

WRITTEN AND EDITED BY TEACHERS COLLEGE, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

# TEACHING BEYOND BELIEF

CLASSROOM AND COMMUNITY



This film and its study guide will move your students...  
The message is: this whole world is ours,  
we are all connected, we are all responsible  
for making this—our—world better.

—Ambassador Swanee Hunt  
Harvard Kennedy School of Government



A moving and beautiful film.

—Khaled Hosseini, *The Kite Runner*

## A Study Guide for Adults and Students

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**This Study Guide is a collaboration of:**

Teachers College, Columbia University  
[www.tc.edu](http://www.tc.edu)

Beyond the 11th  
[www.beyondthe11th.org](http://www.beyondthe11th.org)

and

Principle Pictures  
[www.principlepictures.com](http://www.principlepictures.com)

### *Message from the Film Director*

When Susan Retik and Patti Quigley became widows on September 11, 2001, their loss gave them permission to seek retribution, but their compassion motivated them, instead, to help heal the wounds of that day. Afghanistan was the training ground for terrorists who killed their husbands, and, incredibly, it was in Afghanistan that Susan and Patti affirmed a common humanity that we all share. By starting the nonprofit Beyond the 11th, they began supporting education and poverty alleviation projects to help Afghan widows and their children who are among the world's neediest people. When I first learned about their mission, I knew I wanted to share their inspiring story of hope and courage with as many people as possible. Thank you for helping me to spread their message of shared humanity by bringing the film into your classroom and community.

Beth Murphy, Director/Producer, *Beyond Belief*

For more information, or to order the educational DVD:

[www.principlepictures.com/beyondbelief](http://www.principlepictures.com/beyondbelief)

# Introduction to the Study Guide

*Beyond Belief* documents how Susan Retik and Patti Quigley, young mothers widowed in the terrorist attacks of September 11th, reached out to support widows in Afghanistan who have themselves been afflicted by war and terrorism. It chronicles Susan and Patti's response to the loss of their husbands by choosing to embrace these widows and their families through a sense of shared humanity. It is a story that challenges us to consider what it means to live in a complex, global community at the start of the 21st century as we ask, "What kind of world do we live in? What kind of world do we want it to be?"

Even in this very hopeful movie, people of all ages will find the depictions of loss deeply moving and some may find them painful. It is estimated that one-third of the world's population watched the events of September 11th in real time. For those who are viewing *Beyond Belief* with a clear and personal memory of their own experiences of this tragic event, the movie will evoke memories of a *very* difficult time and stories of their own. Some viewers may experience once again the anger and helplessness they felt in the aftermath of the attack.

Viewing *Beyond Belief* as an individual is powerfully affecting, but the movie asks us to move beyond emotions and *do* something. Seeing the movie with others, either in a classroom or adult group, offers the opportunity to share feelings, test perspectives, and develop possible responses. This study guide is intended to facilitate this process.

For general information about the country of Afghanistan, users of the study guide can consult the following reliable resources:

Afghanistan – Timeline: A chronology of key events: [news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/1162108.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/1162108.stm)

BBC: [news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/1569826.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1569826.stm)

The CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

U.S. State Dept: [www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5380.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5380.htm)

## Tips About Facilitating

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### ***Follow the Group***

Note that this guide offers a sequence of four themes and related questions to support group discussion. After sharing memories of September 11th and screening *Beyond Belief*, follow the group study guide questions. The themes, questions, and quotations offered here track many of the most important issues that will arise. However, rarely will these issues come up in the order presented nor are they exhaustive of all possible issues. Any one of the essential questions may provoke a discussion that touches on all four themes. The guide is organized in a way that enables the facilitator to be flexible in customizing the approach to the needs of the group.

The movie is intended to engage viewers in the plight of the particular Afghan women who are portrayed: As Susan says, "[T]hose 400 women are really 400 women." As the discussion proceeds, be certain to turn the group's attention to the theme "Giving and Receiving." You might engage the group by asking: "Is giving to people who need help optional? How much, if anything, do we owe others?" and "What do we receive in the act of giving?" Mention that *Beyond the 11th* is a non-profit organization providing support to widows in Afghanistan who have been afflicted by war, terrorism, and oppression. It offers participants an opportunity to make a contribution that supports the specific work that Susan and Patti have begun. See its website at [www.beyondthe11th.org/](http://www.beyondthe11th.org/)

# ADULT STUDY GUIDE

## Community Groups and College Classrooms

### THEME 1

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## Never Forget: One date, many memories and meanings

### Essential Questions

- Because people remember many different things, is there more than one September 11th, 2001?
- Whose story is it?
- What will we tell our children and grandchildren about the day?
- What would we like history books to say about the events of September 11th?

