

## 10th Annual Invited Lecture: Khalida Brohi

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**SUSAN POCH:** Good evening. Good evening, happy to have you here this evening. Welcome to all of you. So glad you were able to be here. My name is Susan Poch, and I am Assistant Vice Provost for the Undergraduate Education. And welcome very much to the 10th Annual Common Reading Invited Lecture at Washington State University.

I'm also the co-director of the Common Reading Program. And my fellow co-director, Karen Weathermon, and I are very pleased to have you at our event tonight. The Common Reading Program is a part of the First-Year Programs of Washington State University's Undergraduate Education.

I'd like to begin tonight by recognizing some very special guests with us with us this evening, our First-Year Focus faculty, many of whom used the Common Reading book, *I Am Malala* in their classes, who hold office hours in their residence halls associated with their classes, who have informal discussions in the dining halls, thanks to the Parents Program grant. I'd also like to recognize the residence life REDs, for Residential Educational Directors, and residential advisors, who actually help the faculty develop the First-Year Focus Common Reading events in the residence halls. I'd like to recognize the faculty and guest experts who make special presentations all throughout the year on book-related topics to Common Reading student audiences and others. And I would like to recognize the members of the Common Reading Selection Committee, who spend many, many volunteer hours evaluating books that were nominated to be common readings.

And especially, our generous partner the Global Campus, who has sent a staff member here this evening to do a live broadcast of this evening's lecture to his students and others. If you're someone that is affiliated with any or all of these groups, would you stand and be recognized?

[APPLAUSE]

**SUSAN POCH:** Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]

**SUSAN POCH:** Thank you. Really, without your efforts, all that I have just mentioned, and without your dedication to students and their passion for their education, the Common Reading Program could not have been the success that it is for the past 10 years. There are two final guests that

I would like to welcome to this evening's lecture. Doctors Kate McAteer and Asif Chaudhry, would you please stand?

[APPLAUSE]

**SUSAN POCH:** Thank you. Dr. McAteer is the leader of the WSU Tri-Cities Common Reading Program and is the Clinical Assistant Professor for Biological Sciences there. And Dr. McAteer drove to Pullman from the Tri-Cities to personally escort this evening's guest speaker back to her campus, where she will meet with students, faculty, and staff, and deliver this Common Reading lecture to their staff and faculty and students tomorrow. That campus, along with the Spokane campus, the Global Campus, and the North Puget Sound Everett campus are also using the *I Am Malala* book as their Common Reading.

And Dr. Chaudhry is a WSU alumnus, having earned his PhD in agricultural economics here, following a extensive career in foreign service, which included four years of service as US Ambassador to Moldova. Dr. Asif Chaudhry currently serves as the WSU Vice President for International Programs and is our Chief International Relations Officer.

As is pretty evident, it takes many, many people to make a program like the Common Reading a success. And it is particularly with thanks to Dr. Chaudhry that we are able to connect with Khalida this evening and make arrangements for her to be here. So thank you very much.

And so you may wonder, why does WSU even have a Common Reading Program? Well, it began many moons ago in 2007 as a way to create a shared, or common, academic dialogue among students with their professors and throughout the university and beyond. The Common Reading Program inspires literally thousands of first year and other students to think critically and in new ways, and to communicate better as they encounter and explore traditionally held ideas. That's why we use the slogan, "make the connections."

Making all sorts of connections is exactly what our students are learning to do through the common reading. Over the years, the program has proven to have a positive and community building effect. For example, we have discerned that because of the Common Reading Program, students are able to experience diverse perspectives on complex issues that are often global in nature. Faculty are inspired to link the book topics to their own and others' groundbreaking research. More than 3,000 students every year have attended Common Reading Guest Lectures delivered by professors as well as other experts.

And increasingly, numbers of different programs across the university collaborate with the Common Reading Program annually to extend its reach to include many, many more academic, cultural, film, and performance venues. The Common Reading Program thanks all of you for participating in and adding so much to this program.

