



# THE BOXING GIRLS OF KABUL

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY ARIEL J. NASR

TEACHER'S GUIDE



## ABOUT THE FILM

*The Boxing Girls of Kabul* (Dir. Ariel Nasr, 2011, 72 min 53 s)

Three young Afghan women—Sadaf and Shabnam Rahimi, and Shahla Sikandary—strive to become world-class boxers, training without the benefit of even the most basic facilities at the national Olympic Stadium in Kabul. They are loyal to their country, yet dare to defy its traditions. Inspired by their tenacious coach, Sabir Sharifi, these courageous boxers openly dream of their future and a chance at the 2012 Olympics. Committed to a challenging regime and enduring family and societal pressures to abandon their training, the women are determined to fight their way onto an international stage. The film shadows them closely over the course of a year, and we come to know them both as individuals and as a team of competitors punching well above their weight. *The Boxing Girls of Kabul* reveals a compelling journey of both personal and political transformation, and illustrates the power and importance of fighting for what you believe in.

This film explores a number of themes that can be discussed in the classroom, including Afghanistan as a country in transformation; gender roles; the relationship between nationalism and sport; as well as world religions and familial and societal responsibilities. Youth will identify with the subjects in the film and be introduced to the situation in present-day (2011–2012) Afghanistan, particularly in relation to the realities of women in this context.

## RECOMMENDED AGE LEVEL

This film is suitable for learners aged 15 and up. The film contains mature content, including archival footage and descriptions of violence against women. It is recommended that educators preview this film before presenting it to their students.

## RECOMMENDED SUBJECT AREAS

This film can be integrated into the curriculum in the following subject areas at the secondary and post-secondary levels:

- Social Studies
- World Issues
- Gender Studies
- Women's Studies
- World Religions
- Physical and Health Education
- Sport and Society
- Kinesiology
- Coaching and Leadership Development
- Geography
- History
- Asian Studies
- Human Rights
- International Relations & International Development
- Anthropology
- Political Science

## ABOUT THE GUIDE

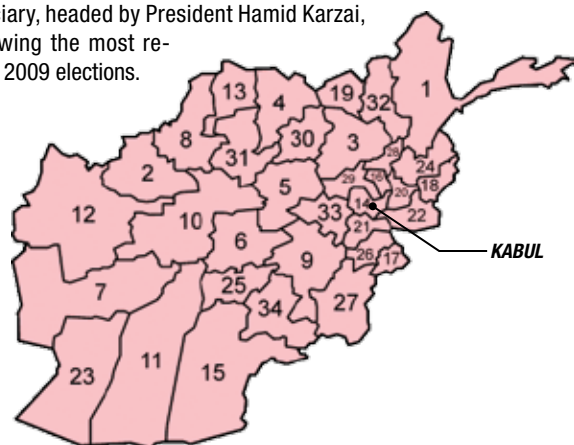
This guide is designed to accompany the film *The Boxing Girls of Kabul* and promote discussion surrounding issues raised in the film. By using this guide as a starting point, educators will feel more at ease with the subject matter addressed in the film. The various sections of the guide are intended to provide contextual information that will add to the viewing experience. The sections entitled “Discussion Questions” and “Suggested Activities” are designed to spark discussion and aid in the development of customized lesson plans for individual educators. The “Resources” section at the end of this document encourages educators to learn more about the issues associated with Afghanistan, with Canada’s involvement in Afghanistan, and with female athletes worldwide. Additional NFB films linked to the themes of Afghanistan and women in non-traditional sporting roles are listed to assist with further study for both educators and students.

## PREVIEWING THE FILM

It is always important to preview a film before watching it with your students. While previewing *The Boxing Girls of Kabul*, make a list of reflective discussion questions that may be pertinent for your students. Keep track of words, terms, concepts and scenes that may need demystifying. This film also contains brief moments of mature and sensitive subject matter. How you would like to address this content with your students is up to you, although we recommend informing them that this content is part of the film before you screen it with them.

