



Summer 2012

A-AWA's Third Anniversary Event:

September 18, 2011

A-AWA celebrated its third anniversary on September 18th 2011 during a grand event at Dunya Banquet Hall in Annandale, Virginia. This was the first formal introduction of A-AWA to the Afghan community in Virginia and D.C. area. The Mistress of ceremony was a young and energetic volunteer, Ms. Hanna Karimi, who is also the president of the Afghan Student Association at George Mason University. The event started with the introduction of A-AWA's Board of Directors - Mrs. Shahla Ahmadi (President), Dr. Homaira Behsudi-Wali (Vice-President), Dr. Hosai Hesham (Secretary), Mrs. Nillab Pazhwak, Ms. Raihana Noorzad, Ms. Nilofar Ariasaif (Treasurer), and Honorary Board Members, Mr. Lou Mitchell and Ms. Sima Wali. The introductions were followed by an overview of A-AWA's goals and future objectives for the coming year.

Ms. Shahla Ahmadi welcomed members and guests with her powerful message to the Afghan community, which brought home for all of us the magnitude of the responsibilities we carry to our culture and our community. Ms. Lina Rozbeh followed by reciting her beautiful poem, "The Birth of a Girl" that so perfectly expresses the plight of Afghan women. Ms. Nillab Pazhwak presented an impressive slide show and discussed A-AWA's activities and future projects. She sought community support and cooperation in order to achieve bigger goals and make a difference for the Afghan community here in the U.S., as well as through projects inside Afghanistan.

During this special occasion, A-AWA had the honor of introducing Ms. India d'Afghanistan to our local Afghan community. Ms. Malal Nezam, an outstanding volunteer and recognized community member, introduced Mrs. India and presented an overview of Afghan women's status during the Amani era. Ms. India d'Afghanistan was warmly welcomed by a crowd of over 300 guests. Her humble and impressive presentation left an everlasting impression on her audience. Ms. Shahla Ahmadi recognized Ms. India's valuable efforts by presenting her with the A-AWA's highest appreciation plaque.

The event enjoyed the support of the Afghan Embassy as Mrs. Sultana Hakimi, the wife of Afghan Ambassador Mr. Aklil Hakimi, presented her message to A-AWA and our Afghan community. Honorable guest, Mr. Pat Harrity, Supervisor of the Springfield District in Fairfax County, shared his support of A-AWA and acknowledged the beneficial collaboration between Fairfax and A-AWA as the County utilizes organizations such as A-AWA in their outreach efforts in and around our community. Mrs. Zohra Yousef, representing the Afghan Women Association

of Southern California, shared her message of solidarity between the California based organization and other Afghan women associations around the country and globe. Mrs. Nooria Faryar, currently a member of the board of directors, thanked all the event sponsors and volunteers, especially Trivision and Dunya Banquet Hall. Ms. Raihana Noorzad, another member of the board of directors, was responsible for the warm welcoming of all our guests.

This was a great opportunity to have representatives of various Afghan organizations under one roof celebrating our common cause of making a difference in the community and keeping Afghan heritage, values, and culture alive. A-AWA enjoyed meeting with representatives of Mustafa Center, Afghan Academy, Sham - e- Orphan, Help the Afghan Children, and many other organizations. Dr. Homaira Behsudi-Wali, as A-AWA's Vice President, presented the closing remarks, encouraging the community to support A-AWA.

The event ended with dinner and a moving performance of the Afghan National Dance interpreted and performed by the George Mason Afghan Students Association. Ms. Sima Azimi organized a wonderful and colorful traditional Afghan clothing fashion show. A-AWA extends its gratitude to all sponsors of the event and the enormous support received from community members and A_AWA volunteers. Dedicated and talented people such as Valarie, Nilofar Ariasaif, Qudsia Faryar, Mariam Rusta, Walid Rusta, Arian Ahmadi, Arian Misdaq, Rahila Roshna , Najiba Malikyar, and so many more selfless A-AWA supporters that we regret not being able to list them all. Our sincerest thanks to everyone.