And now, a few housekeeping details. At the end of this evening's guest lecture, there are two things that you should know about. The first, following the lecture there will be a brief question and answer session. We have two microphones placed in locations here in the audience for those of you that would like to come up to the microphone and ask a question.

And our guests viewing the lecture remotely, thanks to the Global Campus technology, have logged onto YouTube using a Gmail account. And they will see a chat box while watching the live stream on YouTube, and can use that chat box to post a question. Alternatively, they can also visit the @WSUglobal Twitter page and tweet a question about the event.

The second important detail that you need to know is that following the Q&A there will be a special announcement for students who would like to have proof of attendance at tonight's event. If you're one of those students, be sure to listen carefully for the announcement at the end of the program. It is now my distinct pleasure to welcome to the lectern Dr. Kirk Schulz, the president of Washington State University.

[APPLAUSE]

**KIRK SCHULZ:** Good evening, it's great to see such a large crowd here tonight. And I think you're in for a real treat. Several people I'd like to start off by thanking for making all this happen tonight, the first, Susan Poch, a Co-director of the Common Reading Program-- please stand as I call your name-- Karen Weathermon, Co-director of the Common Reading Program, Mary Wack, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, and efforts of the entire Office of Undergraduate Education for stewarding programs like the Common Reading Program for the transformational student experience our students receive. So thank you very much. Please give me a round of applause.

[APPLAUSE]

**KIRK SCHULZ:** This is the 10th year for this reading program at Washington State. And I think each year people work hard to find the right book that really fits the theme and things that we're trying to

do at Washington State. I found myself, as I was reading the book, I was reading it on a couple flights I was taking. And I kept thinking, well I'll read just a little more, and just a little more.

And before I knew it, three or four hours later, I was near the end of the book and looking through the pictures. And what a moving story. And it's one of those types of things, and I read a lot, that grips you and keeps you going. And it was interesting to hear the perspectives of a young woman in Pakistan who is really setting out to do some really unique things.

So it's not just the book though and what's in the book. I hope that this will cause you to ask yourself some questions. And it causes you to want to experience some additional things. So hopefully, maybe you'll go out and decide, hey, I want to learn more about this country. I want to learn more about the culture. Maybe you think it'd be great for me to go outside the United States during my time as a student at Washington State, do study abroad.

Maybe you want to go and learn more about some of the social change that's occurring for women and under-represented minorities in different places in the world. It makes no difference, necessarily, what those things are. But hopefully, it causes you to want to extend yourself out and do something a little different.

So I think it's an exciting opportunity tonight. And I think you're going to really enjoy our speaker. It's really a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to introduce tonight's speaker, Khalida Brohi. We had dinner together just across the way, and we really had an interesting discussion about Pakistan, the culture, the different types of things that Khalida is trying to do.

*I Am Malala*, the girl who stood up for education and was shot by the Taliban was one of 27 books that were nominated for the Common Reading Program. Erica Austin who served as Interim Provost of that time made the final selection after things were narrowed down. And the topics in the book align closely with our two year theme of social justice and leadership.

Ms. Brohi is a social entrepreneur from Pakistan whose life and accomplishments parallel those of the author of *I Am Malala*. As a champion for women's rights and education, and as a voice against honor killings of Pakistani women, Ms. Brohi has been threatened with violence by her own countrymen. Like Malala, Ms. Brohi made her own opportunities to help others.

She founded and directs the Sughar Empowerment Society, a nonprofit organization that supports rural and tribal Pakistani women. By offering classes and employment, Sughar helps them to improve their quality of life by women socioeconomically, emotionally, and

intellectually. Ms. Brohi recently also helped create The Sughar Foundation.

She is the Chief Visionary Officer. That is an awesome sounding title, I must say. Chief Visionary Officer, so much better than president. So Ms. Brohi has drawn much international acclaim, has received many awards. As examples, in 2014, *Forbes* magazine named her 30 under 30 top young world leader in the social entrepreneurship category. That category honors those who leverage business tools to improve the world.

The topic tonight of Ms. Brohi's remarks is "The Solution is Education, Not Legislation." Folks, please join me in giving a big cougar welcome to our speaker tonight, Ms. Khalida Brohi.