## ABOUT AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan is a landlocked country, bordering six other countries. Its population is 30,179,000 (as of 2012). About 23 percent of Afghanistan’s total population is said to be urbanized in its four major cities, hosting population numbers of: Kabul – 3.573 million (2009 estimate); Kandahar – 468,200; Herat – 397,456; Mazar-i-Sharif – 375,181 (2006 estimates). The country’s official languages are Dari (50 percent of population) and Pashto (35 percent of population). There is a great deal of bilingualism in the country and a variety of other languages are spoken, including Turkic languages (primarily Uzbek and Turkmen at 11 percent of the population) and many dialects. Eighty percent of the population consists of practising Sunni Muslims, while 19 percent are said to be Shia Muslims. It is an Islamic Republic state, while its government consists of three branches: executive, legislature and judiciary, headed by President Hamid Karzai, following the most recent 2009 elections.



1. BADAKHSAN 2. BADGHIS 3. BAGHLAN 4. BALKH 5. BAMYAN 6. DAYKUNDI 7. FARAH 8. FARYAB  
9. GHAZNI 10. GHOR 11. HELMAND 12. HERAT 13. JOWZJAN 14. KABUL 15. KANDAHAR 16. KAPISA  
17. KHOST 18. KONAR 19. KUNDUZ 20. LAGHMAN 21. LOGAR 22. NANGARHAR 23. NIMRUZ  
24. NURESTAN 25. ORUZGAN 26. PAKTIA 27. PAKTIKA 28. PANJSHIR 29. PARVAN 30. SAMANGAN  
31. SARE POL 32. TAKHAR 33. WARDAK 34. ZABOL

Afghanistan is a primarily mountainous country, made up of a heterogeneous agglomeration of ethnicities over its 34 provinces. Pashtoons, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks and numerous minor ethnic groups (Nuristanis, Baluchis, Turkmens, etc.) all call Afghanistan their home. Afghanistan's diverse languages and ethnicities help us understand the density and range of the country's 5,000-year-old culture, which encompasses art, music, poetry and traditional dishes.<sup>1</sup> Soccer, cricket and *buzkashi* (similar to polo) are the most commonly played sports in the country.

Thirty years of civil and international conflict in Afghanistan have resulted in hardships, poverty and human rights violations for civilian Afghans. According to the United Nations Human Development Index, and using data trends from 1980 to the present, Afghanistan is ranked as the 15th least developed country in the world.<sup>2</sup> The average life expectancy of its citizens is anywhere between 47 and 64 years. Afghanistan is also one of the poorest countries in the world, with an unemployment rate of 35 percent (according to the CIA World Fact Book) and with 42 percent of the population living on less than \$1 a day (according to a 2009 report).<sup>3</sup> Despite such statistics, Afghans remain a resilient people—a theme explored in the film *The Boxing Girls of Kabul*.

## ABOUT KABUL

Kabul is both the capital of Afghanistan and of the Kabul province. It is the largest city in Afghanistan. As of 2012, its population exceeds 3 million. The city of Kabul is home to about 80 percent of the entire province's population. Kabul is an ancient city, dating back 3,500 years. Over its history, it has remained an important international trading city for Afghanistan.

As recently as 2002, schools began reopening in Kabul, following Taliban rule. There are also a number of universities in Kabul, including the American University of Afghanistan and Kabul University.

In *The Boxing Girls of Kabul*, the three female boxers attend school and openly visit the gym in Kabul. It is important to remember that, in provincial towns and more rural areas in Afghanistan, such public institutions may not be as accessible. Such avenues for opportunity—and the current absence of Taliban rule in the city—also help explain why Kabul's population has continued to rise throughout the early part of the 21st century.

## ABOUT THE TALIBAN

The Taliban is an extreme Islamist militant and political organization that ruled large parts of Afghanistan from 1994 until 2002. When the Taliban began taking over parts of the country, they renamed Afghanistan the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. As a political entity, the Taliban received diplomatic recognition from only three countries: Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The main leader of the Taliban is considered to be Mullah Mohammed Omar, and the group is believed to have originated in the city of Kandahar.

