.

### **Rumi (Jalal ad-Din Balkhi) Odes & Quatrains**

Read Rumi Odes and Quatrains translated by Shahram Shiva

Odes and Quatrains can be downloaded from [Worldview Blog](#) in pdf format.

## Cultural Heritage in Afghanistan

### **UNESCO\_ World Heritage**

Read background information about World Heritage Sites and UNESCO's World Heritage Mission.

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/about/>

### **UNESCO\_ World Heritage in Danger**

The List of World Heritage in Danger is designed to inform the international community of conditions which threaten the very characteristics for which a property was inscribed on the World Heritage List, and to encourage corrective action

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/158>

### **Afghanistan's Heritage**

Read a brief article about cultural heritage of Afghanistan by Brendan Cassar.

<http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?ctl=Details&tabid=3919&mid=3639&ItemID=8112>

### **Cultural Profile: Heritage**

Read about heritage, historical background, monuments, museums, reconstruction of the built heritage in Afghanistan.

[http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan\\_Cultural\\_Profile/-1020.html](http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan_Cultural_Profile/-1020.html)

### **Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley**

*Bamiyan Valley in Afghanistan:* This cultural landscape was inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2003 simultaneously with its inscription on the World Heritage List. The property is in a fragile state of conservation considering that it has suffered from abandonment, military action and dynamite explosions. Parts of the site are inaccessible due to the presence of antipersonnel mines. UNESCO, at the request of the Afghan Government, coordinates all international efforts to safeguard and enhance Afghanistan's cultural heritage, notably in Bamiyan.

Read about cultural heritage site, why it is selected as a World Heritage Site, description of the site, see the map, pictures, and watch the video.

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/208/>

Gallery : <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/208/gallery/>

Video : <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/208/video>

### **Minaret and Archaeological Remains of Jam**

Read about cultural heritage site, why it is selected as a World Heritage Site, description of the site, see the map, and pictures.

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/211>

Gallery : <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/211/gallery/>

### **Uncovering Rich and Complex Layers of Afghan National Identity**

Read a review article on Afghan National Treasures, an exhibit organized by National Geographic by Melinda Wightman published in Middle East Studies Bulletin in Spring 2009.

Article can be uploaded from [Worldview Blog](#) in pdf format.

### **The KIT: World Heritage in Young Hands**

An innovative education concept! Sharing knowledge about heritage conservation with young people in the form of a journey through the world's magnificent cultural and natural heritage...

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/educationkit/>

You can download the KIT in pdf version at

<http://whc.unesco.org/uploads/activities/documents/activity-54-19.pdf> or [at Worldview Blog](#).

## Cultural Profile in Afghanistan

### **Culture in Afghanistan**

Read about arts and culture in Afghanistan.

[http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan\\_Cultural\\_Profile/-357.html](http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan_Cultural_Profile/-357.html)

### **Archives and Libraries**

[http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan\\_Cultural\\_Profile/-8.html](http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan_Cultural_Profile/-8.html)

exchange.

[http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan\\_Cultural\\_Profile/-1021.html](http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan_Cultural_Profile/-1021.html)

### **Cultural Policy and Infrastructure**

[http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan\\_Cultural\\_Profile/-388.html](http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan_Cultural_Profile/-388.html)

### **Film**

Read about Afghan filmmaking in the 1960s and 1970s, Filmmaking in the Soviet and Taliban eras, Contemporary Afghan filmmaking, Kabul Film - Mohammad N Ehsani, Director Siddiqullah Barmak, filmmaker, and SPACH - 'Rediscovered Homeland.'

[http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan\\_Cultural\\_Profile/-1018.html](http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan_Cultural_Profile/-1018.html)

### **International Cultural Exchange**

Read about UNESCO and the NGOs, Foundation for Culture and Civil Society (FCCS)MMCC Mini Mobile Children's Circus, GAP and the Women's Park Bagh e Zanana, Karte Parwan, and International cultural collaboration and

## ***Literature and Poetry***

Read on Early Afghan literature, The emergence of modern Afghan literature, Soviet-era Afghan literature, Contemporary Afghan literature, and Haidery Woojudi (writer)

[http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan\\_Cultural\\_Profile/-1022.html](http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan_Cultural_Profile/-1022.html)

### **Pushtun Poet: Khushal Khan Khatak (1613-1694)**



Seventeenth-century Afghan warrior-poet Khushal Khan Khatak wrote in Pashtu. Regarded today as the national poet of modern Afghanistan, he wrote a large body of verse during a time of civil strife. His themes are not conventional but speak of small everyday joys and sorrows, as well as national hopes and religious devotion. His theme of the noble tribesman later became popular with other writers. Khushal Khan Khatak's grandson Afdal Khan authored an important history of the Pashtun.