A-AWA's Recognition of Princess India's Humanitarian Efforts



In September 2011, The Afghan American Women Association had the honor of hosting Princess India d'Afghanistan as the distinguished guest during the extensive celebration that marked A_AWA's third anniversary. On that memorable day Mrs. Malal Nezam, an outstanding member of A-AWA, introduced Princess India to over 300 guests who attended the event. Mrs. India was presented with A-AWA's highest appreciation plaque. A_AWA would like to thank Mrs. Malal Nezam who was instrumental in making the arrangements and engaging the cooperation of the Afghan Women Association of Southern California to make Mrs. India's memorable visit possible.

Princess India was born on June 7, 1929 in Bombay India during her parent's exile from Afghanistan. She completed her education in Italy and Switzerland. She is married and has two daughters and one son. Banned from returning to her homeland, she spent most of her life in Italy. After many years she finally gained access to return to Afghanistan in 1968 to attend her mother's burial ceremony. She returned again after the fall of Taliban in 2001. In spite of the fact that she was always away from her homeland, she never stopped extending her help whenever and wherever possible. She placed particular focus on helping the less fortunate children in Afghanistan. During the Russian takeover, she took care of 65 young Afghans at her own home after they were released from hospital in Italy. When Princess India was finally able to return to her homeland for good, she celebrated the occasion by donating the Monarch's property and estate in eastern Afghanistan to the Afghan people.

Over the last decade, she has worked to increase awareness of the human rights situation in Afghanistan. Throughout Europe, she raises funds for development projects targeted at education, homeless and orphaned children, and centers for abused women. In 2006, Princess India was named as the Cultural Ambassador of Afghanistan to Europe by Afghan President Hamid Karzai. Some of her efforts inside Afghanistan are channeled through the Mahmoud Tarzi Foundation and she serves as the vice-president of this reputable foundation.

Former Princess and life-long humanitarian India d'Afghanistan has been recently recognized as the "Person of the Year" in Afghanistan for the year 2012 (1391 Islamic solar calendar) by Radio Azadi. Radio Azadi has had this award for the last five years and has bestowed it on India for her humanitarian work with children, the disabled, and women in need. "Before making the final decision we consulted several civic groups in Kabul, which praised Princess India and her work," says Radio Azadi Director Hashem Mohmand. "She supports the weak in Afghanistan and we wanted to honor her for her dedication to help her country."

A_AWA is proud to support and message Ms. India's true and valuable efforts, and we wish her great success in her future projects.

A-AWA's Community Outreach Committee Update, March 2012:



The Senior Social Circle has continued with its monthly programs since its launch in September 2010. The program celebrated its first year anniversary in September 2011. The number of participants has gradually increased as more members in the Afghan community take interest in these monthly gatherings. Each gathering has offered new information covering a variety of topics by professionals in the field. As a venue to promote socialization, networking, and culture, participants have learned from the announcements and information shared by different community members and organizations.

Over a year of experience has demonstrated great success as we continue to see a growing number of participants in the 'Afghan Women's Support Group' that was formed side by side with our 'Senior's Social Circle'. This new group has initiated activities such as Afghan music, book reading, and storytelling that make the programs more enjoyable to participants. Further, these programs have continued to benefit from involvement by our younger generation and support from members of the George Mason's Afghan Students' Association.

A_AWA has witnessed that each monthly program brings participants closer to each other and offers them a venue to support each other. Additionally, the gatherings have become the cornerstone for launching and supporting A-AWA's other projects such as the Coat Drive and Dari/English language classes. The plan is to continue meeting once a month with each program accommodating 30 to 50 participants.

Future presentations will focus on:

- Promoting Afghan culture through celebrating Afghan festivals e.g. Nawrooz, Eid, etc.

- Empowering women through celebrating Women’s International Day and Mother’s Day.
- Offering support through a series of physical and mental health awareness workshops
- Recognizing prominent Afghan community members e.g. artists, scientists, writers and entrepreneurs and more as role models and supporting their contributions.
- Job search and networking opportunities.

