## Rights of the Girl Child

This is part of the book Women in the World Today, published by the State Department's Bureau of International Information Programs.

**By Robin N. Haarr**

In many cultures and societies, the girl child is denied her human rights and sometimes her basic needs. She is at increased risk of sexual abuse and exploitation and other harmful practices that negatively affect her survival, development and ability to achieve to her fullest potential. Because girls are particularly vulnerable, they require additional protections. The girl child is one of the 12 critical areas in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, which recommends elimination of all forms of discrimination and abuse of girls and protection of their rights.

This girl in a slum in Bangalore, India, faces not only economic hardship but discrimination and victimization because of her sex.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, sets forth the basic human rights of children, usually those under 18 years of age. These rights include nondiscrimination; the right to survival and development of potential; protection from harmful influences, abuses and exploitation; and full participation in family, cultural and social life. The convention also spells out some human rights violations that are unique to the girl child, including discrimination based upon sex, prenatal sex selection, female genital mutilation and early marriage.

### Cultural Influences on Treatment of Girl Children

Discrimination and harmful practices against the girl child vary depending upon cultural context. For instance, intentional abortion of female fetuses and female infanticide are common practices in East and South Asian countries where sons are strongly preferred. India and China have a significant sex-ratio imbalance in their populations as a result of these practices, according to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA, 2005). In India such practices are reinforced by the perception that daughters are an economic burden on the family. They do not significantly contribute to the family income and large dowries may be expected by in-laws when the girl marries. In China, sex selectivity and abandonment of infant girls have increased dramatically since the enactment of the one-child policy in 1989. Prenatal sex selection is more common where modern medical technology is readily accessible and open to misuse. According to the UNFPA 2004 report, sex-selective abortion and female infanticide have resulted in at least 60 million "missing" girls in Asia. The shortage of females in some Asian countries has led to other problems, such as increased trafficking in women for marriage and sex work. Despite government programs and efforts to end such practices with education, financial incentives and threat of punishment, sex-selective abortion and female infanticide continue.

The status of girls is significantly less than that of boys in some countries. This makes girls more vulnerable to discrimination and neglect. Available indicators reveal that girls are discriminated against from the earliest stages of life in the areas of nutrition, health care, education, family care and protection. Girls are often fed less, particularly when there are diminished food resources. A diet low in calories, protein and nutrients negatively affects girls' growth and development. Less likely to receive basic health care, they are at increased risk of childhood mortality.

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**HOLIDAYS**

March 27 - Holi
March 29 - Good Friday

U.S.CONSULATE GENERAL
Mumbai

# Online Photography Contest 2013

Theme

# ORDINARY WOMEN, EXTRAORDINARY WORK

to honor International Women's Day and Women's History Month

Photos need to be original work of the contestants and to be shot in India within past five years.

The contest is open to Indian nationals residing in the five states of the consular district:
**Chattisgadh, Gujarat, Goa, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra**

For complete rules and details on how to enter, visit
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## March 1-31 2013

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The Table

VIIRA CABS

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Girls are more likely to be denied education. In 2007, an estimated 101 million children worldwide — the majority of whom were girls — did not attend primary schools (UNICEF, 2010). Africa, the Middle East and South Asia have the largest gender gaps in education. Girls from poor and rural households are especially likely to be denied education. Knowledge and skills needed for employment, empowerment and advancement in status often are withheld because of customary attitudes about educating boys over girls. Girls are more likely to be used as child labor inside and outside of the home. Yet there are many benefits of investing in girls' education. Healthier families, lower fertility rates, improved economic performance and poverty reduction are among them. Educating girls in a supportive, gender-sensitive environment is critical to achieving gender equality.

The United Nations Population Fund estimates that 100 to 140 million girls and women have undergone genital mutilation and at least 3 million girls are at risk of the practice every year. Most cases occur in regions of Africa, the Middle East and Asia. In Egypt, it is estimated that 75 percent of girls between 15 and 17 years of age have undergone genital mutilation, a practice which has immediate and long-term negative consequences on girls and women's health and well-being, and complications can be fatal. Some countries in Africa, Europe and North America have banned genital mutilation; nevertheless, the practice continues.

Child marriage is another human rights violation that occurs in Africa, South and Central Asia and the Middle East. The highest rates are in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, where girls are married as early as 7 years of age, but often before 15 or 18 years of age. According to UNICEF statistics, in Bangladesh, the Central African Republic, Chad, Guinea, Mali and Niger more than 60 percent of women married before 18 years of age. In India, 47 percent of women married before 18 years of age. In Yemen, more than 25 percent of girls marry before 15 years of age. Child marriage is a form of sexual abuse that separates girls from family and friends, isolates them socially, restricts education and leaves them vulnerable to violence from husbands and in-laws. Child brides face health risks and even death related to premature forced sex — often with a significantly older husband — and early pregnancies. They are also at increased risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.