**Overview:** Just as people over 60 will surely remember where they were and what they were doing on November 22, 1963, when President John F. Kennedy was assassinated, people over 20 will certainly remember where they were and what they were doing on September 11th. There are reports that one-third of the world watched the aftermath of the attack in real time. Everyone has a September 11th story of his or her own.

### Our Own Stories

If time permits, and if you know that group members will be comfortable sharing with one another, use the following activity to take up this theme before showing *Beyond Belief*.

Collecting memories: Ask group members to take a few minutes to collect their own memories from September 11th. If they have paper handy, they can jot them down. Telling participants to make a “short-hand” list of the most vivid markers may help them capture the memories in just a few minutes, i.e., “Where I was. How I found out. What I saw. With whom I was. What I did,” and so on.

Sharing stories: After collecting their own memories, ask participants to turn to the person nearest them whom they do not know (someone whose September 11th story they would not know) and share each other’s stories for 5-10 minutes. If time permits, let this go as long as 10 minutes. People will want to finish.

Sharing with the group: After the pairs have had 5-10 minutes together, ask the group as a whole if someone would like to share (with permission) an image or moment of the day from their partner’s story.

Lessons: After collecting a few personal recollections, consider asking participants if they would like to offer any lessons or larger meaning they draw from these events. Don’t look for any consensus or necessarily take time to discuss. The point is just to get the thoughts out there. Consider taking notes about these ideas and letting the group members know that, if they choose, they can refer back to these ideas after viewing the movie.

### Questions and Quotations

Using the essential questions, ask participants if the movie has moved them to think more about the meaning of the day. The following quotes might prompt their reactions to the movie.

Patti Quigley: *Each year, when September 11th comes up, for me, it’s for the rest of the world, because I live it every day.... One thing that was important to me is for myself and the girls to understand that terrorism was not going to take over our lives. I have tried to turn this into something other than hatred.*

Susan Retik: *September 11th... I’m so numb to that. I sometimes feel like it has nothing to do with me and my tragedy. It’s that my husband was killed and I lost him and that’s what affects my life, but when I come here [the site of the World Trade Center] and I see—and I can picture the plane coming in...it’s just, so...*

Susan Retik: *We were actually in New York and we were just throwing out names and I just said, ‘How about Beyond the 11th?’ And...my thinking was basically, look, we’re not stuck. The terrorists may have killed our husbands on September 11th, but the whole idea is that we’re not gonna stay there.*

## For Further Investigation

More to think about:

- Does the label “September 11th” mean any one thing, or even the same thing, to Susan and Patti?
- Does the story belong more to people like Susan and Patti and the families of firefighters and police who died than it does to those of us who were spared such terrible losses?
- Does the story belong more to New York City than to San Diego? More to the United States than to Afghanistan or any other country? Should we even ask such questions?
- Are those of us who have shared or read about the experience of September 11th free to make whatever meaning or draw whatever lessons we choose from the date?
- Is the event itself still important to us?

Further resources:

*Forever After: New York City Teachers on September 11th* (edited by Teachers College Press and Maureen Grolnick):  
Stories of the events of September 11th and its aftermath from the perspective of the New York City teachers who were in classrooms close to the World Trade Center

Personal Stories of Transformation from The Tribute WTC Visitor Center:  
[www.tributewtc.org/programs/toolkit.html](http://www.tributewtc.org/programs/toolkit.html)

The September 11th Memorial Website  
[www.national911memorial.org/site/PageServer?pagename=New\\_Home](http://www.national911memorial.org/site/PageServer?pagename=New_Home)

## THEME 2

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# Choosing Compassion Over Hate

## Essential Questions

- Can we choose not to hate?
- Can we choose the community for which we feel responsible or must we define our loyalties based on race, religion, gender or nationality?
- How do such choices make us who we are or who we would like to become?
- How do cycles of hatred begin?
- How do we balance our concerns for the global with our affection for the local?

**Overview:** On September 8, 2010, the *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristoff wrote the following: “So at a time when the American government reacted to the horror of 9/11 mostly with missiles and bombs, detentions and waterboardings, Ms. Retik and Ms. Quigley turned to education and poverty-alleviation projects—in the very country that had incubated a plot that had pulverized their lives. The organization they started, *Beyond the 11th*, has now assisted more than 1,000 Afghan widows in starting tiny businesses. It’s an effort both to help some of the world’s neediest people and to fight back at the distrust, hatred and unemployment that sustain the Taliban.”

