



Author Series
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Gayle Tzemach Lemmon
Council on Foreign Relations

***The Dressmaker of Khair Khana:
Five Sisters, One Remarkable Family, and the Woman Who Risked Everything to Keep Them Safe***

Peggy Blumenthal: I'm Peggy Blumenthal, Chief Operating Officer here at the Institute of International Education and I'm delighted to welcome you all. Some of you have been here many times, some of you work here and are colleagues, and others of you are new and particularly drawn by this exciting topic. Most of you know IIE for the work it does with the State Department, administering the Fulbright program and various other programs. In fact, I am very pleased to welcome Gayle Tzemach Lemmon, who is herself an alumna of the Fulbright program. And then of course we also work very closely with the Women's Foreign Policy Group and pleased to welcome you all back again... Let's turn it over to Kim.

Kimberly Kahnhauser: Thanks so much Peggy, to you and IIE, for your generous hospitality once again. It is always a pleasure to be here. And thank you all for joining us today for our Author Series event on *The Dressmaker of Khair Khana* with Gayle Tzemach Lemmon. I'm Kimberly Kahnhauser, Associate Director of the Women's Foreign Policy Group, an organization which promotes women's leadership and voices in foreign policy through our programming and mentoring. If you are not already a member and want to learn more about us, I would encourage you to fill out one of the membership information cards or pick-up an application as you leave. We have a lot of exciting programs coming up in NY, at the end of April we will have our annual UN conference and on May 19th we have our Celebration of Women Diplomats. We work closely with women diplomats all year round—and I'm pleased to see several with us today—but our celebration is when we take the time to honor them and their contributions to foreign policy and as role models for the next generation of women leaders. I hope to see you all there!

It is now my pleasure to introduce Gayle. We just had her speak in DC and I'm delighted to welcome her again in NY. Her book has been all over the news. In fact, C-SPAN just covered our DC event and she was on *The Diane Rehm Show* Thursday, so we are very excited to have her here today. Gayle's career has spanned journalism, business, and think tanks. She began her career in journalism and spent nearly ten years covering presidential politics and as a producer with the ABC News Political Unit and *This Week* with George Stephanopoulos. She then studied for her MBA at Harvard where she began writing about women entrepreneurs in war zones in Afghanistan, Bosnia, and Rwanda. Her reporting on these women has been published everywhere from *The New York Times* and *Financial Times* to *CNN.com* and *The Daily Beast*. She has also written from Afghanistan for NPR and *the Huffington Post*. Before joining the Council on Foreign Relations where she is currently a Fellow and the Deputy Director of the Women and Foreign Policy Program, she also worked at the global investment firm PIMCO. Please join me in welcoming Gayle.

Gayle Lemmon: I love doing all kinds of events because I think the messages in this book are so important that getting them out to leaders like you who will then transmit them to hundreds more means so much to me, on behalf of the young women whose stories I am able to tell in this book. Also I just love being with women from whom I get as much as I ever give in terms of the conversation and the

discussion and the questions, so thank you for being here despite this lovely weather and thank you also in advance for engaging in a great discussion. I look forward to the Q&A and having a real dialogue with you about the process of bringing this book to life. I'm sure that some of the work that you all do in this room every day and also how we can have an impact that goes from this door into what we can do in terms of really making a difference for women who will never get to sit in rooms like these. So thank you very much.

In December of 2005 I traveled to Afghanistan for the first time to write about women entrepreneurs in war zones. I had just turned 30 and had decided to go to Harvard Business School and leave ABC News. It was a very big moment for me because I didn't really know what I was doing. I knew that I didn't want to be doing what I was doing in 20 more years and that there were really stories that I cared about that I thought should be told and that I knew I could never tell if I stayed with the network, but I loved my job, I loved my colleagues, and I was terrified. I didn't know anybody who'd gone to business school, certainly not anybody who'd done an MBA program, and definitely not gone to Harvard. So I sort of took a leap of faith, left ABC in the middle of the 2004 campaign, and set off to go to business school thinking about "How am I going to write about something I care about deeply?"