However, grass-roots movements can implement change successfully. An example is the Kembatti Mentti Gez zimma–Tope (KMG), spearheaded by Dr. Bogaletch Gebre in Ethiopia to stop genital mutilation. Or the Marriage Without Risk Network in Yemen, which links several NGOs that educate communities and advocate to curb child marriage.

The girl child is one of the 12 critical areas in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, which recommends elimination of all forms of discrimination and abuse of girls and protection of their rights. It also recommends enhanced development and training to improve their status and eliminate their economic exploitation. Awareness of girls' needs and potential should be improved in society and among the girls themselves so they may participate fully in social, economic and political life. Progress has been made, but much remains to be done to protect girls' rights and assure them a future in which they may benefit themselves and their communities.

***Robin Haarr*** *is a professor of criminal justice at Eastern Kentucky University whose research focuses on violence against women and children and human trafficking, nationally and internationally. She does research and policy work for the United Nations and U.S. embassies and has received several awards for her work, including induction into the Wall of Fame at Michigan State University's School of Criminal Justice and the Coramae Richey Mann "Inconvenient Woman of the Year" Award from the American Society of Criminology, Division on Women and Crime.*

**Read more: Women in the World Today in PDF format**

## WORD FROM THE CENTER

"We, the people, declare today that the most evident of truths — that all of us are created equal — is the star that guides us still, just as it guided our forebears through

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*Kids' Movie Screening*

AMERICANCENTER Mumbai

# THE WIZARD OF OZ

**Saturday**
**March 9**
***at 11:00 AM***

**U.S. Consulate General,** C-49, G Block, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra-East, Mumbai-51

**Free and open to the public, on a first-come, first-served basis.**

**This event is for children 6-16 years old; those under 16 must be accompanied by a parent.**

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Seneca Falls and Selma and Stonewall." -President Obama's Inaugural address, January 2013.

President Obama's evocation of three seminal civil-rights locations signaled his renewed commitment to the unfinished business of securing civil rights, and the promise of legal equality between individuals, irrespective of gender, race, or sexual preference. To mark Women's History Month, let me focus on just one. Seneca Falls N.Y. was the site of an 1848 convention of female suffragettes -- and male supporters -- that produced a declaration espousing the principle that women should enjoy the same legal rights as men, including the right to vote. While today most liberal democratic governments have reached a consensus on the rights of women, the history of the struggle for women's rights is instructive on the pernicious nature of contemporary biases.

It is relatively easy to legislate legal equality; to enshrine in hallowed documents inspired ideals is a drafting exercise. How do you make aspirational laws work? Therein lies the long-term challenge. The real work of civil rights only begins with law. Statistics consistently show that women are under-compensated for their traditional work, and receive less compensation for work equal to men in professional positions. Where is the equality in that?

More troubling are the too-common cases of physical violence and psychological aggression by men against women. Both India and the United States in the past year witnessed horrific examples of the abuse of women by gangs of predatory males. Thus a paradox: the same societies which produce women world leaders also creates men who treat women like chattel or worse.

History is full of lessons which may need to be repeated from time to time. From history we see how far we have progressed -- or in some cases, how far we haven't.

Regards,

Kapil Gupta
Information Officer

## Alumni Highlights

Harish Sadani, Founder - Member and Honorary Secretary of Men Against Violence and Abuse (MAVA), India's first such organization comprised of men, Sadani was sponsored by the U.S. Government to participate in the International Visitor Leadership Program on "Gender Issues in the U.S." (January 9-27, 2012).

Sadani has been working to stop & prevent gender-based violence and abuse of women since 1993, and has been working full-time with the organization for the past seven years. Under his leadership, MAVA's innovative youth initiative, Yuva Maitri, the only one of its kind in India, has gradually spread from Pune and Mumbai to 3 other districts of Maharashtra state. This program mentors young men on Gender, redefining Masculinity and creating a rich pool of male communicators.

MAVA has entered into an International On-line Competition run by Fetzer Institute, U.S. on their website www.tellusworld.org. This competition has invited voluntary organizations to share their stories on how they are promoting love and forgiveness in the communities they serve. Wishing Sadani and his team good luck for the competition and their future endeavors.

### Welcome to our new Alumni Outreach & Program Coordinator

I'm very pleased to announce that the U.S. Consulate General, Mumbai has a new Alumni Outreach and Program Coordinator, Ms. Behrooz Avari!