I would like to personally thank each of the participants, volunteers, and A-AWA members for their time, interest, and support! Special thanks to Mrs. Mariam Rusta, Mrs. Nooria Faryar, Mrs. Shahla Ahmadi and all of the presenters for their continual efforts to make these programs a success!

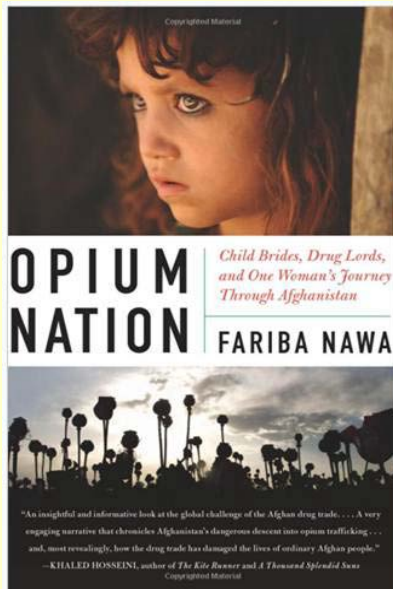
A-AWA is looking forward to hearing more from our beloved Afghan Community as well as benefitting from their increased involvement and support.

Nillab Pazhwak

Community Outreach Committee, Chair

Opium Nation: Child Brides, Drug Lords, and One Woman's Journey through Afghanistan

By Qudsia Faryar



About Fariba Nawa, the Author:

Fariba Nawa has written for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, *Mother Jones*, *The Sunday Times Magazine* (London), *Newsday*, and the *Village Voice*. She has been a guest on CBS’s 48 Hours as well as numerous other television and radio shows on NPR, the BBC, MTV, and NBC. She lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with her husband and two daughters.

When veteran reporter Fariba Nawa returned home to Afghanistan—the nation she had fled as a child with her family during the Soviet invasion nearly twenty years earlier—she discovered a fractured country transformed by a multibillion-dollar drug trade. In *Opium Nation*, Nawa deftly illuminates the changes that have overtaken Afghanistan after decades of unbroken war.

Sharing remarkable stories of poppy farmers, corrupt officials, expats, drug lords, and addicts, including her haunting encounter with a twelve-year-old child bride who was bartered to pay off her father’s opium debts, Nawa offers a revealing and provocative narrative of a homecoming more difficult than she ever imagined as she courageously explores her own Afghan American identity and unveils a startling portrait of a land in turmoil.

The quote below is from Khaled Hosseini, author of *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*

“Insightful and informative. . . . Fariba Nawa weaves her personal story of reconnecting with her homeland after 9/11 with a very engaging narrative that chronicles Afghanistan’s dangerous descent into opium trafficking . . . [and] how the drug trade has damaged the lives of ordinary Afghan people.”

My own experience:

On January 15, 2012 I attended a book reading event at Bus Boys and Poets Restaurant in Washington DC. It was a wonderful experience to meet the Author of *Opium Nation* and briefly chat with her. I was moved and horrified at the same time when she was talking about her book and her experiences back home in Afghanistan. After reading *Opium Nation*, I can honestly say that Fariba Nawa writes beautifully and sincerely. She describes her motherland, Afghanistan, in accurate sincere detail from the depictions of daily life to the grand visions of the scenic landscape. This is a well-written book that tells the story of what has happened to Afghanistan because of opium and the horrible effects women and young girls endure in the wake of successive cultural tragedies.

Mission Accomplished!!!

A-AWA’s 2011 Coat Drive was an even bigger success than in prior years. Macy’s generous support of our campaign has helped to achieve our goal this year. As always, many thanks go out to the Afghan-American community, Greater Washington DC Goodwill, and Wal-Mart for their contributions.

A special thanks for the generosity of Paxton International for free shipment of the coats to Afghanistan. Through the help of Paxton, the coats arrived safely to Afghanistan, where A-AWA’s new partner, Sela Foundation, was able to implement the project inside Afghanistan. A-AWA truly appreciates Sela’s support. As always, we could not have done this task without the continued support from Ms. Fouzia Amiri and team, who helped A-AWA for the past three years inside Afghanistan.