The story I came up with was women entrepreneurs in war zones and I went at it, not because I wanted to write about women, but because I wanted to tell an economic story that was under-told and underreported. Because almost every story we hear about war, it's about the men. It's the men who go off and fight, it's the men who have funds, it's the men who shape the peace agreements and terms of war, and it's the women who have to live with everything that men decide. Sometimes as reporters, we almost apologize for telling the stories about women, because they are soft. They're not the stories of the embedded reporters getting on the front page of the newspaper. They are the stories of the people who pull families through when almost no one is paying attention, and who make sure that communities are there so that when the men come home, there is something to come home to. And I felt like this was the story that no one was paying attention to. We are so used to seeing women as victims of war to be pitied, rather than survivors of war to be respected—and you don't invest in people that you pity, you invest in people that you think are going to be there for the future. And so every time I went to these places, such as Rwanda or Bosnia or Afghanistan, I kept meeting women who were doing remarkable things, who had started businesses in the post-Taliban period, who were employing a lot of people, and who really believed that business was the key to their country's future.

So in December of 2005, I flew from Boston to Kabul and one of the first scenes in the book is me trying to figure out how to wear a headscarf properly. When you go to Afghanistan, the last thing you want to do is stand out—you really want to be there, especially as a reporter, being able to tell stories in a way that makes everybody around you comfortable. I remember landing in Kabul, thinking, what in the world have I gotten myself into? I'm a pretty green foreign reporter, but I know there are stories out there.

About two weeks later, I found myself at the offices of Mercy Corps—I'm sure some of you know of Mercy Corps' work—and it was December, almost Christmas time, and it was freezing. There was no heat. We had a little wood stove in the room and we were sitting there, with a young woman, our hands sort of cupped over a cup of chai. And I said to her, "So tell me what you're doing." I was working on a story for *The Financial Times* at the time and also a case for Harvard Business School about women entrepreneurs in Afghanistan. "What kind of work are you doing?" She said, "Well, I'm starting a company. I've just said no to an international aid organization that wanted to employ me for about \$2,000 per month, and I said no because I believe that I should start another business." She sort of started waxing very poetically about how business was the key to Afghanistan's future and money was power for women and that money changed the dynamic in the household, particularly in Afghanistan, in a very traditional society where earning an income means earning respect. And I looked at her and I said, "Well, I'm barely 30, and I know you're not 30, so how in the world do you know this much about business? Why are you so passionate about it?" She said, "Well, I had this terrific business during the

Taliban supported by the 100 women in my neighborhood. It was really great and I learned to be an entrepreneur.”

And I sat there as a reporter and I just sat back because as a reporter, you are always looking for the untold story even if it's under everyone's nose. It's not out there and people don't think about it. Tell me the last time you thought about Afghanistan and women and entrepreneurs and the Taliban in the same sentence. And yet here were these girls who have been breadwinners during years in which they were not allowed to be on the streets and they had thought there was nothing remarkable about what they had done. That is when I became determined to bring this story to readers because this is one story in one difficult country of one impossible time about one young woman who stands for so much.

We just now expect women to pull families through to the other side. Rarely do we ever give them credit for all the work that they do when no one is paying attention. I think we are used to seeing these stories as soft, as we were just saying. What if it were her shooting a gun through a window or getting out a broom sweeping up the pieces and putting up the tarp where the window used to be? And yet it's the stories of women who pick up the pieces every day. That is why I set out on the journey five years ago to bring this book to life.

In the first weeks of the Taliban, for women in Afghanistan, especially women in Kabul who were like you and me, gone to university, they were out teaching, they were out working, they were professionals in their own right, and they were contributing to their families. All of a sudden everything they did was impossible. So we had all these girls who were supposed to be teachers, and lawyers, and doctors, and all of a sudden the only thing they could do was stay home. You had young women like Kamela who did the one thing that they still could: they became entrepreneurs. The young women like Kamela found themselves in a very unique situation.

So, Kamela's family in particular—her father had worked in a previous regime in the army for decades. He had been jailed for supporting Massoud, if you know Afghan history. He was retired. As he thought, he was long past the point of being politically active. But that didn't matter in house-to-house searches. If you had any kind of attachments to the last government, that was a very bad place to be. Since she had another brother who was in his teenage years that qualified as fighting age. Fighting age sort of started 16 or 17 and ended around 45. You just didn't know what was going to happen to those men. Kabul is a city—I know some of you had spent time there—where rumor traveled faster than Western Union. So overnight people who say, “So and so has been taken and so and so has been held. This person's cousin's friend is in prison because he was in the wrong place at the wrong time.” Fear spread fast. I think what people don't think about with the Taliban is the economic side of that story. As bad as the politics were—and they were bad—every night the radio would say women cannot leave the house without a chaperone who is male, even if they are a ten-year-old boy, that qualifies as a male chaperone. Women cannot work. Women cannot be at school. Women will be forbidden from revealing the “seditious limbs.” I actually have primary Taliban documents which say the “seditious limbs.” I never asked them what those limbs actually were. Any of that was grounds for either a beating in the streets from the Vice and Virtue forces or public detention.

