



## An Unusual Journey AFGHANISTAN UNVEILED



A FILM BY BRIGITTE BRAULT & AINA WOMEN FILMING GROUP  
COLOR, 52 MINUTES, 2003

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**M**any innocent civilians were killed in the war against the Taliban in early 2001. The world soon forgot about these victims as more wars broke out elsewhere. *Afghanistan Unveiled* is a documentary in the form of a road movie. It visits, in turn, the cave-dwellers of Bamyán—mostly women and children left behind after the men were slaughtered—who have only enough food to keep alive, the Kuchi nomads, also in poverty and feeling devastated, the warm and hospitable Badakshan mountain people, and the ancient but troubled city of Herat, where women are kept away from public places due to chaos following the war.

A pioneer work in several ways, the film is the first from Afghanistan to be made by group of young women. All from Kabul, group members include video journalists and cinema students. The film is the first after the war with the Taliban to focus on the living conditions of women, and the first where their faces are shown and their voices heard. It not only reveals the victimized women and their efforts to make changes, it also leads us on a journey with them as they renew their sense of responsibility to help the society change for the better by facing some harsh truths.

For the young women in the filming crew, who never knew about life outside the capital city of Kabul, this is their first solo journey, made without legal guardians as required by the local law. As their very first statement, they refuse to be covered by a *chadri*—a veil large enough to cover a woman from head to toe with only



Selected images from *Afghanistan Unveiled*. ©2003 Women Make Movies

a mesh inset around their eyes and nose for them to see through and breathe. Their sincere attitude and persistence made it possible for them to access women living in harsh conditions and to bring out their voices, voices that testify to both the crimes of Ben Laden and the casualties of American bombs. Although both filming techniques and interview questions are not perfect, the filmmakers still successfully speak out about the harsh truths, and make each woman's face as compelling as her story. As the young women travel, breathtaking landscapes are revealed on the barren land through their cameras, while happiness from their first experience of freedom to travel shines through their youthful laughter.

The film can be a good learning tool for high school and survey-level undergraduate classes, as the reality of another part of the world will remind them to treasure what they have—not only in terms of peace and education, but also in terms of opportunities they have in life. ■

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