The new Coat Drive Team will start the project earlier this year in order to implement/distribute the coats for fall 2012. Our goal will be to get the coats there before the harsh winter hits the region. Of course we cannot accomplish this task alone. A-AWA counts on continued support from people like you to accomplish its 2012 Winter Coat project. We still need your help and we are asking you to join our efforts and bring a smile and warmth to the faces of even more children this year.

Update from the Board:

The success and progress of our organization and the projects we pursue, depends on strong, talented, and organized leadership. A-AWA has taken a great step forward in this area with the accepted appointments of the following new Board members, Ms. Nooria Faryar and Ms. Valarie Akins. Also, Ms. Qudsia Faryar, Mrs. Nillab Pazhwak, and Ms. Valarie Akins will lead A-

AWA's effort to release regular newsletters and update A-AWA's website and Facebook page. A_AWA is delighted to have their commitment in making this important improvement that will serve A-AWA's outreach objectives within the community. A-AWA's board wishes them much success!

Let's all join together to welcome them and thank them for taking on this responsibility!

- A-AWA President Shahla Ahmadi attended the 10th Anniversary of the U.S. Afghan Women Council which was hosted by Mrs. Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State, with special guest Mrs. Laura Bush on March 21, 2012. Shahla introduced the organization to Mrs. Clinton and has laid the ground work for gaining support for the organization from levels that could provide incredible progress for the A-AWA and the people we so desperately need to help.
- On March 9th, Shahla Ahmadi attended the International Women's Day at Strayer University in Alexandria. At this event, she introduced A-AWA to the University and local community. She was also able to meet several notable women who are very influential leaders among women focused support organizations.

Shahla Ahmadi also took advantage of many other networking opportunities and attended:

- 10th Annual General Assembly of the Afghan American Chamber of Commerce on Saturday February 25th.
- Fundraiser dinner banquet with the Embassy of Afghanistan on Sunday February 12th which included a reception for Caroline Hudson, author of "Afghans and Americans United."
- The 92nd Anniversary of the Restoration of Afghanistan reception hosted by The Embassy of Afghanistan on September 15th, 2011.

In addition, proposals have been sent and are currently being considered for approval, to the County of Fairfax for Grant monies and office space. If approved, the A-AWA will have a more visible and physical identity within the very Community we seek to assist. Board members have also met with the President of a local African American Women's Association located in Springfield and have begun discussions regarding possible use of office space at their address.

A-AWA has created and implemented a classroom led coursework for Dari/Pushto/English with instructor led support by Mrs. Nooria Faryar and Dr. Behsudi. They have been assisted by Ms. Rahila Roshna, Mrs. Arian Musdaq, and Ms. Najiba Malikyar. We are grateful as an organization and fortunate as a community for the wonderful talent and time all of them have volunteered! Thank you to all!

The Senior Circle and Women's Support Group also continue to be a success under Mrs. Nillab Pazhwak and Mrs. Mariam Rusta's leadership. Support group meetings are held every month with increased attendance. The committee has done a fantastic job finding guest speakers and involving support group members in monthly activities. The continued success of this program is a testament to the efforts of the committee and the fun everyone has when we all get together!

Also, A-AWA's Community Outreach Committee has had the pleasure of receiving requests from other community organizations to help them reach out to the community through A-AWA's mailing list that contains close to 200 prominent community members and organizations.

Dari classes

Our Dari teaching pilot program that started in the fall of 2011 has been a success. Our goal was to assess the amount of interest from Afghan families/community in the Washington area. We have also been trying to prepare teaching materials and to attract volunteer instructors to teach languages, religion and culture.

Since then, we have been able to teach Dari to a small number of kids and one non-native speaker adult. Four volunteer instructors have been teaching language skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Students are also learning how to pray and recite verses from the Quran. Emphasizing our traditional values as well as cultural information is also part of the daily instruction. Since we are limited in terms of space, we have not advertised these classes to the general community. We are in the process of locating a facility that would be convenient to most Afghans in order to offer our services at a larger scale.