[APPLAUSE]

**KHALIDA BROHI:** I think I'm going to-- Hello. Is this working? OK. OK, thank you so much. That was a very beautiful introduction. Thank you, and I'm very humbled. Those posters are very intimidating. But it's an honor being here. Oh, my god, look at all these people. Thank you so much for being here and taking the time.

I'm going to talk a little bit about my story and what we've done at Sughar. But I really want to know your perspective and your questions. So please feel free to ask me any questions after my talk.

And the other main thing is, I won't give a lecture, because I haven't really experienced lectures in my life. And so I'm just going to talk, and see how it goes.

I come from a very small village in a place called Moola in Baluchistan. It's on top of the mountains where tribal communities live. And some of my uncles are tribal leaders. In those times, when my father was little, he was actually a shepherd. And his brothers would help his father on small farms where they would do agriculture for some landlords. And so they were busy doing that.

But in those times, something happened in his life that was very drastic. The lights here are a little extreme. The lights everywhere are extreme. That's OK. I'm very used to looking at faces of people. But am I glittering all over the place?

But in those times, something really drastic happened. And that could have changed his life, could have changed everybody's life. But it was something that was quite common in some of

those villages. My father's oldest brother killed his wife in suspicion that she was having relationships outside of the marriage, so in the name of honor.

And all of that poverty was going on. They didn't have anything at the house to eat. In that time, the brother was like, OK, I'm going to marry again. And he convinced my grandfather that me, my father's daughter, should be given in exchange to another tribe to bring him a second wife.

Things were looking really bleak, because first, poverty. Women were really scared in that house because of the incident that happened. And my father was only four years old, and he had grown up to be 13 by that time. And so many things were happening.

But sometimes when I think about that incident, that murder and how they discovered it, my mother, who was a newlywed bride in that house, and she saw the dead body, I think of that day. And I think of today. What changed it? What were the circumstances that brought that whole structure to a very different place, gave it a different face, actually?

And one thing happened, one very, very important thing that actually did change the entire family, and my future, and my sister's future, and the future of women in Pakistan-- education. And my dad actually had to kill some sheep for it. The story's really interesting. I recently found out what my dad did.

Nobody in that tribe actually went to school. None of his brothers had gone to school. They were wage laborers. That's how they've lived.

And you might all know why population in these countries is higher, because people are waiting, especially in tribal areas, people are waiting for a son, another son. So they keep having kids. Because in four years of their age, they actually bring income to them.

My father would take the sheep from the areas from the neighborhood, and he would go to the fields just like singing and talking to his friend. He was very little, no shoes, and he would think about all these things. He was a very thoughtful young boy.

And he would think about how the rain sounded when it fall on the Earth. He would think about how the wind just came and passed through the leaves. And he could actually hear the leaves talking. He would think about these really small, childish things. But they were thoughts, and they were important to him.

And so one time, a really beautiful day, he brought all the sheep. In those times of poverty, he put them in a place where they were busy eating. And he started thinking about how the sky was looking too blue that day. And in his thoughts, the day kept passing.

And one time when he actually came back to the earth, he is like, oh, my god. It's actually about to be evening. So he looked at the sheep, and took his stick, and started herding them. The sheep wouldn't move.

And then he found out, in just a few days, nobody could save the sheep. They had overfed. And they were bloated. And this was devastating because a son, in the family, has really brought dishonor to the family by doing something like that. He was a good-for-nothing, no earning. There was no ability to earn.

So his father, as a punishment, sent him to a school. And this became the first ever time that anyone in that whole family went to a school. And that changed my life, that changed my mother's life, and everyone's life.

When my father, the day he went to school, his sister actually washed his feet because they were falling apart. He was a four-year-old boy, walking all this way, taking the sheep. But he went to the school, and he discovered that there was something new there. There was something that they had never talked about. And so as he grew, he would come back to the day when his brother demanded to ask for me to be exchanged to bring him a wife.