Behrooz comes to us from USIEF (United States-India Education Foundation) Mumbai, where she served as the EducationUSA Advising Services Associate for four and a half years. Behrooz is a State Department alumna herself, having gone on the Partnership for Learning Undergraduate Studies (PLUS) program from 2006-2008. In her new position as the Alumni Outreach and Program Coordinator, she will be handling all alumni affairs for Western India. We are very excited to have her on board, and she looks forward to connecting with the dynamic alumni of USG programs.

Please join us in welcoming Ms. Behrooz Avari by connecting directly with her on www.alumni.state.gov

Sincerely,

Swati Patel
Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer

**If you are an alumnus of a United States exchange program and have received special recognition, please send a write-up with 2-3 photos to mumbaipublicaffairs@state.gov. You could be featured in future e-bulletins!**

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## Mumbai Mondays
### Womens History Month

# Women Inspiring Innovation through Imagination

The accomplishments of women in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics commonly referred to as STEM span the centuries of American history. Eighteen women honored this year by the National Women's History Project exemplify pioneering work, scientific breakthroughs, life-saving discoveries, invention of new technologies, creation of organizations, as well as the promotion of women and girls in STEM. Come hear about their endeavors and about U.S. educational opportunities and programs promoting interest and participation in STEM.

Rosemary Macray heads U.S. Consulate Mumbai's American Citizen Service Unit. Prior to moving to Mumbai in July 2011, she worked as a public affairs officer for the State Department Bureau of Consular Affairs. Her overseas foreign service postings have taken her to Mexico City, Buenos Aires, and Quito, Ecuador. Before joining the State Department, she worked as a journalist in Chicago, IL, Brussels, Belgium, and Darmstadt, Germany. She holds a BS degree in journalism from the University of Florida and an MA degree in Human Relations from the University of Oklahoma.

Women Inspiring Innovation Through Imagination

## March 18
## at 06:30 PM

**U.S. Consulate General, C-49, G-Block, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra-E, Mumbai-51**

**Free and open to the public, on a first-come, first-served basis.**

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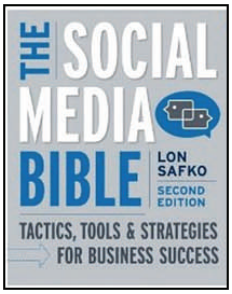
# NOTES FROM THE AMERICAN LIBRARY

## New books on Social Media

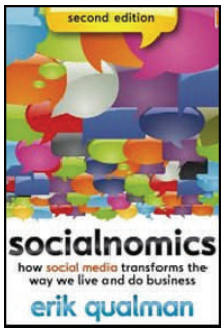



***The Social Media Bible: Tactics, Tools & Strategies for Business Success* by Lon Safko. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2012.**

*The Social Media Bible*, a comprehensive resource on marketing using Social Media, offers technology updates to the iPad, apps, Foursquare, and other geotargeted networks. New case studies demonstrate how businesses have successfully implemented these strategies, using the newest social media tools.

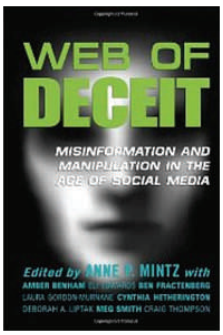
***Face 2 Face: Using Facebook, Twitter, and Other Social Media Tools to Create Great Customer Connections* by David Lee King. Information Today, Inc., 2012.**

*Face 2 Face* presents a practical guide for any organization that aspires to create deep, direct, and rewarding relationships with patrons and prospects. Author King demonstrates how a range of web 2.0 tools and techniques can be used to start and sustain conversations and humanize the organization in the eyes of those it seeks to serve.




***Socialnomics: How Social Media Transforms the Way We Live and Do Business* by Erik Qualman. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2013**

In *Socialnomics*, Erik Qualman offers a look at the impact of social media on business to reveal what the future holds and how businesses can best take advantage of it. He explores how social media is changing the way businesses produce, market, and sell products; how it eliminates inefficient marketing tactics and middlemen; and how businesses are connecting directly with their customers through popular social media platforms.




***Web of Deceit: Misinformation and Manipulation in the Age of Social Media ed. by Anne P. Mintz. Information Today, Inc., 2012.***

*Web of Deceit* focuses on the dangers that have grown with the increased use of the Internet, such as identity theft, phishing attacks, and e-commerce scams. The chapters in the book help readers to protect themselves on social networking sites, safeguard their personal information available on the web, avoid e-mail Trojans and scams, and learn how to evaluate websites for misinformation.