## Questions and Quotations

Sgt. Tom Fleming: *So they go back and they’re gonna tell their family and their friends about this. People might scratch their head and people might say ‘Well, why aren’t you supporting people in the United States that are victims of September 11th, or why aren’t you supporting U.S. troops, or why aren’t you supporting policemen or firemen?’*

Susan Retik: *Especially since September 11th, the world has gotten so much smaller. We cannot pretend that the problems and the rest of the world doesn’t affect us. We can’t live in our little plastic bubble here.*

Jim Fleming, Patti’s brother: *We choose our way into being ourselves. And I think that’s what Patti and Susan do, in little choices and in big choices. When given the choice between violence and love, they choose love. When given the choice between retribution and restoring harmony, they choose restoration of harmony. When given the choice between death and life, they’ve chosen life.*

Susan Retik: *Patti and I have talked a lot about this, that hatred is learned. So not only would we like to help these widows with their basic necessities, we hope to undo if even a small bit some of the hatred that has been learned both in Afghanistan and here in the United States. If these widows and their children have an opportunity to learn about us, and we about them, we can begin to learn the truth about one another. We are not hateful people, and we do not believe that they are hateful people.*

## For Further Investigation

More to think about:

- Patti and Susan feel compassion for, and identification with, widows in Afghanistan—widows living in the very country in which Al Qaeda had its headquarters. Is that hard to understand?
- Are multiple loyalties and identifications a good thing, or are there still too many situations in which we must “choose sides”?
- What choices do we have if we are the object of hate?
- When does the poverty of others become our problem?

Further resources:

Many organizations work to interrupt cycles of poverty; a few of them include:

Arzu: [www.arzustudiohope.org/home/story/mission](http://www.arzustudiohope.org/home/story/mission)

Bpeace: [www.bpeace.org/](http://www.bpeace.org/)

Care: [www.care.org/](http://www.care.org/)

Doctors without Borders: [www.doctorswithoutborders.org/](http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/)

Hope Not Hate Initiative: [www.aidemocracy.org/programs/peace-security/hope-not-hate](http://www.aidemocracy.org/programs/peace-security/hope-not-hate)

Live Without Hate: [cincinnati.com/nie/live\\_wo\\_hate/](http://cincinnati.com/nie/live_wo_hate/)

UNIFEM: [www.unwomen.org/](http://www.unwomen.org/)

Women for Women International: [www.womenforwomen.org/](http://www.womenforwomen.org/)

## THEME 3

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# The Impact of War on Women and Children

## Essential Questions

- Why does war fought within a country’s own borders bring both violence and devastation to the safety, status, and survival of the women and children living there?
- What care and protection are women entitled to, and from whom?
- Should we focus wartime recovery efforts on women and children?
- Do women have a special solidarity with one another?

**Overview:** The approximately 2,000,000 Afghan widows are among the most impoverished and vulnerable people in one of the poorest countries in the world, yet they are often overlooked. Culturally displaced, widows in Afghanistan are stripped of whatever resources and respect they had when they were married. About 90% of Afghan widows have children, and the average widow has more than four. Approximately 94% are illiterate. It is difficult to overstate the bleak reality of everyday existence for these women as they struggle to feed their children and simply survive. Suicide sometimes seems the only way out. According to a 2006 UNIFEM survey, 65% of the 50,000 widows in Kabul “see suicide as the only option to get rid of their miseries and desolation.” For more about this problem, see [www.beyondthe11th.org/about.ourwork.php](http://www.beyondthe11th.org/about.ourwork.php)

## Questions and Quotations

Susan Retik: *Even at the time when the United States was talking about invading Afghanistan, I did feel, oh my goodness, people are gonna be killed as a result of this, and there’s gonna be more of us, there are gonna be more widows.*

Modira Sahida: *When we have food, we eat. When we don’t, we wait for God. God will help.*

Lida: [Answering the question of whether there are times when she is hungry.] *Yes. There are many days like that. Most days I give my brothers the food because they go to school, and they'll get hungry.*

Sahera Naznia: *This pain, unhappiness, graves and widowhood doesn't happen to one person. It will happen to many thousands of people. We don't feel alone. Our sisters and mothers have the same kind of pain.*

Clementina Cantoni: *It's been estimated that in Kabul alone there are between 30 [30,000] and 50,000 widows. These women and their children are trapped in a cycle of poverty because if children don't go to school, they have no future either. It's a vicious circle that keeps repeating itself.... The widows...in Kabul have migrated from the provinces, so they've either been told by the husband's family that they just can't feed them and they don't want to take care of them, and they've had to leave, or for some reason they find themselves in urban areas with no support and no social networks at all.*

Zainab Wahidi: *In Afghanistan we say a husband is like shade. Wife is sitting under this shade. Do you know shade? Yes. Sometimes when we wish for the goodness of a woman, we tell God: never take this shade from on your top, from on your head. All the time, you'll be safe under this shade.*

Susan Retik: *At the core, it's so obvious, it's like a palpable thing, a mother is a mother is a mother and a woman is a woman is a woman, no matter what country you live in and what circumstances you grow up with. Whether you grow up in war and oppression or whether you grow up with all the freedoms you could possibly want.*

## For Further Investigation

More to think about:

- During the American Civil War, black women experienced gender-based violence. More currently, examples include: Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kosovo, and Timor-Leste. Have you heard about the gendered dimensions of these conflicts? If so, what, if any, patterns do you notice among these countries?
- Do the special risks women face in war-torn areas constitute human rights abuses for which we are all accountable?
- Can women play a unique role in peacemaking?