You had all these stories happening and the politics were atrocious, but the economics were just as bad. Overnight jobs went away, so people reached the point several months in that they were selling baby dolls, shoe laces, windows, and doors, anything that had economic value. Kamela found herself in a situation where she had five brothers and sisters at home counting on her to provide. Her father and her brother had fled the city and they had promised they would send money as soon as they could, but that wasn't going to help in the meantime. So what she did was she decided to start the dressmaking business at home. Home business had the advantage of not attracting tremendous Taliban attention because out on the street you were under threat at every moment that you were outside. If you stayed indoors and if you sort of followed the rules you could basically navigate around the rules about women's work and women's activities, if fortune smiled upon you. If you had the luck

not to be in the wrong place at the wrong time you could get around the rules, and that is what these young women did.

One of the first things that she did in her book was going to her older sister's to beg and plead for her to teach her how to sew because the truth is, like me and a lot of you around the table she had never learned to sew from her mother. She was an educated girl who went through years of teacher training at education college and was about to go to university, and that became impossible. So she went to her older sister's house and said, "Can you please teach me how to sew?" So they do this crash course in dressmaking in an afternoon. She actually goes without a chaperone—actually one of the only times that she did because it was early on in the Taliban days and her brother was in school. She had no other way to get there. So she gets home at night and decides that this one dress is going to be the foundation of the business. By the time she finishes she has now created jobs for not just women in her neighborhood but women all around Kabul who were desperate to support their families and who were willing to take almost any risk needed to make sure that they could earn a living and make sure that they could support the children who were counting on them.

One of the first women who comes and sews with her, during the third or fourth chapter, is named Sara Jan. She knocked on her door and said, "Kamela, I never met you. I don't know you but my cousin's cousin's cousin tells me you have work for women. Two years ago, very unexpectedly the high school principal and my brothers-in-law have been supporting my three children and me for the last several years. All three of my brothers-in-law have lost their jobs: one was a mechanic, one was a city worker, and one worked in computers. All of that is gone and they have no ability to support themselves, let alone nine children. I have never held a job in my life, but I can sew. I promise you if you give me work I will do the best I can for you and for your sisters." Kamela thinks, "I have absolutely no ability to pay this woman any kind of salary but I could not turn her away." So she becomes Kamela's supervisor and together they create a system which allows Kamela to focus on the marketing and really become the entrepreneur that she always had the potential to be—if it were not for the Taliban, it would never have become—and Sara Jan focuses on the scheduling and making sure that the quality control is mastered.

As the business grows, more and more young women came to their house. Almost every day there are girls knocking saying, "My friend's friend's friend told me you have work. My father is gone. My brothers are sewing at home too, and we need the money." By the end, you have a system that Kamela set up: 20 to 25 girls sewing with them a day. They have about seven to eight shopkeepers all around Kabul that they are supplying at any one time. There's a great scene with her and her brother when they realize they can buy fabric on sale. Kamela said, "Our margins are going to be even better. This is great." And they might be able to buy some of the dresses, so they don't want to buy on order. She brings some of the dresses. At the end of the time she is basically supplying eight to ten shopkeepers all around Kabul and in the process creating jobs for all the young women who came to her.

