



Newsletter for English Teachers About the USA – Virtual Classroom

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Women's Empowerment

Improving the status of women is one of the most critical forces to make international development a success. "Women are key to economic progress and stability. Investing in opportunities for women is not only the right thing to do; it is the smart thing to do," said Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton.

For years, Secretary of State Clinton has been a vigorous advocator of women's empowerment. She staked her claim as an advocate for global women's issues in 1995, when, as First Lady, she gave an impassioned speech at a United Nations conference in Beijing.

Remarks to the U.N. 4th World Conference on Women Plenary Session delivered September 5, 1995, Beijing, China

"What we are learning around the world is that if women are healthy and educated, their families will flourish. If women are free from violence, their families will flourish. If women have a chance to work and earn as full and equal partners in society, their families will flourish. And when families flourish, communities and nations do as well. That is why every woman, every man, every child, every family, and every nation on this planet does have a stake in the discussion that takes place here. [...] We need to understand there is no one formula for how women should lead our lives. That is why we must respect the choices that each woman makes for herself and her family. Every woman deserves the chance to realize her own God-given potential. But we must recognize that women will never gain full dignity until their human rights are respected and protected. [...] If there is one message that echoes forth from this conference, let it be that human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights once and for all. Let us not forget that among those rights are the right to speak freely -- and the right to be heard. [...]"

"**Women's progress is human progress**" Secretary of State Hillary Clinton delivered those words at the UN on March 12, 2010 as she marked the 15th anniversary of her speech at the World Conference on Women in Beijing. [Remarks at the UN Commission on the Status of Women](#)

Further Information

- [Webcast: Amb. Verveer: Changing Attitudes](#)
- [Amb. Verveer Answers Questions on Violence Against Women](#)
- [Amb. Verveer Remarks at the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women](#) (November 18, 2010)
- America.gov: [Women of Courage](#) & [Democracy & Human Rights](#)
- State.gov: [Office of Global Women's Issues](#)
- The White House: [Council on Women and Girls](#)

International Organizations & NGO's

- [Human Rights Watch](#)
- [International Committee of the Red Cross](#)
- [United Nations Development Fund for Women \(UNIFEM\): Women's Empowerment](#)
- [United Nations Population Fund \(UNFPA\)](#)
- [United Nations Women Watch](#)
- [U.S.-Afghan Women's Council](#)
- [OXFAM International: Gender Justice](#)
- [Say No - Unite End Violence Against Women Site](#)



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The Role of Education: "When women are accorded their rights and afforded equal opportunities in education, health care, employment and political participation, they drive social and economic progress. They lift up themselves, their communities and their nations," said [Secretary Clinton](#). "But none of these benefits is possible unless girls are able to learn without fear and women are able to have autonomy and decision-making over their own lives, and those are the very things that violence and the fear of violence take away."

Lesson Plan on Girls' Education: UN WORKS: This lesson presents an overview of where, why, how and in what conditions girls are denied access to primary education. Students will learn that educating girls is essential to the development and prosperity of nations and peoples. This lesson examines the obstacles faced by young girls in developing countries as it pertains to education and what international documents protect this basic human right. [UN Works: Lesson Plan](#)

Secretary Clinton Honors Ela Bhatt, Leader in Women's Empowerment



Ela Bhatt © America.gov/AP Images

Remarks at the Global Fairness Initiative Awards Honoring Ela Bhatt (Nov. 15, 2010) "Ela Bhatt has spent nearly every day of the past four decades helping move more than a million poor women in India to a position of dignity and independence, gaining access to opportunities they never dreamed possible."



U.S. voters cast ballots in the 2006 congressional election. © AP Images/America.gov

The Aftermath of the Midterm Elections

The result of the recent midterm congressional elections means divided government for at least the next two years, as Democrat President Obama will have to share power with Republicans in the House of Representatives. Democrats retained control of the Senate, but with a reduced majority.