Further resources:

"Afghanistan: Land of Widows": [www.opendemocracy.net/people/article\\_1303.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/people/article_1303.jsp)

"A Female Approach to Peacemaking," Doreeen Carvajal, *New York Times*, March 5, 2010: [www.nytimes.com/2010/03/06/world/africa/06iht-ffpeace.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/06/world/africa/06iht-ffpeace.html)

NoBorder Network: [www.noborder.org/chechnya/display.php?id=85](http://www.noborder.org/chechnya/display.php?id=85)

Peace Women Across the Globe: [www.1000peacewomen.org/eng/aktuell.php](http://www.1000peacewomen.org/eng/aktuell.php)

United Nations Development Programme: [hdr.undp.org/en/](http://hdr.undp.org/en/)

## THEME 4

# Giving and Receiving

## Essential Questions

- Is giving to people who need help optional? How much, if anything, do we owe others?
- What moves people to help others?
- What do we receive in the act of giving?
- Can a charitable relationship be reciprocal? What makes that possible?

**Overview:** When Patti and Susan chose to help widows in Afghanistan in response to their own loss, they made a choice that many people use religious language to express. All three of the Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—prescribe charitable acts for the purpose of creating a just society. The Hebrew word for charity, *Tzedakah*, is derived from a root that means righteousness, justice or fairness. In the New Testament, Jesus commands, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" and defines neighbor as a stranger from far away in the parable of the Good Samaritan. According to Professor Iftikhar Ahmad of Long Island University, "In Islam, *sadaqa* and *zakat* are integral parts of the faith. The giver must feel compassion and empathy for the receiver. In the act of giving and receiving a relationship between the two people is established through which the receiver sees hope about possibilities and develops positive feelings about the community."

## Questions and Quotations

Patti Quigley: [About being in a setting where many Afghan widows were begging.] *It didn't dawn on me until a few minutes later that here I am, I'm saying no to all these people that I can't give them anything, and—but I'm one of the luckiest people in the world, I have more things than I know what to do with, and how could I possibly be saying no to them.*

Susan Retik and an Afghan widow in an exchange: *It makes me embarrassed to think of how much we have and to show you a picture of my home is—it makes me feel like it's not fair, because—*

*The feelings that you're sharing—it means a lot. We never thought that in America there could be widowed women. I feel very sorry for you. That you've gone through this also. Seeing tears in your eyes makes me feel very sorry for you.*

Susan Retik: *But in fact, it is very specific what it is that we are giving to. Four hundred widows to receive 15 chicks, a certain amount of chicken feed, and those 400 women are really 400 women. Which sounds so ridiculous but part of me feels like, it wasn't just, "Oh we're helping women in Afghanistan." We are helping these people in Afghanistan.*

Susan Retik: *When we decided to help women and widows here in Afghanistan, we always wanted an opportunity to come and to meet you and it is a dream fulfilled for us to be able to have finally met you.*

Susan Retik: *Life is so random. And I got lucky enough to be born, I think, into the best family, into the best community in the best country in the world, and you take for granted the liberties that you have. And these people, these women didn't ask for this lot in life. They did nothing to bring this on. I hope that I can internalize this for as long as possible because it's so easy to get back into your American ways.*

Sahera Naznia: *There are a lot of people in Afghanistan and other foreign countries, but not all of them have the same feeling toward us. We will never forget them. I wish we could see them every month, but it's not meant to be. Now that they are far away, may God keep them safe over there.*

## For Further Investigation

More to think about:

- Do expressions of empathy move Patti and Susan as much or more than expressions of gratitude?
- How does giving between people differ from giving and receiving in nation-to-nation relationships?

Further resources:

*Beyond the 11th: Empowering Widows in Afghanistan* offers substantive ways in which individuals can take action and make a difference. [www.beyondthe11th.org/what.takeaction.php](http://www.beyondthe11th.org/what.takeaction.php)



# SCHOOL STUDY GUIDE

## Grades 7–12

### THEME 1

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## Never Forget

**Essential Question:** Are there lessons from September 11th?

**Overview:** People throughout the world can often remember exactly where and when they heard of the events that occurred on September 11th, 2001. In classrooms ten years later, many students may be too young to have personal memories of that day. What would “never forget” mean to them? Perhaps the call to “never forget” refers to something larger than simply recollecting a memory. Perhaps there are lessons to be learned from the situations that led to those events, or from the ways individuals responded to those events. By asking the question, “Are there lessons from September 11th?” students can explore the effects of this formative event in American history.