Read more about him at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khushal\\_Khan\\_Khattak](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Khushal_Khan_Khattak)



Rahman Baba was one of the most remarkable men to live on the long border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Poems of this much loved Pathan reveal the inner world, and ideals and aspirations, of many Pathans, regardless of their tribe or worldly achievements.

<http://www.rahmanbabadiwan.com/>

### ***Media***

Read about Media, Broadcasting, Press, Publishing, and Internet.

[http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan\\_Cultural\\_Profile/-6.html](http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan_Cultural_Profile/-6.html)

## ***Performing Arts***

**Music** (The Afghan instrumentarium, Traditional music, Religious vocalisation, Popular music, Music under the Soviet and Taliban regimes, Recent developments, Music in Kabul by John Baily, Music from the Shrines of Afghanistan by Thomas McCabe, Mohammad Yousef Kadari ( rebab maker), Mohammad Ali Brushna (harmonium maker)

[http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan\\_Cultural\\_Profile/-788.html](http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan_Cultural_Profile/-788.html)

**Theatre** (Early theatrical development, The development of modern Afghan theatre, Recent development)

[http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan\\_Cultural\\_Profile/-790.html](http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan_Cultural_Profile/-790.html)



## **Dance**

[http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan\\_Cultural\\_Profile/-789.html](http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan_Cultural_Profile/-789.html)

## **Kharabat**

[http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan\\_Cultural\\_Profile/-801.html](http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan_Cultural_Profile/-801.html)

## ***Visual Arts***

### **Traditional Visual Arts**

Carpet making, Gilim weaving, Tile making, Pottery, Miniature painting, Calligraph

[http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan\\_Cultural\\_Profile/-814.html](http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan_Cultural_Profile/-814.html)

**Rabanni Rangbean (artist)**

[http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan\\_Cultural\\_Profile/-821.html](http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan_Cultural_Profile/-821.html)

## Contemporary Art in Afghanistan

### **Center for Contemporary Arts in Afghanistan**

Read and see more about contemporary arts in Afghanistan.

[http://www.ccaa.org.af/?page\\_id=23](http://www.ccaa.org.af/?page_id=23)

### **Modern and Contemporary Visual Arts**

Read about modern and contemporary visual arts in Afghanistan.

[http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan\\_Cultural\\_Profile/-815.html](http://www.culturalprofiles.net/afghanistan/Directories/Afghanistan_Cultural_Profile/-815.html)

### **Zalmaï Photography**



Born in Kabul, Afghanistan, Zalmaï left the country after the Soviet invasion in 1980. He traveled to Lausanne, Switzerland, where he became a Swiss citizen. Following his passion for Photography, which he discovered very early in life, Zalmaï pursued combined studies at both the School of Photography of Lausanne and at the Professional Photography Training Center of Yverdon. In 1989, he began to work as a freelance photographer, traveling around the world from Indonesia to Egypt, from Cuba to the Central African Republic, and eventually returned to Afghanistan, where he continues documenting the ongoing war and plight of the Afghan people.

Visit his web-site for his gallery, books, awards, exhibitions, bio, and contact at

<http://www.zalmai.com/>

## Lida Abdul

Born in Kabul, Afghanistan in 1973, and resides there now. Abdul lived in Germany and India as a refugee after she was forced to leave Afghanistan after the former-Soviet



invasion. Her work fuses the tropes of ‘Western’ formalism with the numerous aesthetic traditions--Islamic, Buddhist, Hindu, pagan and nomadic--that collectively influenced Afghan art and culture. She has produced work in many media including video, film, photography, installation and live performance. Her most recent work has been featured at the Venice Biennale 2005, Istanbul Modern, Kunsthalle Vienna, Museum of Modern Art Arnhem, Netherlands and Miami Central, CAC Centre d'Art Contemporain

de Bretigny, and Frac Lorraine Metz, France. She has also exhibited in festivals in Mexico, Spain, Germany, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan; She was also a featured artist at the Central Asian Biennial 2004. For the past few years, Abdul has been working in different parts of Afghanistan on projects exploring the relationship between architecture and identity.

Visit her website at <http://www.lidaabdul.com/>

## Afghan Food

### Afghan Food

Read about Afghan Food and Afghan Recipes.