The Taliban came to power following the collapse of the communist Mohammad Najibullah regime in 1992 and a succession of intense civil wars. The Taliban were mostly made up of sons and orphans of mujahideen (military men) who had been raised in refugee camps in Pakistan and were opposed to what they saw as the corruption of their group. They began taking control of southern and western Afghanistan, including Kandahar and surrounding areas, in late 1994 and early 1995. By September 1996, the Taliban had taken

hold of Kabul, and so began their intensive takeover of the country. Civil wars continued to plague Afghanistan throughout the rule of the Taliban. According to UN reports, these wars resulted in a record amount of civilian deaths and numerous cases of human rights violations, particularly gender-targeted violence, as witnessed in some archival footage presented in *The Boxing Girls of Kabul*.<sup>4</sup>

While international efforts have eradicated Taliban leadership from many parts of the country, including Kabul, since 2001 and 2002, reports reveal that with increasing support from military groups in Pakistan, Taliban groups continue to survive. In the film, it is often noted by the girls, their coach and their families that “the Taliban could come back.” This fear is driven by the increasing instances of civilian deaths and suicide bombing violence that continue to afflict Afghanistan.

## ABOUT CANADA'S ROLE IN THE WAR IN AFGHANISTAN

In December 2001, Canada became one of the many countries that signed the Bonn Agreement.<sup>5</sup> This international agreement aimed to strengthen and support stability and security in Afghanistan, following the takeover of the Taliban movement. Canada has continued to play a prominent role in humanitarian aid and military support in Afghanistan. Canada's role in the war has been debated by opposing political parties and academics, but despite many successful operations, there have been significant casualties among Canadian troops and discussions of controversial treatment of Afghan detainees.<sup>6</sup> In light of Canada's involvement in Afghanistan, it is imperative to teach young people about the country, its history and culture, and about Canada's recent role in the war. Many young Canadians are impacted by this war, as they may have relatives or parents who have served. It is important to be sensitive when discussing these issues with your students.

For more information about Canada's participation in Afghanistan, see:

Canadian Government Report on Canada's Engagement in Afghanistan: [afghanistan.gc.ca](http://afghanistan.gc.ca).

1 For a comprehensive look at some of these cultural traditions and artifacts, please visit [afghan-web.com/culture](http://afghan-web.com/culture).

2 See [hdr.undp.org/en/statistics](http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics) for the full list of countries and to access data and statistics.

3 See [irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83417](http://irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=83417).

4 See the UN Human Rights Reports from Afghanistan for more information about human rights violations and civilian deaths: [ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/AfghanCivilians-ContinueToDie.aspx](http://ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/AfghanCivilians-ContinueToDie.aspx) and [ohchr.org/EN/Countries/AsiaRegion/Pages/AFIndex.aspx](http://ohchr.org/EN/Countries/AsiaRegion/Pages/AFIndex.aspx).

5 For full text of the agreement, see: [un.org/News/dh/latest/afghan/afghan-agree.htm](http://un.org/News/dh/latest/afghan/afghan-agree.htm).

6 For more information, see: [cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2009/02/10/f-afghanistan.html](http://cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2009/02/10/f-afghanistan.html) and [cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2009/11/18/diplomat-afghan-detainees.html](http://cbc.ca/news/canada/story/2009/11/18/diplomat-afghan-detainees.html).

## ABOUT THE CHARACTERS AND SETTINGS



*“When we play sports, we do so to forget our problems. When I box, I feel happy.”*

Sadaf is the first of the three boxing girls we meet in the film. She is the younger sister of fellow boxing girl Shabnam Rahimi and the daughter of Salima Rahimi, a self-declared open-minded mother, proud of her two daughters. At the time the film begins shooting, Sadaf is 16 and belongs to the 54 kg boxing weight division, but is too young to compete in the first international competition the girls attend in Vietnam. She is later invited to compete in Kazakhstan when she is 17. Sadaf started playing sports by joining the soccer and volleyball teams in her school, but soon found out that a boxing team was forming in the Kabul Olympic Stadium. At the end of the film, we learn that Sadaf is the only girl of the three still competing and that she still dreams of fighting at the Olympic Games.