The rules that Sara Jan put in place are very strict for all of the young women who come. No laughing on the street. No talking to men on the way. No ever pulling back your burqa. No wearing white socks—that's the color of the Taliban flag and, if they catch you, the Vice and Virtue forces will get you in trouble and get me in trouble. All of these rules are near the door, near the schedule, where they hang their burqas every morning when they come in for work. Kamela said, "It's very important that you all know the rules. Our community supports us because we support the community. If we break that trust and attract the problems of the Taliban, this will be the end of the business." Every time there was a knock on the door—every young woman talked to me about the fear that was involved at that moment just because you didn't know. The Vice and Virtue forces were the Taliban's foot soldiers. Even if the guys in Kandahar weren't that strict, these young men had to be—I know some of you have lived in countries where there were foot soldiers who actually enforced the rules and they were the ones with the batons and the TV antennas who will beat you in the street or take you into jail just as easily as they will go visit their mother on the weekend. This is not a big deal for these young men. They are zealous believers in the Taliban's missions and they are the ones that these girls are really afraid of. They take

all kinds of precautions: never be in the market at the time of calling of prayer. That's when they go to every shopkeeper and yell at them and physically push them into the mosque and say, "You must go and pray and, by the way, what in the world are women doing here?"

This is the time when they were most at risk, so they would take the back streets because the Taliban never really knew Kabul. They would still be going the wrong way down one-way streets months after they had taken Kabul because they were young men who had been pushed from the south of Afghanistan into refugee camps in Pakistan as children, most of whom who had lost their parents, and then had never been in a city like Kabul. It was for them Sodom and Gomorrah. Kabul for them was sin city and its capital rolled up into one. That's why Kabul got cracked down upon harder than any other place that the Taliban hit because it was a way for them to send a message. For all these risks that Kamela and these girls were facing every time they left the house—Kamela in particular because she was in the market place so often, was really the one who was the face of the business, the brains of the business, and also the person they saw in the markets, so that's the person [for whom] the danger was the greatest.

One thing I want to talk about before we get going into Q&A is the role of the Taliban. The Taliban were never really monolithic in the sense that they think that we sometimes understand them here in the United States. There was one Talib in particular who sent his daughter to work with Kamela. One afternoon a woman comes up to her—there's a scene in the book where she says, "I have a message from my father. He says, 'I know you are an honorable woman who is working to support the community. I want you to know as long as you don't ever have men here and that the rules that Sara Jan built are enforced, I will do all I can to support you.'" You see this throughout the book, at the same time they are creating fear and terrorizing these young women, there are always pockets of these girls who slip throughout the Taliban years and let them create opportunity not just for their own families but their communities. At one point Kamela's sister says, "This is too much. We are really for going to get cracked down upon. Don't you see this is really too much danger for us to handle?" She said, "Our faith has always told us it is our responsibility to help as many people who come to our door. So while we can't help everyone, we can do the most that we can. We are doing the right things for our families, for our faith, and for our community, so God will protect us." She really did believe this so in part she jokes now that she was 19 and dumb, so she takes risks at 19 that not a lot of us have taken at 39, or 49, or 59. But I think she really had continued to have a sense of mission because things were so bad and because there was so little hope.

She really created a community as well as a factory. You would have young girls who would come over and listen to Farhad Darya, who was a famous Afghan crooner. They played it on an old Chinese cassette recorder, very low. They would swap jokes. They would gossip about boys. They would tell stories about their families. They did the same things that young women do everywhere around the world when they were together. They would also talk about [the movie] *Titanic*. *Titanic* is the one cultural phenomenon that the Taliban couldn't stop. [*Laughter.*] The Leonardo DiCaprio haircut was marvelously popular in 2000 in Taliban-era Kabul. There was *Titanic* wedding cake, *Titanic* vegetables, *Titanic* lipstick. In fact, for those of you who have been to Kabul there is a dry river bed in Kabul that was called *Titanic Bazaar*. One night a huge rain came in and swept up everything that had been in the bazaar and then the *Titanic* had sunk. [*Laughter.*]

I think you see what life looked like for girls who make the difference at a really trying at an impossible time that was almost free of hope. They created hope on their own and for themselves when the outside world had really forgotten these girls. They didn't have any-one who looked after them, so they looked after themselves. That is why I thought it was so important to bring this story to readers because I think so many of us know mothers and grandmothers who have stories almost as extraordinary as this one in the sacrifice they symbolize and the work that they did. Yet, we're still used to taking women's stories for granted. I think it's time to celebrate unsung heroines and unlikely entrepreneurs. I really do hope that this book does its part to change the conversation and also remind people about the people who are behind the embedded IEDs and the stories about war that we really

see shaping the front page of Afghanistan coverage everyday—letting us lose sight of the women who are there fighting everyday for something better, for both their children and their community. Thank you so much and really appreciate it. I look forward to the Q&A. [Applause.]