### Activities

#### 1. On your own... Reflective Writing

What emotions do you feel when you think of September 11th? Describe your connection, if any, to the events of that day.

#### 2. As a group... Discussion Questions

**a.** Whose job is it to tell the story of September 11th? Who decides? How did your parents and/or teachers talk to you about what happened?

*Patti Quigley: Each year, when September 11th comes up, for me, it's for the rest of the world, because I live it every day.*

- Is there more than one “September 11th”? Is any one understanding of the events of September 11th more true or meaningful than any other?

*Susan Retik: Somebody had a big sign outside their house that said ‘Remember September 11th, 2001.’ I know this is gonna sound insane, but I forgot today was the third anniversary, I was so focused on the bike ride. But when I saw that sign, it just hit me like a ton of bricks.*

- When we read signs or car stickers that ask us to “Never Forget September 11th,” what is it that we should not forget? What happens if we all remember different things?
- Is there a lesson from September 11th? Explain how this lesson might be connected to the personal experiences of Patti and Susan.

**b.** Revisit your reflective writing. Have your thoughts or feelings changed as a result of this discussion? Why or why not?

#### 3. In the world... [See below for links to these resources]

- Visit the timeline at the National 9-11 Memorial website to revisit the events of September 11th, 2001.
- Visit The Tribute WTC Visitor Center website to learn more about how Norma Hardy, Jim Laychak, Gordon Felt, Tsugio Ito, and Masahiro Sasaki responded to their losses on September 11th, 2001. How do these individuals contribute to the “lesson” of September 11th?
- Read Adam Zagajewski’s “Try to Praise the Mutilated World.” In what ways does this poem connect to the experiences of those who suffered losses as a result of September 11th?
- The events of September 11th had a dramatic effect on the quality of life for many American Muslims and immigrants. Explore these experiences through the collections of Columbia University Libraries’ Oral History Research Center. Compare the experiences of these individuals to the media’s coverage of the Park 51 Center in New York City. What do these reactions teach us about the “lessons” of September 11th?

## For Further Investigation

Columbia University Libraries' Oral History Research Center: [www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/oral/](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/indiv/oral/)

The National September 11th Memorial & Museum: [www.national911memorial.org](http://www.national911memorial.org)

September 11th - Personal Stories of Transformation from The Tribute WTC Visitor Center: [www.tributewtc.org/programs/toolkit.html](http://www.tributewtc.org/programs/toolkit.html)

"Try to Praise the Mutilated World" by Adam Zagajewski, excerpted from *Staying Alive: Real Poems for Unreal Times*, edited by Neil Astley. This poem is available online at: [www.poemhunter.com](http://www.poemhunter.com)

## THEME 2

# Choosing Compassion over Hate

**Essential Question:** Can we choose not to hate?

**Overview:** Writer William Hazlitt asserts that "We can scarcely hate anyone that we know." Is it possible that all hatred is born from ignorance? Is it possible for us to "cure" hatred through education? In this section of the study guide, students will examine the cycle of hatred and ignorance in their own experience, and then expand the conversation to discuss how this cycle manifests itself in the international arena. Students will explore the way Patti Quigley and Susan Retik chose compassion over hatred, and used that compassion to try to interrupt the cycle of ignorance that contributed to the tragic events of September 11th.

## Activities

### 1. On your own... Anticipation Guide

a. Complete this anticipation guide by rating each statement below as 1 (I often do this), 2 (I sometimes do this) or 3 (I rarely do this).

\_\_\_\_\_ When I see someone in my community who dresses or speaks differently than I do, I find them interesting and want to know more about them.

\_\_\_\_\_ When I disagree with someone, I choose to listen to their point of view before I give my own.

\_\_\_\_\_ When people in my family or group of friends are having a disagreement, I try to help them understand each other.

b. Compare your responses to the message of Carl Sandburg's poem, "Choose":

*The single clenched fist lifted and ready,  
Or the open asking hand held out and waiting.  
Choose:  
For we meet by one or the other.*

c. Do you agree with Sandburg? Can we choose not to hate someone? Why or why not?

### 2. As a group... Socratic Seminar

a. Read the poem "Where Monsters Can Grow." (URL is below.)

- What is the connection between ignorance and hatred?

b. How do the following excerpts from *Beyond Belief* relate to the cycle of ignorance and hatred?