And that day, my father was in about eighth grade or something. And he said no. He became the first person, first son, who actually said no to an elder brother and his father. He said no, and he left with my mom from there.

And that is how we started living in a separate place, in a small community. Then we moved to a town, a slum area, and then to a big city where we got our education. It's very interesting how, in the whole context, if that day never happened, that day when he actually went to the school for the first time, if he kept being part of a cycle of life that was formed for them, nothing would have changed for us. But education changed everything for them.

And afterwards when we would go to school, I would learn how to read. I couldn't believe these stories. I mean *Rapunzel*, that's awesome, the hair, someone climbing up the hair. I had to tell these stories in the villages.

So I would take the books and read every sentence, and translate it in Brahui and tell

everybody. Then I would go to my Sindhi friends, and I would translate everything in Sindhi to them. These were different tribes where we were living in. But I had to tell everybody what I was experiencing. And being the first girl in the tribe to be educated like that was also making me guilty in many ways. But I was still getting something that was going to change the entire community.

And then at 16, when I witnessed that honor killings, that was actually really traumatizing for me. It changed everything. I was very, very angry. I remembered the days when I would see my youngest friends married off.

I was 9 years old. We would be dancing at someone's wedding. And I had no idea why we were dancing, and turns out, my friend was getting married to a really older man. And people were just celebrating.

And these things kept happening, where I would think about them, but I never really understood the difference of what was right and what was wrong. But that day when that murder happened, everything changed. And so we started doing a campaign called Wake Up Campaign Against Honor Killings. I don't know how many of you know about my story, but this was my way of handling an issue like this.

Every time young people at that age, whenever they find an issue, they think it's beyond them. It's bigger than them. So they're going to have to let other people handle it. And for me, that other people was the policymakers. We had to get them to put their attention on it. So we launched that campaign.

We brought a lot of people from all around the world to join us into shaming the government into creating policies that would actually protect the women. But amazingly, fortunately, my being from a tribal community, something happened that very quickly showed me how much we failed in our decision. In two years and a half when I was in the villages, I witnessed something. One of my friends had a scar on her face. And I was like, what happened? What is that?

And she's like, my husband beat me with a broom. And I asked, but all these things we're doing for you guys, there is no effect or something? And that is when I realized that whatever we do at the policy level does not really touch their lives so much. It's very far away from them.

But by the time I discovered that, the whole tribe had turned against me. And they tried to get



me out of that village. And so I was taken from there back to Karachi. I was locked into a room where my father was like, now you really have to go back to your education. And I was in ninth grade that time. And I was like, fine. I will now decide about my education.

But the whole idea of feeling is very, very dramatic for a teenager. Being 19, feeling like that, people against you, I really had to find out what was going on. Just once, if I knew what happened that made the campaign fail, it would be all fine.

So I started thinking about everything. Like everyone else, I started blaming me and my team and what we did. And eventually, we realized it was actually our fault. We were really accusing so many cultural beliefs that were very important to many people. We were naming people who were murdering their daughters. We were really out there speaking against customs and beautiful things.

And so the other thing that was happening in the meantime was that the women who we were fighting for, we were not really involving them. That day when I asked my friend what happened to her, I never asked her, do you want to be a part of this thing I'm doing for you guys? Do you want to be a part of the activism? And that is when reality hit me.

In six months, we realized that the only way to bring solution in communities like that is to go back, work with the local people. And the only way is to work with the tribal leaders, and through them, work with the women. And so we started launching the center called The Sughar Center, and we would train these women how to make embroidery, and also teach them about their rights and what Islam says about their rights.

But many times when I talk about that part of my work, I actually forget talking about what we did for men to understand. Because you can never teach one gender and leave the other gender behind. You have to create that balance. And in societies like that, no matter how free the woman is, until and unless her brother and father are at the same page, things don't change.

So we started doing two activities which were very, very interesting. This is actually my favorite part. We tried so many things. These two worked. One, the most important one, was cricket matches. We did some tournaments where we would bring all these really famous teams from different villages, and we would host this grand tournament. We would have all these-- what do you call them-- winning cups and banners and everything.