To read these and many more visit the

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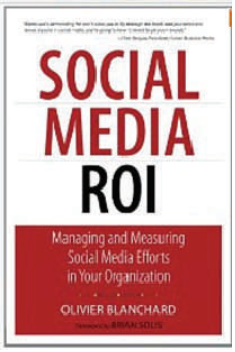


***Social Media ROI: Managing and Measuring Social Media Efforts in Your Organization* by Olivier Blachard. Que, 2011.**

In *Social Media ROI* author Blachard delivers practical solutions such as new best practices for strategy, planning, execution, measurement, analysis, and optimization to align the social media programs with the organizational goals. This book offers a comprehensive exploration of integrating the social media process in any organization.

Designed by:
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**Dhaval Ninawe**

"Well, in any case, I will get married off in an year or so, and from then on, I will see how I can adjust my career according to the family I'll have." This was the response of a fellow female Indian student I met on campus when I asked her about her immediate future plans after graduate school. It wasn't a surprising answer to me: this is perhaps the way a vast majority of Indian girls would answer if asked about their career plans after their undergraduate degree. This particular student was already pursuing a graduate degree in the US, and even with an educated family background, she could only view her future as hanging on such fine balance: hoping earnestly that her future husband through an arranged marriage would be supportive of her career.

When I heard that statement, the response to the same question by an American friend of mine inevitably came to my mind: she had in fact graduated in family studies, and was hoping to work for children with developmental delays. Before she told me about her major, I never even knew someone could get a degree in such a field. And here she was, explaining how she and her boyfriend were planning to shift to another state within the US, so she can take up a great job offer there, and he would try to acquire a job in the city she would be in.

I had heard both these statements within a span of a couple of weeks, in the same city in the US.

This is not a generalized picture of both societies, of course, but it is definitely a reality. When I heard my Indian friend talk about her ambitions as if they were a function of her luck in finding a complacent groom, I thought on how secure she would be feeling about her education and life ahead. And given the complexities of caste, astrology and age restrictions in India, what are the chances that she would find such a groom within the age window that society has judged acceptable for its women to marry?

My friend had simply followed her older siblings into choosing engineering studies as a career since that was a 'natural choice' in India. And yet, although to her credit she indeed did very well, all the efforts that she might put into her research, her relentless pursuit for a scholarship, could all be a story of legend she would perhaps tell her children at bed time, ten years from now.

Looking at the Indian society from afar and comparing it with the West gives me the opportunity to see pros and cons in both. But one painful reality back home shames me most: our judgments and stubbornness to tame and domesticate our women. How women are judged based on their marital status and 'homeliness' rather than their ambition and merit.

But if this was just another mawkish example of all that is wrong with the arranged marriage system in India, why was she here in the first place spending thousands of dollars into a degree that would tax most of her youthful years and her parents' financial savings?

The answer is the ray of hope that gives me reason to argue our case to the world about Indian women and our current society: our constant willingness to adapt and grow. It makes me proud whenever I see my Indian friend at a research meeting or make a smart move in class. She may not know how her future husband would value her education and her ambitions, but she surely knows how to make the best of what comes her way!

*Written by USIEF Member Abhijit Sunil who is currently pursuing his Master's in Southern Methodist University. This is an independent article reflecting the author's personal views.*

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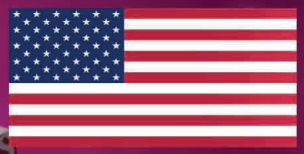


AMERICANCENTER
MUMBAI

# Saturday Film Screenings

## Women's History Month

### March 2

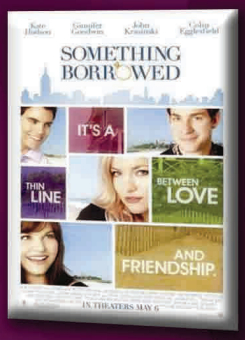
## Bridesmaids

*Competition between the maid of honor and a bridesmaid, over who is the bride's best friend, threatens to upend the life of an out-of-work pastry chef.*

### March 16

## Something Borrowed

*Friendships are tested and secrets come to the surface when terminally single Rachel falls for Dex, her best friend Darcy's fiancé.*




### March 9

## Black Swan

*A ballet dancer wins the lead in "Swan Lake" and is perfect for the role of the delicate White Swan - Princess Odette - but slowly loses her mind as she becomes more and more like Odile, the Black Swan.*

### March 23

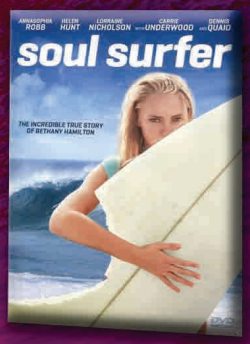
## Hope Springs

*After thirty years of marriage, a middle-aged couple attends an intense, week-long counseling session to work on their relationship.*

### March 30

## Soul Surfer

*A teenage surfer girl summons the courage to go back into the ocean after losing an arm in a shark attack.*




## Screening will start at 2:30 PM

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