Sadaf declares herself a “lucky Afghan girl” throughout the film, paralleling her advancement in her own sport with the advancement of women in Afghanistan. She is also aware that the challenges the girls face in international competition are not in their commitment to the team or to the sport, but in the limited budgetary support and access to resources, like equipment and uniforms. Sadaf draws links between the support that she and her fellow athletes receive and conceptions of gender roles in Afghan society.



*“When I climbed into the ring, I had an extraordinary feeling.”*

Shabnam is Sadaf’s older sister, belonging to the 46 kg weight division at the time of the film’s production. Coach Sabir Sharifi calls her the best boxer on the team, insisting that she often understands the technique of the sport right away. The film does not tell us outright if Shabnam is still fighting at the end of the film, but we do know that her ambition crosses into her studies, as she is now preparing for her university entrance exams in hopes of becoming a doctor. Following the release of the film, the director has confirmed that as of 2012, Shabnam is still in competition and even won a medal in the fall of 2011.

Shabnam appears the quietest of the three girls, as we hear her voice the least throughout the film. In a powerful scene following Shabnam’s first international fight—and loss—she is very upset. Her sister Sadaf yells at her for not succeeding, while her teammates assure her that she has made every Afghan—male and female—proud as the first international female boxer to ever step into a boxing ring. Shabnam later tells us that Afghan girls are underprivileged in comparison to their international competitors. This conscious acknowledgment should not be misread as defeat; instead, she appears to embody trained perseverance throughout the film. Shabnam’s quiet strength contrasts with the fierceness of her sister. The sisters represent the diverse motivations, attitudes and behaviour toward sport, presenting the viewer with multiple ways to understand the character of a “female Afghan boxer.”



*“In the future I want to be the most progressive and bright of all Afghan girls... a champion.”*

According to Shahla’s father, her introduction to boxing began after she asked his permission to join a judo team. When the boxing team was founded, Shahla decided to switch sports, receiving consent once more from her father. Shahla competes in two international boxing competitions in the film. Coach Sharifi calls her a strong competitor in her weight class of 64 kg, insisting that one day she will become a world champion. In her first international competition in Vietnam, we see her make it to the championship round. Despite losing 14-0 to her Kazakhstani opponent, coach Sharifi openly and exuberantly celebrates her performance.

When Shahla brings her bronze medal home, her father tells us the entire family is very proud of her. Shahla is very happy to have her father, who teaches her that there is no difference between boys and girls—that both have equal rights. The apparent limitless support exhibited by Shahla’s father perhaps influences Shahla’s own pride for her country. She tells us she is proud of her country as a place where women can play sports, when just a few short years ago they were not allowed to leave their homes. Shahla’s father challenges stereotypes of traditional notions of Afghan men and assures us that having optimistic nationalist beliefs can lead to progressive action.

Shahla also tells us she is afraid of the Taliban, and that their knowledge of her success as an international female athlete is the reason she has stopped attending classes for over two months. We also see her struggle to agree on her athletic pursuits with her mother and brother. Shahla’s choices, as progressive as they are, appear to come at a price for her safety and that of her family. By the end of the film we learn that Shahla now works part-time, is married, pregnant with her first child and visits the gym when she can. Shahla’s character continually challenges typical conceptions of a “progressive” Afghan woman. She reminds us that there can be many ways women—and men—can positively influence their country, but that they all must be ready to fight for the best possible reality for women.



*“I’m not afraid because my work is clean. I want to train healthy humans and athletes.”*

As a sitting member of the Afghanistan Olympic Committee, coach Sabir aims to train “champion” girls in his gym, asking them to fight their way to the Olympics. Sabir tells us that the political situation at the time of the film’s production is “better” now, which is why it is important for the girls to box. It is important, according to Sabir, for the girls to be successful internationally so that they can bring medals back for their country, in an effort to encourage national pride and support for other Afghan athletes.