Make it really fancy. Text everyone that the event is happening. And finally, on the day of the play, everybody would come. You would see all these men in long beards, like really angry looking men. And men leaving their work and wage labor, everything to see the game and tell who's going to win, because these local teams were very famous in those villages.

And so the day that game was happening, my team members would go and do the commentary on it. They were pro. They had already had experiences. And I have to say, that was one of my cousin's. So I felt really safe having him in that whole process. It was really hard getting him into that, but it really worked.

The first time he started we were all sitting there, everybody on the ground. The match is starting. In between the match, there is a moment in cricket tournaments-- I don't know how many people over here know about cricket-- there's a part where you don't know what's going to happen next. You really want to know, like, oh, my god, who's going to win? I think this is going to win. And so in the commentary, the guy was like, "that was a 4. And that's a 6. And now batting person is going for this and that. And so he would say all these things. And suddenly, there's silence. And he would be like, now, let's talk about women in Islam.

And that is the moment when I was like, all right, let's run. It actually worked. Nobody moved. People were like, who's going to win? And all these men were actually receiving messages that were extremely important to talk about. And they were never talked about by men. And then once again, the commentary would come back, just to make the environment a little normal.

And then we found out the next day these men are meeting in a market. There is a culture of bringing everyone for tea. Please, come and have tea, if they see someone. And in the process of having chai, sipping on tea, they're like did you hear that little message? And talking about Islam is a big thing. So it's a noble thing they're talking about Islam.

But they're talking about women in Islam, which is taboo. But they're actually breaking that taboo. Slowly, men are talking about their wives, their daughters, which was a discussion never to bring in a market. And this is how we break taboos, and that is how the slow process of discussion towards women's rights started.

The other activity that-- and once again, education very important-- the other very important thing that helped us was after many experiments. We almost did get attacked at some point. But this was a lot of fun.

We started doing monthly meetings. We used to only have women sit in those monthly meetings. And we would ask them how their training was going. How was the center? Did they need anything? What did they learn? They would show in those interactive dramas they would do.

But we started doing monthly meetings of both men and women. We would have men sit in one corner and women sit in one corner. Women would all face towards the other side because they didn't want to see someone else's husband. It's against their culture. But whatever, they were all at a place where they could hear each other.

And that is when, after all the events, someone would read a poem, whatever they were learning in the training. After all of that, we would be like, so-- the first time was interesting. We were like, so is there anyone of you men who has done something really nice for their wife or daughter or mother? Just want to know. Silence.

It was really embarrassing. We were like, come on, there must be someone, something really nice. And then we started giving them examples, like taking them shopping or something. Or you bought them a new dress.

And slowly, this guy stood up, really thin man. He probably was working in agriculture. His shirt had green stains on it. And he stood, and he was super shy. These men blushed too. They're really shy.

And he's like, well, my wife got sick. And I took her to the hospital. And we were like, that is amazing.

Clap for him. Make him the hero. We clapped so hard. We've never clapped so much.

And it became the biggest deal ever. He was the hero of the town. The next month we did the meeting, men actually did things for their wives so they can talk about it. [LAUGHING] My heart just melted.

That's how education helps. It's extremely slow. We had to wait another month to see very slight changes. It can be very frustrating, but it helps.

On the other hand, when all these politicians are trying to say, OK, let's bring policies. Let's invest whatever we have in doing the biggest meals we could do for all the policy makers,

have them seated in an air-conditioned room. Let's discuss the Constitution. And let's discuss further a little more next month. And after six months of discussion, let's maybe bring a bill that might get passed.

And those expenses, if they're only taken back to these women and children in those communities, would change everybody's lives. It was really interesting how these dynamics work. So recently, I'm sure many of you know about how honor killings work. Do you all know what honor killings are?

Please raise your hands. Oh, OK, so not many people. So honor killings is a cultural thing. Many people think it's a religious thing where you're actually told by the religious leaders to kill your wife or something. But it's a cultural belief where a woman who is suspected of having relationships before or outside of her marriage is murdered by her brother, or father, or uncle.