The Republican victory gives its House members the power to elect the chamber's leader, the speaker, who will set the agenda for what measures are considered on the floor and has a major say in selecting the chairmen of House committees.

President Obama stressed the need for compromise in a November 3 news conference, saying the results showed "no one party will be able to dictate where we go from here, that we must find common ground in order to ... make progress on some uncommonly difficult challenges."

[More](#)

Divided U.S. Government Can Work, Scholars Say

"By and large, in my experience, divided government can indeed produce results. Those results are usually preceded by periods of intense conflict," said William A. Galston, a senior fellow in governance studies at the Brookings Institution, a leading Washington policy research group. Unlike many countries with parliamentary governments, the United States elects its chief executive and its lawmakers separately, and the three branches of government — legislative, executive and judicial — are designed to be equal and capable of limiting one another's power. Congress passes laws and appropriates money; the president can veto laws or sign them and put them into practice with regulations; and the courts enforce the laws and decide whether the laws and the actions of the government violate the U.S. Constitution. [America.gov Article](#)

Polls

[A Clear Rejection of the Status Quo, No Consensus about Future Policies](#). The proportion of self-described conservative voters increased by nearly a third from 2006 -- from 32% to 41% -- and is the highest percentage of conservative voters in the past two decades. (Pew) [Obama Approval Advances to 47%, Up From 43% Pre-Election](#) - Weekly average of 45% and demographic support patterns are unchanged. (Gallup)

Survey

[Survey of Young Americans' Attitudes toward Politics and Public Service](#). The 18th edition takes a careful look at: Political preferences and activity, including voting in the 2010 midterm elections; Opinions of President Obama, Democrats and Republicans in Congress; Interest in the Tea Party movement; etc. (Oct. 21, 2010, Harvard Institute of Politics)

Lesson Plans

NYT Learning Network: [Should Sarah Palin Run for President?](#) A New York Times Magazine profile takes a close look at Sarah Palin and at speculation over whether she will run for president. What do you think of Ms. Palin? Do you think she should run for president in 2012? Why or why not? (November 18, 2010)

NYT Learning Network: [Political Polls and Pundits: Parsing the Midterm Election Results](#). What do the 2010 midterm election results mean for the country? What can exit poll data tell us about how Americans are thinking about politics and government? In this lesson, students examine the exit polling data and analysts' interpretations to better understand the midterm election results. (November 9, 2010)

America.gov Articles

- [Hispanic Voters and Candidates Influence US Elections](#). The 2010 midterm elections in the United States demonstrated the growing importance of the Hispanic vote. [MORE](#) (Nov. 5, 2010)
- [No Major Foreign Policy Shift After US Midterm Election](#). Following major Republican gains in the November 2 midterm elections, President Obama is expected to face challenges [MORE](#) (Nov. 5)
- [Incumbent Governors Fare Well in US Midterm Elections](#) (Nov. 5)
- [Indian Americans Celebrate Watershed Election](#). One of the big winners in the 2010 US elections, say Indian-American activists, was the Indian-American community. [MORE](#) (Nov. 5)
- [Midterms Show Voters Still Worried About Economy, Obama says](#) (Nov. 3)

Electronic Publications

- [Congress, the Legislative Branch](#)
- [About America: How the United States Is Governed](#)
- [The Legislative Branch: The Reach of Congress](#)
- [Publication: Outline of the U.S. Government](#)

Teabagger

What is a [teabagger](#) - a person, who protests President Obama's tax policies and stimulus package, often through local demonstrations known as "Tea Party" protests (in allusion to the Boston Tea Party of 1773)

The Tea Party

Today, a small but enthusiastic group of Americans is using this event to symbolize their frustration over U.S. economic policies and are playing an influential role in the 2010 midterm elections.

The tea party is a coalition of national and local groups that share an interest in reducing the role of government in American life and lowering government spending.

"The tea party is not a political party and has no single leader. It is a movement," New York Times reporter Kate Zernike told journalists at the State Department's Foreign Press Center October 22, "but it's also become a state of mind."