Sabir has been a national representative for boxing in Afghanistan. In 1984, he was selected to attend the Los Angeles Olympics. As Communist Afghan government officials were dependent on the Soviet military occupation at the time, they decided to boycott the games and Sabir could not attend. Over the years, Sabir and his teammates continued to box, albeit in fear of the Taliban, who mistrusted and opposed sports—particularly boxing. In February of 2007, the first girls’ boxing team was established by Sabir and some of his “brothers”: teammates and friends.

Coach Sabir tells us many times that he risks his life for his sport and now in coaching the girls. Despite the resistance he continues to experience from his countrymen, he carries a strong belief that Afghan athletes can succeed internationally. As Shahla is fighting her first fight in Vietnam, he tells her she is only losing by two or three points. Moments later, the camera shows us the final score of 14-0, yet Sabir’s encouragement does not come across as an idealistic lie. This scene—among others—demonstrates Sabir’s subtle yet rigorous belief in the fight both he and his girls must wage for their own success and the success of their country.

## KABUL OLYMPIC STADIUM (GHAZI STADIUM)

The gym in the Olympic Stadium plays an important role in this story. Originally built in 1923 in Kabul, the stadium can hold up to 25,000 people. Recently, it has begun undergoing renovations in an effort to rejuvenate its spaces. In December 2011, celebrations were held to commemorate the first phase of renovations. The renovations are said to represent the transformation of Afghanistan’s Taliban past into a contemporary and successful future.<sup>7</sup>

The location and space of the gym in the film also represent the possibility for positive transformation of the perceptions of gender and sport in Afghanistan. Sadaf tells us early in the film that in the very gym in which they practise, women were recently tortured and killed by the Taliban. As she speaks, we are shown images of public tortures and executions held in this space throughout the 1990s. While Sadaf tells us that even today the space can be “spooky” if one visits it on her own, it is the same space where we see

<sup>7</sup> See [reuters.com/article/2011/12/15/us-afghanistan-stadium-taliban-idUSTRE7BEOLB20111215](http://reuters.com/article/2011/12/15/us-afghanistan-stadium-taliban-idUSTRE7BEOLB20111215) and [blogs.state.gov/index.php/site/entry/afghanistan\\_ghazi\\_stadium](http://blogs.state.gov/index.php/site/entry/afghanistan_ghazi_stadium).

her and her teammates practise with their coach. As female athletes in this gym, the boxing girls of Kabul fight not only in the practice of their sport, but to transform the meaning of the space they understand as their “home turf.”

## LEARNING APPROACHES

Your students may not know much about women and sport in Afghanistan, or they may be well-informed. Encourage them to explore what they know and what they want to know before watching *The Boxing Girls of Kabul*, using what is referred to as the KWL tool, originally developed by Donna Ogle in 1986.

The letters in the acronym KWL represent three concepts: What do I already *Know* about the subject; what do I *Want* to know; and what have I *Learned*. You may take this process a step further and add a “C”: asking how your knowledge or opinions have *Changed* after watching the film. A KWL(C) can follow a very simple structure. An excellent inquiry-based tool, it is extremely useful for exploring media works in the classroom. This tool challenges students to question their own assumptions, to reflect on their ideas and knowledge about the film or media text they are consuming, and to share what they learned in the process.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

There are several ways that you can discuss the film, both before and after you screen it. The following are suggestions for questions to be discussed with your students and ways to integrate the questions.