Ms. Kahnhauser: Thank you so much. It's so nice to hear the stories of women impacting the world around them and not just as victims. I'll start it off and open it up for all of you. What is Kamela doing today?

Ms. Lemmon: She is a very successful entrepreneur. The book opens in the introduction with me learning about this business she's just started. At that point, she only had the laptop courtesy of Mercy Corps and herself as an employee. Right now, she has just won a very large government contract to teach entrepreneurship all around the country. She now goes even in places like Kapisa and Kunduz and Kandahar, which are tough security wise. She and the women and men who work for her go all around the country and they teach entrepreneurship, because she clearly continues to believe that this is the only way Afghanistan can stand on its own long after the foreigners leave their country. She is very passionate about that.

Question: I'm just curious as to—in writing this book, what are your plans? Are you going to broaden your storytelling, kind of look to other places? Because it seems that this is a story around the world: if you go and you visit countries in Africa, it's the women that are really running the show there. It is a bit more interesting with microfinance, women's work in banking—have you looked at trends? What are your plans for the future?

Ms. Lemmon: I hope to go to Liberia next. There are a bunch of stories there that I've sort of been sussing out over the last couple of years. I really hope that this story does more than to focus on Afghanistan; I really hope it helps to change the conversation about women—and it's a very small goal, I know, for one book [laughter] I do think that it's storytelling that changes the world because it gives people someone to relate to. And I think the problem with Afghanistan coverage, the real challenge, is that it is shaped right now by bombings and explosions and kidnappings, and those are very real. I talk a little about it in the introduction because my editors pushed me to it and I think it does help people understand what it's like. It's very hard even to report on stories like this because security is so tough that not only are you facing the risk, which is secondary, but the people who are talking to you are facing risk.

We were trying to ask them about the Taliban years, during which kidnappings and bombings were rampant—particularly during the years in which I was writing this book, and also the Taliban is resurgent. One young woman said to me, "I am going to talk to you because I think it's really important that the outside world knows how much work women did." And this young woman had actually taught Microsoft Office in a hospital in Afghanistan because hospitals were one of the few safe spaces women still had during the Taliban years. There were always threats of cracking down, but the Taliban didn't live there permanently. The women were doctors—in fact, Dr. Maryam is one of the main characters in the book. Women were doctors throughout the Taliban years, women ran NGOs, women taught schools, this young woman taught Microsoft Office. She said, "If my husband finds out I talked to you, he'll divorce me," and she cried during the interview. Honestly, it was hard as a reporter to sometimes step back and be distanced from the stories that you were hearing all day, but I think that's what is pushing me to go on to other countries and to hope that more stories are being told, and women like you will go out in your work every day talk about these kinds of stories as well. I mean, it's the multiplier of telling stories that reach people and that change the way people think about issues that they may think they know about, but they don't necessarily have the full story.

Question: Hi, Judith O'Neill, Lakota LLC. First of all, thank you so much for that. It is a fundamental issue of what you said—it struck me that your story and your book is the third leg of a global stool of women basically saving the future of their families and of their country. You mentioned Liberia, have you considered doing a documentary? If you have, talk to Abigail on the Liberia situation and also if you have not thought about it, you might want to think about talking to The Hunger Project and those

should be the other two legs of the stool. In Liberia for example, there was not prohibition on women going out and doing anything, there was simply lack of education and constant war and the women were belittled over there for sure. All that is so well told in the documentary, which got huge distribution, and won the Tribeca Film Festival [Inaudible].

Ms. Lemmon: It is a terrific film *Pray the Devil Back to Hell*, we actually did it with Greg Mortensen from *Three Cups of Tea*, he did an Amazon Q&A with us. So I did a Q&A with him and we actually mentioned *Pray the Devil* as somebody's work I respect enormously. It's the same thing: more storytelling and connecting it to women on the ground makes the difference. I think that that's really important.

I want to, if I might, pick up on the microfinance piece. I think that microfinance is very important, but I specifically do not write about it because I think we aim low when it comes to women. I think microfinance is an incredibly powerful subsistence and poverty alleviation tool that can lead people from entrepreneurship in the micro level to small, medium and growing. But why is it the case when we think about women, we immediately think about the micro? I think we have to change that because what creates jobs and long-term economic growth and long-term prosperity for a country is the microbusiness that grows into the small, medium, and growing enterprise. I think that microfinance has been great and it's very sexy and it's wonderful and very acceptable, but we have to focus on getting the support to women entrepreneurs who are in the small and medium who exist in all these countries.