[America.gov Article](#)

Major Parties and the Tea Party Movement

- [America First Party](#)
- [Constitution Party](#)
- [Democratic Party](#)
- [Green Party](#)
- [Libertarian Party](#)
- [Republican Party](#)
- [Tea Party](#)

Discussing the Latest Terror Threats in Class

- NYT Learning Network: [Scans, Pat-Downs and Frisks](#). WHY has the Transportation Security Administration introduced a new screening process for airline passengers? WHEN did the "more aggressive pat-down procedure" start? WHAT has been the public's reaction so far? WHERE did the man who tried to bring down a plane last Christmas hide his explosives? WHO has threatened to carry out plots that involve putting bombs on airplanes? HOW would you respond to the terrorist threats and complaints from airline passengers if you were the chief of the Transportation Security Administration? (November 23, 2010)
- NYT Learning Network: [Terror Threat Thwarted](#) (November 1, 2010)

Literature

In this month's literature section we will take up the issue of women's empowerment.

HALF THE SKY by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn

Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn call women's rights the moral issue of the 21st century. Their book, *Half the Sky*, explains how female empowerment is one of the most effective tools for eradicating poverty and extremism. The authors plead for a worldwide grassroots movement in support of the women of the world, their education, health (with a strong emphasis on reproductive health), economic and political empowerment, and human rights.

NYT Magazine: [The Women's Crusade](#). "In an excerpt of their book, "Half the Sky: Turning Oppression Into Opportunity for Women Worldwide," Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn write that the liberation of women could help solve many of the world's problems, from child mortality to terrorism."

- [Hillary Clinton's Latest Campaign](#): Secretary of State Hillary Clinton: "Democracy means nothing if half the people can't vote, or if their vote doesn't count, or if their literacy rate is so low that the exercise of their vote is in question." [MORE](#)
- [Afghan Schoolgirls vs. Jihadists](#) | [When Development Makes Life Harder for Daughters](#) | [X-Factor Philanthropy](#) | [Madame President: Questions for Ellen Johnson Sirleaf](#)

Links and Teaching Material

- [Half the Sky Movement.org](#)
- [Half the Sky: Q&A with Nicholas Kristof](#). Kristi Heim, Seattle Times, October 9, 2009
- GoodReads.com: [Interview with the Authors](#)
- WorldAffairs.org: [Half the Sky: A Resource Packet for Educators](#)
- NYT Learning Network: [Women's Rights](#) | [Do You Believe in Equal Rights for Women and Men?](#)

THE BREADWINNER by Deborah Ellis

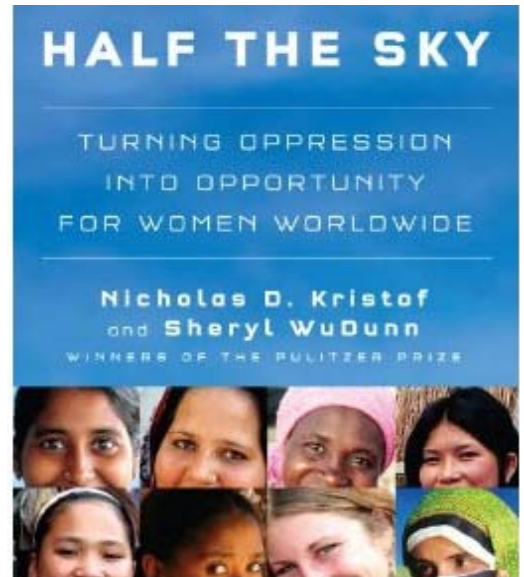
Young Parvana lives with her family in one room of a bombed-out apartment building in Kabul, Afghanistan. Because he has a foreign education, her father is arrested by the Taliban, the religious group that controls the country. Since women cannot appear in public unless covered head to toe, or go to school, or work outside the home, the family becomes increasingly desperate until Parvana conceives a plan. She cuts her hair and disguises herself as a boy to earn money for her family. Parvana's determination to survive is the force that drives this novel set against the backdrop of an intolerable situation brought about by war and religious fanaticism.