Brainstorm four or five reflective discussion questions in advance, and create at least four or five copies of each question. Distribute discussion questions to the class before watching the film. Ask students to try to answer their question while watching the film. Provide them with time after viewing the film to write down their responses. Then, ask students to form groups based on their questions. In groups, encourage students to discuss their responses and record them on large sheets of paper. Once each group member has had a chance to share their responses with their group, invite each group to share their responses with the larger group. Sample questions include:

- 1 What did you learn about Afghanistan while watching this film? Did the film challenge or reinforce any ideas or opinions you had about Afghans? How?
- 2 Do you have a favourite character in this film? Why or why not?
- 3 Are you cheering for the girls in this film to “win”? Why or why not? What are the implications or consequences of “winning” in this film?
- 4 One of the translations of the signs in the opening of the film reads: Afghanistan Free, Developed and Glorious. Did you feel this was an accurate interpretation of Afghanistan, based on the stories you hear from the characters in the film? Why or why not?
- 5 Coach Sabir tells us that the Taliban were always opposed to sports, especially boxing. Why do you think the Taliban would be opposed to sports? Why is it important for the girls to continue to box if this is the case?
- 6 The boxing girls speak passionately about boxing as an integral part of their lives, yet they equally must endure judgment from their families and friends, from strangers and from members of the public. Why do you think this is a common experience for them? As a young person in Canada, can you think of similar activities, values or beliefs you may have that you feel are often judged or misunderstood by family, friends and strangers?

## MEDIA LITERACY QUESTIONS

While watching a film with your students, it is important to not only examine the content of the film but also its construction. The following provides a bit of background about media literacy:

Media literacy is concerned with the process of understanding and using the mass media. It is also concerned with helping students develop an informed and critical understanding of the nature of the mass media, the techniques used by them, and the impact of these techniques. More specifically, it is education that aims to increase students' understanding and enjoyment of how the media work, how they produce meaning, how they are organized and how they construct reality. . . . Media literacy is a life skill. (Ontario Association for Media Literacy, *Ontario Media Literacy Resource Guide*)

The following questions will assist students in understanding how the film *The Boxing Girls of Kabul* is constructed. These questions can be addressed in several ways using various teaching methods—the brainstorming approach described above is a suitable method for media literacy questions.

## CONTENT/PLOT

- 1 What is this film about?
- 2 In your opinion, why was this film made? Why is it important for us—in Canada—to be watching a film about young women boxing in Afghanistan?
- 3 What are the main conflicts the characters face in this film?
- 4 How does it make you feel to hear stories about—and witness images of—violence against women in Afghanistan in this film?
- 5 Can you identify any stereotypes present in the film that you would like to discuss further? What are some of your examples? Why do you define them as stereotypes?

## SETTING

- 1 The film opens with a hidden-camera perspective on a woman being killed in the Olympic Stadium on November 16, 1999, then cuts to the present as we watch the girls box. Why do you think the filmmaker chose to present us with the history of the stadium right away? How does this choice establish the tone for the rest of the film?
- 2 Pay attention to the setting of the gym as you watch the film. What are your observations? How does the setting add to the “feel” of the film? Why do you think there are so many still shots of just the gym, without characters or action?
- 3 How does it make you feel to be taken on a tour of a bomb shelter by Shahla's brother? Why is this part of the film?
- 4 Sadaf says she missed her country when she was in Kazakhstan. Why is it important for us to hear and understand this statement?

## CHARACTERS

- 1 We are presented with a number of oppositional characters in the film. For example, Shahla's mother is very different from Shabnam and Sadaf's mother; and Shahla's brother seems to have a different ideological perspective than her father. Why do you think it is important that family perspectives are included in the film?
- 2 Pay attention to Shabnam's reaction and those of her colleagues and sister following the loss of her first fight in Vietnam. How does watching this

scene unfold make you feel? Identify certain sentences the characters say that seem to stick with you, and think about why that is.

- 3 How do you feel seeing Shahla win the bronze medal after her championship fight?

## ATMOSPHERE/MOOD/EDITING

- 1 How would you describe the feel of the film? What word would you use to describe it? List some scenes that help illustrate the word you chose to describe the feel of the film.
- 2 What do you think of the shots of the girls and their coach practising, without any added narration or text? How do they create a “mood” or add meaning to the film? Did you find them effective? Why or why not?
- 3 One of the last images in the film is of some young girls receiving a monetary gift from coach Sabir. Why do you think the filmmaker chose to close his film with this scene?