Susan Retik: *It's the same living in the United States. Some people I think blame Afghanistan, or some of the people of Afghanistan for the attacks on the United States. This is why we're trying to reach out, because it's a terrible situation that one hurts another which gets the repercussion—I don't know if you can translate all of that....*

Sahera Naznia: *There are a lot of people in Afghanistan and other foreign countries, but not all of them have the same feeling toward us. We will never forget [Patti and Susan]. I wish we could see them every month, but it's not meant to be. Now that they are far away, may God keep them safe over there."*

c. Although their two countries are in conflict, what makes these widows choose understanding rather than hate?

### 3. In the world...

Learn more about how to break the cycle of ignorance and hatred in your own community:

Hope Not Hate Initiative: [www.aidemocracy.org/programs/peace-security/hope-not-hate](http://www.aidemocracy.org/programs/peace-security/hope-not-hate)

Live Without Hate: [cincinnati.com/nie/live\\_wo\\_hate/](http://cincinnati.com/nie/live_wo_hate/)

Hold a fundraiser for an organization that works to break the cycle of ignorance and hatred in the international community:

*Beyond the 11th*: [www.beyondthe11th.org](http://www.beyondthe11th.org)

UNIFEM: [www.unwomen.org/](http://www.unwomen.org/)

### For Further Investigation

“Where Monsters Can Grow” by RHL: [www.rhlschool.com/read4n8.htm](http://www.rhlschool.com/read4n8.htm)

## THEME 3

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# The Impact of War on Women and Children

**Essential Question:** Should we focus wartime recovery efforts on women and children?

**Overview:** Whether ships sink or governments fail, some people believe that women and children are especially vulnerable. In this section, students will explore the economic, social, and educational conditions that contribute to such perceptions of vulnerability. The WebQuest and jigsaw activities lead students into the worlds of war-torn Afghanistan and Chechnya, into the homes of the women and children who maintain hope despite their bleak surroundings. Through the lens of economic activism, students are asked to imagine how they can contribute to a better future for the women and children of war, and themselves.

### Suggested Activities

#### 1. On your own... WebQuest

Sahera Naznia notes, “This pain, unhappiness, graves and widowhood doesn’t happen to one person. It will happen to many thousands of people. We don’t feel alone. Our sisters and mothers have the same kind of pain.” Through the WebQuest outlined below, explore the impact of war on women and children throughout the world.

- Visit the United Nations Development Programme website. Research the development indices for Afghanistan and other war-ravaged countries. Build your own development index at [hdr.undp.org/en/data/build/](http://hdr.undp.org/en/data/build/) to compare the levels of education, health care, income, and human security to those in the United States. In which indices do you see the greatest differences between opportunity in the U.S. and opportunities in war-ravaged nations? How do you believe gender inequity may increase these differences? What does it mean to grow up as a child with such different levels of opportunity? For more information about Afghanistan in comparison with other nations, see the UN’s CyberSchoolBus website at: [cyberschoolbus.un.org/](http://cyberschoolbus.un.org/)
- Read the article “Afghanistan: Land of Widows”: [www.opendemocracy.net/people/article\\_1303.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/people/article_1303.jsp). Based on the experiences of Anja, Fatima and Salima, describe what makes life particularly difficult for Afghan widows.
- Read Charissa Sparks’ article about the quality of domestic life in Afghanistan at [www.rawa.org/temp/runews/2011/01/27/abuse-stifles-the-potential-of-afghan-women.html](http://www.rawa.org/temp/runews/2011/01/27/abuse-stifles-the-potential-of-afghan-women.html). According to Shakila Hamidi, program manager at Women for Afghan Women, what can be gained by educating Afghan women?
- What if you weren’t allowed to attend school? Learn more about what it was like to be a refugee during the Russian military operation in Chechnya (1999-2001) at [www.noborder.org/chechnya/display.php?id=85](http://www.noborder.org/chechnya/display.php?id=85). What prevented these refugees from pursuing their education? In what ways could this same situation befall children in Afghanistan?

## 2. As a group... WebQuest Jigsaw

- a. After completing your WebQuest, move into your “expert” groups to discuss the information on your assigned website and create a summary to share with your group.
- b. In your second group, connect the words of the Afghan widows to the experiences of those described in the WebQuest.