Deborah Ellis spent several months talking with women and girls in Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan and Russia. This suspenseful, timely novel is the result of those encounters. [scholastic.com](#)
Ask your students to write a comparison and contrast paper called *A Week in the Life*, where they compare Parvana's life to their own.

Links

- Listen to Afghan Radio: [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#)
- Scholastic: [Kids in Afghanistan](#) | [Afghan Kids Answer Your Questions](#)
- [Study Questions](#) for "The Breadwinner"
- The Embassy of Afghanistan in the U.S.: [For Teachers - Lesson Plans](#)
- LiteracyNet: [The Breadwinner - Prereading WebQuest Activity](#)
- America.gov: [Women Key to More Prosperous Afghanistan](#)

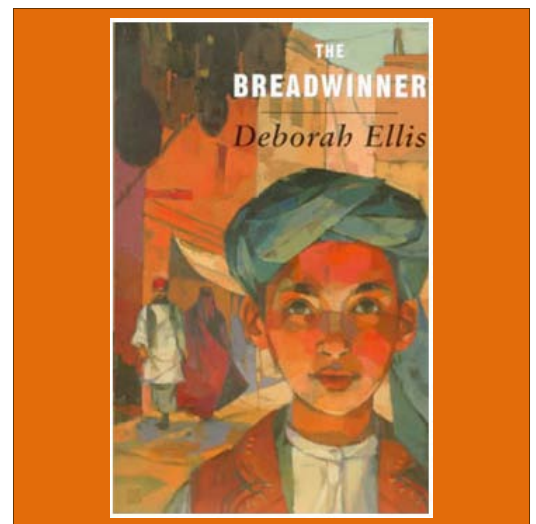
Women in Afghanistan. Parvana's story shows that the advancement of women's rights is critical to political and economic progress everywhere around the world. This is, of course, especially true in Afghanistan, where women's human rights have been ignored, attacked and eroded over decades, especially under Taliban rule. As Secretary Clinton said recently, the vast majority of Afghans want to see their daughters educated, and women given access to economic livelihoods and to healthcare. Women's empowerment is inextricably linked to security, economic opportunity, effective governance, and social development. It is a simple fact that no country can prosper if half its citizens are left behind. State.gov: [Advancing the Rights of Women and Girls: Keys to a Better Future for Afghanistan](#)



RandomHouse.com: [Read an Excerpt](#)

"Women hold up half the sky"
Chinese proverb that was made popular by Mao Zedong. It is variously attributed to him and Confucius, among others.

Listen to the Story. NPR: [Equality Still Elusive For World's Women](#). Women rights' advocates have made some strides in recent decades. But most of the world's poorest are female, fewer girls than boys attend school and women are still vastly underrepresented in leadership positions. Former Ireland President Mary Robinson, the World Bank's Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and Nick Kristof explain the challenges of improving women's lives worldwide.



Information on Afghanistan: America.gov: [New Afghan Power Transfer Plan](#) | [South and Central Asia](#) | State.gov: [Afghanistan](#) | Library of Congress: [Country Study - Afghanistan](#) | U.S. Embassy in Brussels: [United States Policy toward Afghanistan: A Dossier](#)

Dear Teachers –

[Please let us know](#) should you be interested in receiving a free copy of the books introduced.

HALF THE SKY by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn
and
THE BREADWINNER by Deborah Ellis

John F. Kennedy: Civil Rights Address

"We are confronted primarily with a moral issue. It is as old as the scriptures and it is as clear as the American Constitution. The heart of the question is whether all Americans are afforded equal rights and equal opportunities, whether we are going to treat our fellow Americans as we want to be treated ... [O]ne hundred years of delay have passed since President Lincoln freed the slaves, yet their heirs, their grandsons, are not fully free. They are not yet free from the bonds of injustice. And this nation, for all its hopes and all its boasts, will not be fully free until all of its citizens are free."

