



Films fiscally sponsored by WVN, and those hosted on the free WVN film archive raise awareness, influence discourse, and effect on-the-ground change in the status of women on a global scale.



Honor Diaries

Producers Paula Kveskin and Alex Traiman

USA | 2014 | 59 mins

In 2014, Women's Voices Now fiscally sponsored the internationally acclaimed, award-winning full-length documentary, **Honor Diaries**. The film spurred an international movement that has elevated the conversation on a number of women's rights issues including: lack of freedom of movement, the right to education, forced marriage, and female genital mutilation. With over 500 screenings worldwide, several of which have been facilitated by WVN, the film has successfully challenged the paralyzing political correctness that has prevented many government officials as well as communities from identifying, understanding, and addressing these debilitating issues.



Handful of Ash
Director Nabaz Ahmad
Iraqi Kurdistan | 2007 | 33 mins

In the Women's Voices Now 2014 Online Film Festival, WVN selected this documentary short in which Iraqi-Kurdish women and girls recall their traumatic experiences with genital mutilation, a practice that only persists where custom goes unquestioned and with detrimental consequence to the well being of an entire society.

Handful of Ash is a powerful example for the necessity of the free, WVN Film Archive. The movie evolved from the work of the relief organization WADI, which combats female genital mutilation (FGM) in northern Iraq. Using this film, Wadi trained police officers, conducted [midwife trainings](#), and successfully established the first [FGM-free villages](#) in Iraq, and consulted for the government on [implementation of the law banning FGM](#). WVN continues to market this film to global audiences and organizations that are combatting the ongoing occurrence of FGM.

Individuals and communities impacted by Women's Voices Now span the globe.



Films and Poetry Workshop
Spring 2017
Santa Monica, California, USA

In May 2017, Women's Voices Now (WVN) facilitated its first Film and Poetry workshop in Santa Monica, California, for residents of Turning Point Shelter. Turning Point is an interim housing program providing 55 men and women with shelter and a full range of services. The Films and Poetry workshop meets Fridays for 8-weeks and pairs WVN archived films with poetry and creative writing exercises allowing residents a

chance to build a portfolio of original work, express themselves in a safe space, and also to connect and empathize with a global community through film. Women's Voices Now provides each participant with pens, paper, and folders, as well as copies of poems used in class. Exercises build on techniques such as repetition, concrete detail, rhythm, and point of view. The course culminates in production of a small book of their original work and a final open reading.



Shahida Akther
Filmmaker from Bangladesh
2014 WVN Online Film Festival Participant

In early 2013, from her home in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Shahida Akther was perusing the Internet and came across a WVN event held at the University of Southern California (USC), titled "Absorbing the Inferno: A Voice Against Acid Attacks" (Nov. 30, 2012). Acid attacks - a form of violent assault defined as the act of throwing acid or a similarly corrosive substance onto the body of another with the intention to disfigure, maim, torture, or kill - occur regularly in Bangladesh. Shahida was inspired to make a film about this under-addressed atrocity that takes place in her country so as to start a conversation. She contacted WVN for assistance in making the film; we introduced her to the Tom Lantos Human Rights Foundation, which offers "frontline grants" to activists whose work challenges and exposes human rights abuses around the world.

As the recipient of this \$2,500USD grant, Shahida made a short film, **Fight Acid Violence**, which was selected for the 2014 WVN Online Film Festival. While she did not win in our festival, her documentary was widely recognized throughout Asia. She received a number of accolades within Bangladesh and abroad for the content of her film and her bravery in broaching such a topic. Particularly significant was her recognition by the Bangladesh Women's Film Society, which recognized her work and brought acid attacks into public discourse in Bangladesh. Shahida credits Women's Voices Now with giving her the inspiration and encouragement to believe in the power of her voice despite ongoing challenges to her personal safety, and her struggle to support herself and her social impact films.



**WVN Global Tour 2013
Nablus, West Bank**

In June 2013, Women's Voices Now carried out a second global tour in the Middle East, with visits to Israel, the West Bank, Morocco, and Turkey. While in the West Bank, WVN staff visited Tomorrow's Youth Organization (TYO), located in Nablus. The Organization caters to the needs of Palestinians living in the nearby Balata Refugee Camp, offering literacy and computer courses to women and children; a children's summer day camp; and ongoing art courses. There is also a weekly Women's Group, a counseling session for women including seminars on health, mental health, parenting and children's needs, education and literacy, and women's empowerment.

WVN worked closely with the psychosocial manager, Inas Badawi, who meets with the women every week and curated an appropriate selection of films to screen for discussion. Films screened addressed domestic violence, rape, and neglect of girl children. The language of the films was Arabic and most were made by Palestinian filmmakers and/or about Palestinian women. After the session, Inas shared with WVN Staff that the films allowed her to talk about the previously mentioned topics for the first time; she predicted that in the weeks to come women would start coming forward with stories they didn't feel comfortable sharing before seeing their own struggles on screen.



**WVN Global Tour 2013
Meknes, Morocco**

In June 2013, WVN staff and volunteers traveled to Meknes, Morocco, to carry out a symposium planned in coordination with the Moulay Ismail University; Association pour La Protection de la Famille Marocaine; ISA and ELAP study abroad programs; and Prof. Ouafae Bouzekri. The symposium included professors,

female government officials, students, women utilizing the services of the Women's Center, and international audience members.

This Symposium offered a rare meeting of Moroccans across socioeconomic classes coming together to discuss the status and rights of women in Morocco. While such gatherings are usually held in French, the panelists saw the attendees from the Women's Center and recognized an opportunity to converse with women with whom they rarely have the chance to do so. The working language of the gathering switched to Arabic (and some English for the internationals).

After screening a short film from the WVN film archive about women entrepreneurs from rural areas and dense city centers in the country, a lively discussion began about the difference in treatment of boys versus girls in Moroccan households. The back and forth offered an opportunity for the panelists to better understand the kind of seminars and programs they needed to offer to women who seek out women's assistance centers throughout the country. The local women had an opportunity to interface with women they usually see as "above" them, and to be treated as equals in conversation. As well, a candid exchange ensued regarding the role of outside/international parties that come to do aid work in Morocco.



Alka Sadat
Filmmaker from Afghanistan
2011 and 2014 WVN Online Film Festival Participant

In 2011, Alka Sadat traveled to Los Angeles, CA, to receive her first place prize for best documentary in the inaugural Women's Voices Now Film Festival. Her film, **Half Value Life**, portrays the story of Marya Bashir, the first Afghan-Hindo public prosecutor in Afghanistan who challenges criminals, mafia groups, and narcotics smugglers. Bashir endangers her own life by also working to bring perpetrators of violence against women to justice.

Alka described the experience of coming to Los Angeles and being publicly recognized for her work by Women's Voices Now as the moment she gained confidence in her filmmaking talent. She and her sister went on to establish the first women's international film festival in the history of Afghanistan, an annual event that takes place each fall. Alka invites Women's Voices Now staff to serve as a judge in the festival, which takes place in Herat, Afghanistan. They also established the Roya Film House, an organization dedicated to bringing change to Afghanistan's cinema, filmmakers, women and children, through workshops, trainings, film screenings, and international conferences.