Sahera Naznia (asked about remarrying): *In Afghanistan, if you remarry, you can't take your children with you. You have to leave them with your husband's family....Sometimes the children eat one egg. But they try not to eat too many because we need to collect them and sell them. In one week, we collect about 15, 20, 25 eggs. The money from those eggs is enough to pay for one week of expenses for the children. Now, I am responsible for the family.*

Lida: *Most days I give my brothers the food because they go to school, and they'll get hungry.*

Clementina Cantoni: *It's been estimated that in Kabul alone there are between 30 [30,000] and 50,000 widows. These women and their children are trapped in a cycle of poverty because if children don't go to school, they have no future either. It's a vicious circle that keeps repeating itself.*

Afghan Widow: *There was no hope for us. Until now. We're grateful you are helping us work and be independent. We're really sorry about the sad events that happened in America. We are so very sorry that this happened in America to you and your people.*

- c. As a class, discuss the common experiences of women and children during war. Decide if, or in what way, wartime recovery efforts should be focused on women and children, citing the experiences of the Afghan widows in *Beyond Belief* and the events recounted through the websites visited in your WebQuest.

## 3. In the world... Exploring Historical Context

Consider Afghanistan's long history of conflict. In what ways have foreign invasions, civil war, and tribalism combined with underdeveloped economic and educational opportunity to limit the growth of Afghan youth? Compare the experiences of Afghan youth to that of youth in Egypt, Tunisia or Libya. Could a similar uprising occur in Afghanistan? Why or why not?

## For Further Investigation

“Afghanistan: Land of Widows”: [www.opendemocracy.net/people/article\\_1303.jsp](http://www.opendemocracy.net/people/article_1303.jsp)

Beyond the 11th: [www.Beyondthe11th.org](http://www.Beyondthe11th.org)

Interview with Betty Reardon, a major theorist of women and peace: [www.sgiquarterly.org/feature2008Apr-6.html](http://www.sgiquarterly.org/feature2008Apr-6.html) and author of the 1993 book *Women and Peace* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press).

Landier, A., & Nair, V. B. (2009). *Investing for Change: Profit from Responsible Investment*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

“A New Arab Generation Finds its Voice”: [www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/03/20/world/middleeast/middle-east-voices.html#](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2011/03/20/world/middleeast/middle-east-voices.html#)

NoBorder Network: [www.noborder.org/chechnya/display.php?id=85](http://www.noborder.org/chechnya/display.php?id=85)

United Nations Development Programme: [hdr.undp.org/en/](http://hdr.undp.org/en/)

## THEME 4

# The Giver and the Receiver

**Essential Question:** Who benefits more from generosity, the receiver or the giver?

**Overview:** Susan Retik and Patti Quigley started their international organization, Beyond the 11th, by looking to help one widow. Perhaps they realized the power of what Desmond Tutu refers to as restorative justice, which he heralds for employing a “personal approach, regarding the [wrongdoing] as something that has happened to persons and whose consequence is a rupture in relationships.” The women of *Beyond Belief*, both American and Afghan, demonstrate the healing that can result from rebuilding relationships between individuals. In this section of the study guide, students will explore the personal connections and compassion that have helped to rebuild the lives of widows on both sides of the conflict, and may one day restore peace between their nations.

## Activities

### 1. On your own... Reflection

Read “The Hug” by Tess Gallagher. Consider the questions below as you read the poem:

- Could the narrator’s hug be considered generous? What does the homeless man gain from this gift? What does the narrator gain in return? Which one gains more from this experience?
- Gallagher suggests that a hug can be a “masterpiece of connection.” What examples of connection were displayed in *Beyond Belief*? In what ways could these connections be considered “masterpieces”?

### 2. As a group... Research and Debate

**a.** What does it mean to be fair? What does it mean to be just? What does the word justice mean to you?

Philosophers talk about at least two different approaches to the concept of justice. They call them “retributive” and “restorative” justice. First, look these words up in a dictionary, either print or online. Then, compare the qualities of retributive and restorative justice outlined in the chart on the following page.

- Which do you believe is a more appropriate response to the events of September 11th?

**b.** Provide evidence to support your opinion from the following resources and the quotes from *Beyond Belief* listed below.

Susan Retik: *I just could not imagine living in Afghanistan and having had the same thing happen to me, losing my husband and not being able to support my children, not knowing where the next meal was gonna come from.*

Patti Quigley: *I have so many different emotions when I come [to Ground Zero]...sometimes I think, this is one little city block and there are cities and towns all over [Afghanistan] that look exactly this, the whole country. When I think about it, it's devastating.*

An Afghan widow and Susan Retik in an exchange: *The feelings that you're sharing—it means a lot. We never thought that in America there could be widowed women. I feel very sorry for you. That you've gone through this also. Seeing tears in your eyes makes me feel very sorry for you.*

Susan Retik: *...in fact, it is very specific what it is that we are giving to. Four hundred widows to receive 15 chicks, a certain amount of chicken feed, and those 400 women are really 400 women. Which sounds so ridiculous but part of me feels like, it wasn't just, “Oh we're helping women in Afghanistan.” We are helping these people in Afghanistan.*

For more information about Afghanistan, see the following:

The CIA World Factbook: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>

U.S. State Department: [www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5380.htm](http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5380.htm)

BBC: [news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/1569826.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1569826.stm)

**c.** Hold a class debate on the subject of retributive vs. restorative justice and which is the more appropriate response to the events of September 11th. Students should marshal their best arguments in support of whichever perspective they hold.