President John F. Kennedy, June 11, 1963, [Radio and Television Report to the American People on Civil Rights](#), available from the [John F. Kennedy Presidential Library](#)

In Focus – Ambassador Murphy’s Heroes

[Ambassador Philip Murphy](#) introduces his heroes to the audiences during his town hall meetings. In this month’s edition and in coming editions, we will focus on **President John F. Kennedy**.

On November 18, Ambassador Murphy delivered a [speech](#) on "Diversity in Education and the Workplace in the U.S." at the Berlin School of Economics and Law. During his remarks he pointed to the civil rights legislation, initiated during the administration of President Kennedy. Watch the video [HERE](#).

You might also be interested in Ambassador Murphy’s remarks on the [The 50th Anniversary of the Election of John F. Kennedy](#).

Links [John F. Kennedy Presidential Library & Museum](#)
TIME Magazine: [What can we learn from JFK?](#)

Lesson Plans edSITEment: [The Kennedy Administration and the Civil Rights Movement | JFK, LBJ, and the Fight for Equal Opportunity in the 1960s](#) |
DiscoveryEducation: [Views of JFK](#)



World AIDS Day (December 1)

HIV/AIDS is one of the most serious public health problems of our times. Educate your students!

- [America.gov: Beating AIDS](#)
- [AIDS.gov](#) & [CDC: HIV/AIDS](#)
- [UNAIDS Today blog](#)
- [White House: Office of National AIDS Policy](#)
- [The President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief \(PEPFAR\)](#) on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) & [Flickr](#)



Through its webcasts, CO.NX is providing you access to dozens of live, 90-minute programs taking place at the [United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP-16](#). Programs — hosted at the U.S. Center at COP-16 in Cancun, Mexico — run from November 29 through December 10. [Learn more](#) and participate in interactive [webcasts and webchats](#) with leading climate change experts.

[Schedule Highlights](#) * [Co.Nx on Facebook](#) * [Co.Nx on Youtube](#)

[America.gov: Cancun Climate Summit Can Yield Successes. U.S. Negotiator Says](#) (November 23, 2010)

New America.gov Feature and Publication:



The most recent issue of *eJournal USA: Refugees Building New Lives in the USA*.

TODAY on America.gov

Today on America.gov: What’s new? Find out, each day with “[Today on America.gov](#)”, where we’ll give you bite-sized summaries of the latest news and snapshots of our features and other offerings. When you’re too busy to browse all of America.gov, explore our newest content, then join the discussion [HERE](#).

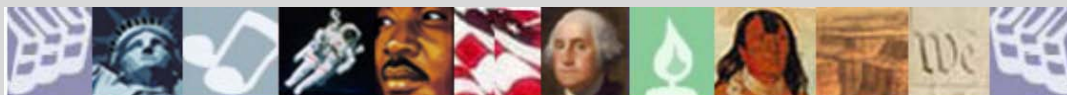
International Education

[Open Doors 2010](#), supported by a grant from the Bureau of [Educational & Cultural Affairs](#) at the U.S. Department of State, is a comprehensive information resource on international students and scholars studying or teaching at higher education institutions in the U.S., and U.S. students studying abroad.

[Educating the World:](#) The number of international students at U.S. colleges has reached an all-time high, thanks to a 30 percent increase in Chinese students. Asia sent the most students to the United States, but the sharpest growth in enrollment came from the Middle East, says a new report.

Links: [America.gov: Education & Youth](#) & [USA Education in Brief](#) | [eJournal USA: College and University Education in the U.S](#) | [Photo Gallery: U.S. Education by the Numbers](#)

[Studying in the United States is so expensive! ...or is it?](#)



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About the USA is a digital collection of background resources on American society, culture, and political processes. In addition to featuring selected websites, it provides access to documents in full text format (E-Texts) on topics ranging from the history of German-American relations, government and politics to travel, holidays and sports.

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