I did a piece in Bosnia once, and this IMF guy actually told me, "We have women selling cheese on the street on the side of the road but we don't have any small and medium sized entrepreneurs." So I met this woman—at that point there were 25 women working for her in the front lines of Sarajevo. She had a quilting, sheets, and linens business which was creating all these jobs and from which all the women that worked for her were sending their children, boys and girls, to school. This piece covered her and the woman who ran the advertising agency and one other woman entrepreneur. I sent it when I did the cover for the *International Herald Tribune* Weekend Business and I said, "Just in case you are looking for women who are doing more than selling cheese. [Laughter.] Here are a couple of people that you could go to the next time you are having a conference for economic investment in Bosnia and Herzegovina." I think microfinance—not to say anything at all against it—but I do think we have to push folks on that. It gets women into thinking about this business solution.

Question: What has your leadership taught you about economic development?

Ms. Lemmon: I wrote a piece about a year ago on sales and women's projects, which earned me the enmity of the people who I had been writing about, but it wasn't aimed at the people who were doing it because it was over and over the same thing. It was exactly your point—there were all these people running trainings for women, and almost no one was asking, "Do the women have jobs afterwards, do their husbands have jobs afterwards, can they earn more money?" And when you spend time with women, especially in very tough parts of the world, it is the money that makes the difference. Sometimes the aid community apologizes for teaching people how to earn a living and business is sort of seen as dirty from a lot of the aid workers that I have interviewed. And that might be so for you because you have the luxury of it, but when eleven people in your family are counting on you, there's no sort of luxury of not wanting to taint yourself with earning a living.

So I wrote a second piece—I did a piece that was sort of a complement to that, which was about the multiplier effect of women entrepreneurs—some of whom were alums from Bpeace, a group that's here in New York, some of whom were 10,000 Women from Goldman Sachs alumni, some of whom were Thunderbird alumni, who had gone through business training and who were now inspiring their husbands and their children to go into business. And the husbands actually said during the interviews that, "I would never have known how to go into business if it weren't for my wife." And in a country like Afghanistan, it's not only these types of people from Logar Province—which for those of you who have spent time in Afghanistan, is a very conservative, Taliban-heavy province—and so that is where I think you see the difference being made.

Not everyone is an entrepreneur, but those types of women who can be successful have then become role models. Women like Kamela, who now can go all over the country, because they've never left their country. Through years of war, they understand how people speak and think. There's a scene in the book where actually she's talking to one of the shopkeepers and Vice and Virtue sweep in and say, "What in the world are you doing? You're a bad Muslim, how in the world can you be talking to this man? He is, you know, you're a stranger, I'm going to take you both to jail." She said, "My brother, this is my cousin. We are both here trying to talk about the work we are doing for our family. Your work is so important, I have so much respect for the work you are doing, and you have so many more important things to do than to crack down on my cousin and me who are really here just helping to work for our families." And so he does—eventually she wears him down and he goes on to crack down on whoever is going to be his next victim. But I think that that gets to what these young women have taken from even the Taliban period and are using now to become really homegrown role models. So I think that is what I have seen: there have to be market connections and there have to be homegrown role models, who tie it all together and make it look less foreign. And I think that's what these young women do.

Question: [Inaudible] Focusing not only on what the women are doing, but also the role of the men. [Inaudible] explaining to them that not only men, but also women, have to participate...

Ms. Lemmon: You see in the book there's Kamela's father and her brothers who are incredibly supportive. I think that none of this could have happened without them. Her father said in the very beginning, "I am leaving you in charge because I know that you can do it and I know that you can provide and do whatever needs to be done for our family." What he said to me recently when I was talking to him about it was, I said, "Did you ever worry your 19-year-old daughter would have no idea how to support them?" He said, "No, I didn't, because she was educated. She had fought to go to school, even during the civil war when rockets were falling throughout the sky from 1992 to 1996." So many people had kept their girls at home, and she fought her sisters who wanted her to stay home. I said, "You have nine girls and two boys, and every single one of those girls is educated." He said, "I look on all my children with one eye and it's the duty of every one of them to provide for their community." He is possibly the biggest advocate of girls' education I ever met anywhere in the world.