## SUGGESTED CLASSROOM, SCHOOL-WIDE AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Now that you have watched and discussed the film with your students, reflect on how this learning can be extended beyond the classroom and throughout your school. Here are some suggestions:

- 1 Have your students fill out a KWL(C) chart as described above. This will be a good way to study the film comprehensively. It will allow you and your students to gather your thoughts and ideas about gender and Afghanistan prior to the film; it may also assist you in the development of your follow-up activities, based on how your students respond to what they “would” like to know; and it will help you and your students keep a log of what they've learned and if/how they've changed.
- 2 Create a timeline. Afghanistan's history is vast and dense, and this film only begins to scratch its surface. As a class, create a chronological timeline using a variety of different resources and media (images, sound, print, video, etc.). You could possibly divide different periods of Afghanistan's history up and distribute them to smaller groups of students. This exercise will also help demonstrate how understanding history is a collaborative activity that must draw upon varied resources and the experiences of different people.
- 3 Understand the geography of Afghanistan. As a vital urban centre, Kabul might provide the boxing girls with opportunities not available to their rural counterparts. Have your students research various provinces in Afghanistan, then have them compare their results. This exercise will also demonstrate how the location of a person's home base might influence many of her abilities, values and opportunities.
- 4 Create a digital story. Using easy-to-use equipment such as Windows Movie Maker or Apple's iMovie, have students pick a space that is as memorable and important to them as the gym is to the boxing girls. Students can either bring in archival photos or video of these spaces or shoot them themselves. Photographs and video can be uploaded into the software and music, text and voice-overs can be added by the students. This activity will help students explore the relationships they have with a safe and important space they frequent.

- 5 Research other trailblazing females. The boxing girls are exceptional because they are among the first in their country to compete internationally. Their strength and desire to succeed comes from the knowledge that they are setting examples for other young Afghan women to play sports publicly and confidently. Have your students research other Canadian females—possibly athletes—who inspired news ways to think about women, culture and sport.
- 6 Invite a speaker. Perhaps you might want to invite an academic or field worker who works in relation to issues of Afghanistan and gender. Alternately, a local boxer might help engage your students, as he or she speaks from the perspective of his or her own sporting experiences, triumphs and struggles. Whoever you invite would most likely be honoured to speak to your students. The speaker will also undoubtedly provide a profound real-life contextualization to the film.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Further Research: Afghanistan

#### Canadian Government Report on Canada's Engagement in Afghanistan

afghanistan.gc.ca

Created by the Government of Canada, this website provides members of the public with recent news, fact sheets and information about Afghanistan and Canada's humanitarian and military participation.

#### Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan

cw4wafghan.ca

A member-based, not-for-profit organization founded in 1996 with 13 chapters across Canada. CW4WAFghan's goals are to advance education and educational opportunities for Afghan women and their families, and to educate Canadians about human rights in Afghanistan. Their site also features educational content and lesson plans geared specifically to Canadian curriculums.

#### Canadian International Development Agency: Afghanistan

acdi-cida.gc.ca/acdi-cida/ACDI-CIDA.nsf/eng/JUD-129153625-S6T

CIDA is Canada's leading agency for development assistance internationally. This site provides users with overview information regarding Afghanistan and Canada's aid involvement in the country.

#### Afghanistan Online

afghan-web.com

Afghanistan Online is a privately owned, independent website that provides updated news and information on Afghanistan. In collaboration with its visitors, it is dedicated to providing the most current and reliable information on Afghanistan online.

#### United Nations Human Rights: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights – Afghanistan

ohchr.org/en/countries/asiaregion/pages/afindex.aspx

OHCHR represents the world's commitment to universal ideals of human dignity. They have a mandate from the international community to promote and protect all human rights. This link features reports and statistics issued by the OHCHR regarding Afghanistan in particular.