Consider these questions as you plan your debate:

- If you were Patti and Susan, would you have put yourself in danger in order to travel to Kabul?
- Is restorative justice an acceptable response to the events of September 11th, 2001?
- Who is benefitting more from the organization highlighted in *Beyond Belief*, Patti and Susan or the Afghan widows?
- How do you think the Afghan widows’ acceptance of the means to earn a living from two American widows might shape their understandings of nationalism and global citizenship?

### 3. In the world... Exploring Economic Activism

Explore these organizations whose work directly impacts the lives of women and children affected by war and poverty. In what ways are these organizations restorative? Who receives more benefits from these organizations, the giver or the receiver? Moreover, which is the giver and which is the receiver?

Arzu: [www.arzustudiohope.org](http://www.arzustudiohope.org)

Business Council for Peace: [www.bpeace.org](http://www.bpeace.org)

Care International: [www.care.org](http://www.care.org)

Mercado Global: [mercadoglobal.org](http://mercadoglobal.org)

Ten Thousand Villages: [www.tenthousandvillages.com/](http://www.tenthousandvillages.com/)

## For Further Investigation

“Delineating the restorative justice ethos: History, theory and restorative justice” by Andrew Woolford. From *The politics of restorative justice: A critical introduction*. Nova Scotia: Fernwood Publishing, 2009.

“The Hug” by Tess Gallagher, excerpted from *Staying Alive: Real Poems for Unreal Times*, edited by Neil Astley. Available online at: [inspirare.wordpress.com/2010/11/28/the-hug-by-tess-gallagher/](http://inspirare.wordpress.com/2010/11/28/the-hug-by-tess-gallagher/)

### Comparing Retributive and Restorative Justice

<b>Retributive</b>	<b>Restorative</b>
Crime defined as violation of the state	Crime defined as violation of one person by another
Focus on establishing blame, on guilt, on past (did he/she do it?)	Focus on problem-solving, on liabilities and obligations, on future (what should be done?)
Adversarial relationships and process normative	Dialogue and negotiation normative
Imposition of pain to punish and deter/prevent	Restitution as a means of restoring both parties; goal of reconciliation/restoration
Justice defined by intent and by process: right rules	Justice defined as right relationship: judged by outcome
Interpersonal conflictual nature of crime obscured, repressed; conflict seen as individual versus the state	Crime recognized as interpersonal conflict; value of conflict is recognized
One social injury replaced by another	Focus on repair of social injury
Community on sideline, represented abstractly by state	Community as facilitator in restorative process
Encouragement of competitive, individualistic values	Encouragement of mutuality
Action directed from state to offender: victim ignored; offender passive	Victim and offender roles recognized in problem/solution: victim rights/needs recognized; offender encouraged to take responsibility
Offender accountability defined as taking punishment	Offender accountability defined as understanding impact of action and helping decide how to make things right
Offense defined in purely legal terms, devoid of moral, social, economic or political dimensions	Offense understood in whole context—moral, economic, and political
“Debt” owed to state and society in the abstract	Debt/liability to victim recognized
Response focused on offender’s past behavior	Response focused on harmful consequences of offender’s behavior
Stigma of crime unremovable	Stigma of crime removable through restorative action
No encouragement for repentance and forgiveness	Possibilities for repentance and forgiveness
Dependence upon proxy professionals	Direct involvement by participants

Adapted from: <http://archive.uua.org/cde/csm/restorative.html>.

**Beyond the 11th** is a non-profit foundation that provides Afghan widows, one of the world's most vulnerable populations, with job skills so they can start small businesses and generate income to support themselves and their children, thereby lifting themselves from poverty and dependence. The organization was founded in 2003 by two American widows whose husbands were killed in the attacks of September 11th. Susan Retik and Patti Quigley were both mothers of toddlers and expecting babies at that time. Rather than respond to their unspeakable loss with anger or despair, they opened their hearts to the plight of Afghan widows, among the most destitute people in the world. By empowering Afghan widows, Retik and Quigley hoped Afghan children might grow up with stability and education—powerful antidotes to the hopelessness that can spawn violent extremism. In 2005, ready to shed the public identity of perpetual 9/11 widow, Patti Quigley stepped down from the organization to pursue other initiatives in Afghanistan. Susan Retik continues as President of **Beyond the 11th**.

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