The final thing which probably is the most moving is I never met the oldest of Kamela's two brothers, who had gone to Iran and Pakistan during the time of the Taliban with her father when all the men left. She said, "My brother really wants to meet you." I was terrified because I thought this is definitely going to be him putting an end to this project. I've spent two and a half years of my life trying to put this story to life. I know that there will be an audience for it if I can bring it to them. He's going to be rightfully nervous about me talking about the story and talking about his family outside of Afghanistan. So I prepared every argument lined up in my head that I was going to give him. My colleague and I sat at this hotel in Kabul watching sad Bollywood videos in a corner waiting for him to get there. He was an hour and a half late. He showed up during the Afghan presidential elections and the traffic was a nightmare, roads blocked throughout because of security issues. He shows up and sits down. I was so afraid. I was dressed as conservative as I could possibly be, trying to be very serious. He says, "I only came here because I wanted to thank you, because my sister was so brave and she took care of our family in a time when we didn't have anyone else. And I'd always hope that a foreigner would come and tell her story on behalf of her and our family."

I think that that was the most moving moment, at a time where I had almost forgotten about why this story was so important, I was so beaten up by how difficult it had been both security-wise and logistically to get this story to my editor. I was so embattled in thinking about what has to be done tomorrow and the next day rather than the mission. It was he who reminded me. It was the only time I really cried in Afghanistan because I guess it was so much of a wrap up of everything that matters in that country and the greatness and resilience that people in these parts of the world face—the challenges that they face every day, not just for themselves but for their daughters. We often get so consumed by the story of the man who won't let his girls go to school that we forget about all the

champions we should be talking about, the ones who make it possible for these young women to become the heroines that they are when the world has forgotten them.

Question: [Inaudible] I really enjoyed the book, and how it took on a different angle. How have people reacted to it being about women?

Ms. Lemmon: Thank you. All of you are the champions who will make this book a success. We were lucky that the people have picked it up—that means so much to me—because that is the audience of these stories that don't usually reach. So it's why we work so hard to get to those places. We've been fighting for this because I think people are ready for a non-victim story when it comes to women. This is a homegrown—I cannot tell you how many people told me that no one would care about this story or that there was no real market for women. Women may buy books, but they are tired of Afghanistan. I said, "Look it may be Afghanistan, but it's just a backdrop for a story that everyone can relate to. The other thing that people always say is the thing they never say about men, I hate to say this, but you always write about the exceptions. I had at least five European and American journalists, including women, say this to me. I said, "Before you think your own country is so fancy, the first group of women to graduate from West Point was in 1980, women who were in the Foreign Service in the 1970s had to quit after they got married. So before you think you're so progressive and have been living in this advanced age for so long, you might want to look at your own history." Second of all these girls are just as Afghan as the girls in Kandahar who will never be able to leave their compound. They never left their country during the Russian years. They never left their country during the civil war. They were there throughout the Taliban, which most of the people that you write about every day were not. They know how to speak to the people in their country. Third of all, you show me any society, anywhere around the world that is not changed by exception, by homegrown exception. I will show you a society that I haven't met. So before everyone says that this is an exceptional story, it is true that these girls don't think they did anything extraordinary at all. They really don't take credit for it. They don't think they did anything unusual. But that doesn't mean that we don't have to think that.

Question: I work with a non-profit dealing with orphans in Africa; our concept was to help these kids in these third world areas. Our first priority was to figure out what they need. But the most interesting thing was after essentially figuring out how to get food, the two things that they are most interested in are emotional support and to help others. It is so universal. It is truly amazing and there are a lot of people changed by this and they are not exceptions.

Ms. Lemmon: We actually taught this book at Harvard Business School last November. I was nervous about how they were going to react. The men were just as excited as the women. The men didn't want to talk about the women's piece because they thought that was secondary to the business piece. [Laughter.] But they were really excited to talk about it. It was a really interesting business question and you don't often grapple with a female protagonist, a Harvard Business School case study, or entrepreneurship in very difficult parts of the world. The reactions—the students put it as one of the highest ranked cases they had all semester. I think that goes to your point that a lot of these students were from emergent market countries and could completely relate to the entrepreneurship.

Ms. Kahnhauser: Can you talk a little more about how you are trying to reach out to male audiences as well?