#### The World Bank, South Asia – Knowledge on Fire: Girls' Schools in Afghanistan Face Highest Risk of Violence

web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/0,,contntMDK:22431587~menuPK:158937~pagePK:2865106~piPK:2865128~theSitePK:223547,00.html

A report issued by the Afghanistan Ministry of Education, CARE International and the World Bank specifically addressing the state of girls' education in Afghanistan. The page features the full, downloadable report, information about the study as well as additional resources.

#### See also the World Bank's information page on Afghanistan:

web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/AFGHANISTANEXTN/0,,menuPK:305990~pagePK:141159~piPK:141110~theSitePK:305985,00.html

#### Canada in Afghanistan

thememoryproject2.com/docs/Db-HistoricaDominion/documents/Afghan\_LearningTools\_ENG\_v1.pdf

Issued in conjunction with the Memory Project of Canada and the Historica-Dominion Institute, this lesson plan is geared toward grade 10–12 History and Social Studies teachers, helping them teach their students about Canada's participation in Afghanistan.

#### Asia Society: Homeland Afghanistan

afghanistan.asiasociety.org/

Using comprehensive text and vivid photography, this website presents Afghanistan's 5,000-year-old history, subdivided into four historical categories. It is also accompanied by curriculum link lesson plans.

#### The New York Times: The Learning Network

#### The Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq: Teaching Resources and Essential Questions

learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/07/06/the-wars-in-afghanistan-and-iraq-teaching-resources-and-essential-questions

Vast collection of resources and learning modules assembled by *NY Times* staff and derived from the Learning Network. While the resources are comprehensive, it is important to remember that they feature numerous U.S. content links.

#### Links and Resources from the PBS film The Return of the Taliban

pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/taliban/etc/links.html

Links and resources aimed at supporting the PBS film *The Return of the Taliban*. Again, a good deal of U.S. content, but the information is vast.

## FURTHER RESEARCH: WOMEN AND SPORT

### Girlboxing

girlboxing.wordpress.com

Maintained by a female boxer in her fifties, this blog presents various issues from the perspective of international female boxers. The author has published a number of posts relating specifically to the female Afghan boxing team; see [girlboxing.wordpress.com/tag/afghan-womens-boxing](http://girlboxing.wordpress.com/tag/afghan-womens-boxing).

### Inspiring Sports Women

niamhgriffin.blogspot.com

Maintained by a female Irish journalist, this blog tells the stories of female athletes in an effort to redress the invisibility of women's sports in the media.

## Women's Sports and Entertainment Network

wsenetwork.com

WSENetwork “strives to increase the visibility of female athletes, women’s sports and women in sports by providing exceptional women’s sports coverage. The goal of WSENetwork.com is to bring captivating, uplifting and informative stories from the world of women’s sports to the women’s sports fan. WSEN is dedicated to celebrating and promoting all women’s sports, at every level.” - Women’s Sports and Entertainment Network

## RELATED FILMS FROM THE NFB

(Please note: not all the films listed here are suitable for classroom use, although most are suitable for your own professional development.)

*Act of Dishonour*, 2010, 90:49

*Under the Hood: A Voyage into the World of Torture*, 2009, 107:11

*Good Morning Kandahar*, 2008, 50:51

*A Dream for Kabul*, 2008, 81:35

*The Sweetest Embrace: Return to Afghanistan*, 2008, 74:04

*Afghan Chronicles*, 2007, 52:33

*Faith Without Fear*, 2007, 84:25

*Shadya*, 2005, 52:45

*Manon Rhéaume: Woman Behind the Mask*, 2000, 47:00

*The Game of Her Life*, 1997, 94:24

*Baseball Girls*, 1995, 80:40

*Shooting Stars*, 1987, 49:24

*Of Principles and Men*, 1985, 26:05

*Marastoon: The Place Where One Is Helped*, 1979, 27:42

## CREDITS

This guide was produced by NFB Education. It was written and prepared by Claudia Sicondolfo, National Workshop Coordination and Promotions. Consultants included the film’s director, Ariel Nasr; Kristine Collins, Head, Institutional and Educational Markets; and Lindsay Wright, Manager, Institutional and Educational Markets.