<http://www.afghanistan-culture.com/afghanistan-food.html>

### Afghan Food

See powerpoint presentation of Afghan Food.

Powerpoint can be uploaded from [Worldview Blog](#).

## Kite Flying

### Kite's Flying in Afghanistan

Read on one of Afghanistan's national outdoor sports.

Pdf can be downloaded from [Worldview Blog](#).

## Recommended Films and Books



### **Silencing the Song: Afghan Fallen Star**

Havana Marking –director Afghan Star-revisits Setera, originally fallen star originally spotlighted in the 2010 HBO documentary “Afghan Star” as she copes with the aftermath of controversy. Read the synopsis of the documentary and watch the trailer.

<http://www.hbo.com/documentaries/silencing-the-song-an-afghan-fallen-star/index.html#>



### **RETURN, AFGHANISTAN**

Aperture  
2004

Hardback  
11.75" x 8"  
128 pages  
80 four-color and 5 duotone

For more than a quarter of a century, Afghanistan has been ravaged by war, drought, and famine. In this magnificent volume, Afghan-born photographer Zalmai returns home after twenty-three years in exile to rediscover his homeland at a crucial moment of transition. Working in rich color, and frequently using a panoramic format that embraces the vastness of the sky and sand, Zalmai immerses us in the ravaged landscape and the bustle of reconstruction. My project tries to capture the resilience of a people who have rarely known peace, their optimism in the face of overwhelming odds and the very real worry that the country remains on a knife-edge and could easily slip back into a nightmare from which it is still trying to escape.

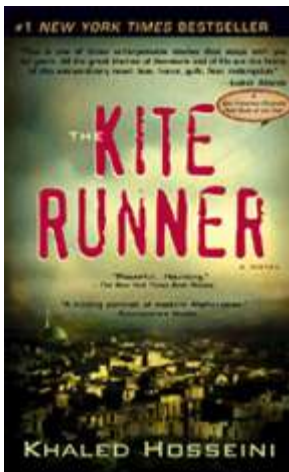


## **One Story, Thirty Stories: An Anthology of Contemporary Afghan American Literature**

[Zohra Saed](#) (Editor), [Sahar Muradi](#) (Editor)

*One Story, Thirty Stories* (or “*Afsanah, Seesaneh*,” the Afghan equivalent of “once upon a time”) collects poetry, fiction, essays, and selections from two blogs from thirty-three men and women—poets, fiction writers, journalists, filmmakers and video artists, photographers, community leaders and organizers, and diplomats.

Some are veteran writers, such as Tamim Ansary and Donia Gobar, but others are novices and still learning how to craft their own “story,” their unique Afghan American voice. The fifty pieces in this rich anthology reveal journeys in a new land and culture. They show people trying to come to grips with a life in exile, or they trace the migration maps of parents. They navigate the jagged landscape of the Soviet invasion, the civil war of the 1990s and the rise of the Taliban, and the ongoing American occupation.



## **Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini**

Taking us from Afghanistan in the final days of the monarchy to the present, *The Kite Runner* is the unforgettable, beautifully told story of the friendship between two boys growing up in Kabul. Raised in the same household and sharing the same wet nurse, Amir and Hassan nonetheless grow up in different worlds: Amir is the son of a prominent and wealthy man, while Hassan, the son of Amir's father's servant, is a Hazara, member of a shunned ethnic minority. Their intertwined lives, and their fates, reflect the eventual tragedy of the world around them. When the Soviets invade and Amir and his father flee the country for a new life in California, Amir thinks that he has escaped his past. And yet he cannot leave the memory of Hassan behind him.

*The Kite Runner* is a novel about friendship, betrayal, and the price of loyalty. It is about the bonds between fathers and sons, and the power of their lies. Written against a history that has not been told in fiction before, *The Kite Runner* describes the rich culture and beauty of a land in the process of being destroyed. But with the devastation, Khaled Hosseini also gives us hope: through the novel's faith in the power of reading and storytelling, and in the possibilities he shows for redemption.



*The Kite Runner* is a 2007 drama film directed by Marc Forster based on the novel of the same name by Khaled Hosseini.... It tells the story of Amir, a well-to-do boy from the Wazir Akbar Khan district of Kabul, who is tormented by the guilt of abandoning his friend Hassan, the son of his father's Hazara servant. The story is set against a backdrop of tumultuous events, from the fall of the monarchy in Afghanistan through the Soviet invasion, the mass exodus of Afghan refugees to Pakistan and the United States, and the Taliban regime.

For more about the film, visit official website at :

<http://www.kiterunnermovie.com/>