

CircleUp!

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER BY
AND FOR EMERGING LEADERS

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Q&A WITH NILAB

Nilab Ahmadi is an unwavering advocate for women's rights and youth activism. She is from Kabul, Afghanistan and is a graduate student studying Public Policy at Duke University. While pursuing a degree in law from Kabul University, the Taliban took over Afghanistan and banned women from all education, complicating her hope to pursue graduate education.

Her extensive volunteer work has found her advocating for a woman's right to work and access education, economic equity and the end of food scarcity, environmental concerns, and youth opportunities.

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

Greetings, and welcome to the first issue of CircleUp!

We are your editors, Della and Mary Jane. We are both students at Bryn Mawr College, and over the summer, we had the privilege of interning for GCC. We are so excited to continue our work and spearhead the publication of this new newsletter.

CircleUp! is by and for the youth. Writing this issue has given us much to consider: our personal responsibility as citizens of the world, the necessity of youth leadership, and the importance of ensuring everyone's access to information and education, regardless of gender or situation. These concerns are near and dear to our hearts as students at a historically women's college.

A few highlights of this issue are a Q&A with former Discussion Leader Nilab Ahmadi and a glimpse into two past Circles.

Until next time!

Della and Mary Jane

NILAB AHMADI Q&A, CONTINUED

We recently spoke to her about her involvement with GCC and her aspirations for the future; what follows is our (lightly edited and condensed) conversation.

CircleUp!: So, tell us a little bit about your story.

Nilab Ahmadi: I am originally from Kabul, Afghanistan. I have been raised among war and conflicts, in a country where women have been deprived of very basic rights like education or the ability to work, especially in remote areas. Because of that, I have been very interested in working with youth and bringing changes to my community.

CU!: You've collaborated with GCC before, as part of 'Youth Resilience in Times of Conflict: Stories from Afghanistan, Syria, and Ukraine.' What was your experience like as a discussion leader?

NA: It was a platform that helped me be engaged with people from all over the world. I was happy that I could share my story, that I could share the pain of other youths through this platform.

I could say, about the Taliban, "See, World, here we are facing these challenges. See, World, that as a woman, as a girl in Afghanistan, I'm deprived of everything in my own country where I grew up. I'm no longer allowed to get an education,



I'm not even allowed to wear the clothes that I want. As a woman, I'm just completely erased from society."

You know, it's sad to live in your country, live with your family, live with your dreams, but still, you feel like you are in a prison, and you just want to find wings and fly.

At the time, I was very hopeful because I could raise my voice. I could also raise my voice through writing articles and stories, and then sharing them with international communities. So, I can say it was very great.

CU!: Oh, you've written articles before?

NA: Yes, I forgot to mention.

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NILAB AHMADI Q&A, CONTINUED

Right after the Taliban took over, I started working on an article. The project was started by a group of students from Monash University, and it was a collaborative article for Afghan women to write about their situation after the Taliban took over. The name of the project is "Six Months Later, After the Taliban."

We were supposed to write about what happened to us, to our achievements, but my article was about the reasons behind the collapse of our government. It was a political article.

They published our article, and one day, one of our colleagues asked me if I was interested in talking in a Circle about youth resilience and conflicts. I said yes, and my colleague connected me with GCC.

CU!: Do you foresee yourself participating in future Circles?

NA: Yes, I just saw the invitation for the 50th anniversary Circle. I am very excited another good Circle is coming soon, and I look forward to participating!

CU!: Considering your past and current commitment to social justice, how do you envision your future?

NA: Once I managed to come to the US and start my masters, everything changed. For me, it was a big change in my life, and I was more hopeful about my future. I can see myself in a position where I can be of more help to my community. And I will say, I hope my education will take me to a place where the Taliban will regret what they think: that women can't bring about any change. Someday, I will be part of this change to my society.



NEXT CIRCLE

JANUARY 24, 2024

12-1PM EST

Peace, Patriarch & Politics

**Gloria Steinem in conversation
with young changemakers**

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Two of GCC's past Circles have brought Afghanistan into focus.

In 1981, GCC hosted 'Afghanistan Between Three Worlds.' Paul Fitzgerald, an American journalist and television producer, screened his documentary on Afghanistan in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion. Paul and his wife Elizabeth Gould were the first American journalists allowed to enter Afghanistan behind Soviet lines.

The documentary was one of a kind; it was the first opportunity for the world to see the streets of Kabul and ordinary life under the Karmal government and Soviet occupation. It was well-received and offered valuable insight for the evening's discussion.

In 2003, GCC hosted 'Afghanistan: A Delicate Balance: Human Rights, Democracy, and Nation Building - Fulfilling our Promise to the Afghan People.' Sima Wali, an activist for Afghan women's rights and president of Refugee Women in Development, was the discussion leader.

Paul and Elizabeth returned to GCC for this Circle. They screened a clip from their documentary about Sima Wali, "The Woman in Exile Returns: The Sima Wali Story."

Sima's conversation with moderator Liz Walker offered a snapshot of her resilience as a leader and as an Afghan woman.

Sima Wali's and Nilab Ahmadi's stories of resilience must be heard, and as women like themselves around the world work to rebuild their communities, it is our duty as global citizens to listen.



WAYS TO GET INVOLVED:

- **REGISTER FOR THE NEXT CIRCLE**
- **FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM, FACEBOOK, LINKEDIN AND YOUTUBE**
- **ASK ABOUT OUR EMERGING LEADER PARTNERSHIPS**
- **SUGGEST IDEAS FOR CIRCLE TOPICS AND DISCUSSION LEADERS**
- **DONATE TO GCC TO HELP KEEP CIRCLES FREE FOR ALL**