Ms. Lemmon: It was funny on Diane Rehm, almost all the callers were men. So we have done a lot of business press. I spent this morning talking to Inc.com. I did an interview with Maria Bartiromo, which is supposed to air this weekend or the following on CNBC. I did Bloomberg radio. Harvard Business School has actually been a huge backer, which is obviously not predominantly female. [Laughter.] So I think that—Goldman will actually be hosting an event, I think that will obviously be the focus from within Goldman Sachs. We are really trying to get out to business. Thestreet.com, a website, gave it an amazingly glowing review about the entrepreneurship angle. I hope through focusing on that that we

reach audiences that wouldn't necessarily pick up an Afghanistan book, or a women's book—which it's not.

Question: I'm Tressa Finerty from the US mission to the UN. Thank you very much for painting a very clean story. How do you think we can increase attention to women's involvement in politics and foreign policy?

Ms. Lemmon: I am delighted to be a resource. I just finished writing the Hillary cover story in *Newsweek* about that—the role of women in foreign policy. The baby came—I just had a baby—the baby came Monday and the Hillary piece was due on Friday. [Laughter.] It has been an insane set of weeks. And then the book came out the following week. In the Quadrennial, I bring that up because the piece is really about the role of women in foreign policy and Secretary Clinton's push. The process in which she is trying to focus her mission, but I think it's hard to put the people and the process together. The new QDDR—her strategy document the State is now using as a strategy blueprint for the next four years based on this Quadrennial Defense Review, which mentions women and girls 133 times. But the question is do how you make that connect to women worldwide, which is a challenge.

Question: What role did religion play throughout your interviews with Karmela and her family?

Ms. Lemmon: States play a huge role for these girls and the work that they get. I did not get into any religious discussion in this book. For me it is totally irrelevant what their faith was. It was just a guidepost for them into a way that they saw their role in their community. They really believe it was their faith that gave them substance to take on the fear of leaving their house every day. And also it was their faith that taught them that they had a responsibility that was more than just themselves. I think that's something that probably every one can relate to.

Question: How does your Fulbright play into the story?

Ms. Lemmon: It was great. The Fulbright was one of the first surges in my own connection to the story. My mom was a single mom who worked two jobs to make sure that I had every opportunity that I could. I think that's part of why I feel so strongly about bringing a story like this to readers. The Fulbright was one of the first opportunities I had. I had been told by other people that only people from x school will get a Fulbright or only people from x background get a Fulbright. I figured I'll just go for it anyway. Being in that world, it just taught me that it wasn't such a big deal. I went to Spain in 1999 on a three month journalism Fulbright, so you can imagine how hard I had worked. [Laughter.] Spain was wonderful. It was for me sort of—it taught me how much was possible. You didn't have to be from x background to have an impact in those kinds of circles. It demystified the whole thing for me. I think it made me go on the Bosch Fellowship to Germany two years later and to have the guts to apply to go to business school, and not think anything about doing any of this work. You realize that it's not really that big of a deal if you work hard enough. I usually tell young people who ask me about it that it is that much work, it is supposed to be that hard. If it is not then everyone else would do it. So suck it up and keep working. That's how I got my Fulbright.

Ms. Kahnhauser: So what's next?

Ms. Lemmon: I'm not thinking very far. [Laughter.] I have a three-week-old baby, so I have to figure out what to do with him first. He's really wonderful, he really is. And a husband who has been very supportive, I have to give it to him. Speaking of men, my husband has been on this book tour and let us rearranges our whole life—we live in LA and had the baby on the East Coast so we can start the book tour. He went to the Bank of New York so we could talk to 200 women six days after the baby came. He is really the ultimate champion for women. I think it was really worth getting this book out in a way that I feel proud of. It's not at all about me. It is about the responsibility you have to people who I think live with grace and dignity under trying circumstances, and on their behalf to do justice to their story. I talk to Kamela all of the time, and they are really thrilled to see that people are connecting in the US and paying attention to it. That's really what I

am thinking about first. And then from there I am hoping to go to Liberia and start work on the next story, and probably go back to Afghanistan to do some work for the Council on Foreign Relations about connecting entrepreneurs into markets. I feel very passionately that without the market connection this does more to actually benefit people delivering aid and not the people on the ground who receive it, speaking up to the extent that I can on their behalf.

Thank you so much for having me! [Applause.]