And often, the other men who are suspected of being in the relationship is also murdered. But usually it's the women, because it brings them business. They actually ask for money from the man who was spared his life.

And honor killings have been existing from a long, long, many, many centuries ago. It has changed its face. And it has become more businesslike, more political now. But it was very different.

And it's not everywhere. It's in very few districts which are marked by UN. And even I have seen the cases happen in those communities. But it's not everywhere. The culture does not really allow going around and killing your own daughters and mothers. And Islam never, ever allows.

So when we decided to use Islam to tell everybody what they were actually missing, it was really interesting for a lot of mullahs. Many people asked me how did we even come to a place where we thought the tribal leaders would listen to us, or the religious leaders listened to us. The main thing about all of that is we used one strategy, where all the men would already have gathered for something, and they would have to listen.

Of course, the cricket match, or the other time is Friday prayers. We attacked a lot of Friday prayers, and we told our message to everybody in those times. And we found out many religious leaders did not disagree, because we actually were bringing evidence what the Holy Quran really says about women's rights, and how Muhammad, peace be upon him, would

treat his wife, and all of these stories. And so things kept changing

I want to talk about a small story before I move further. In 2012, a very difficult year for us, that is when a lot of things happened. I don't want to mention them. But one of my team members who was actually an honor killing victim-- she had gun on her head-- but she was actually rescued by her husband. And her husband decided not to keep her in the house, because she was a dishonorable woman.

So she was thrown out of her house. She went to her parents' house, where they threw her out of that house as well because she was dishonorable. But then later when she was on the street crying for so long, her mother took her in. But they locked her in the room.

We had given out calls for applications to hire a person in the management role in the organization. And one of the shortlisted was her sister. And in Pakistan, many things happen.

So on the day of the third interview where we were going to make our final decisions, instead of her sister, she showed up. There's this really skinny girl who is actually trembling. Her hands were always trembling.

And I was like, I think we actually shortlisted your sister. And she's like, please interview me instead. She's exactly like me. If you like me, you're going to like her. And I'm like, this is amazing. I'm like, OK, just to not be rude. But we already knew the decision. We couldn't do that.

So 31st interview, we sat down over there. Before even the question finished from my mouth, she would answer it. Everything was so genuine and so passionate. I was like, who is this woman?

And so that same day, she was hired. We had the person. She said OK, I'll send my sister tomorrow. And I was like no, no, it's you who's hired. So please come back tomorrow.

And so her mother had finally let her go. And so the next day, every time we hire someone, we spend the whole day with them informally. Take them shopping, or take them to a garden, or to the sea view, or do something that is less informal so they can start coming to a place where we fight honor killings, which is very intense.

So we were just talking. I was telling her my story. She was telling me her story. And then she was like, what compelled you to do this? And then I was like, should I tell her? And then I told

her about my friend who was murdered. I told her the details and stuff.

Before I was continuing the story, she started crying up and down. She was on the floor crying loudly. And I picked her up, and I hugged her. And I'm like, are you OK? What's going on?

She's like I have escaped an honor killing. And this is what happened. She told me the whole story. And the day when her sister couldn't come-- because of the salary, their family really needed. Her mother had opened the door to her room, and was like, OK, you go for her interview and make sure she gets the job. And she got the job.

Amazing, she became part of the organization. She took over everything. She was on TV, on radio. She was brilliant. She was receiving awards with me. It was just amazing.

Until after one year and a half, one year and eight months or something like that, her husband showed up. And he wanted her back. He really wanted that woman who he had seen on TV just back because she was his wife.

And I'm like, I'm getting you divorced. Nobody has done this ever before. But you are really getting rid of him because no one knows what he's going to do to you.

She's like, just trust me. I've taken something from here that I don't think if I could have ever taken. So she left.

That year became the most hardest year because I couldn't do anything in that context. And after five months, she came back. And I had become this stone-like person who was not really laughing. There were other things that happened as well that would be talked about in future when I'm ready to talk about them. But she came back.

And she's like, what's going on? Did I take all of you with me? I'm like, no. She's like, when I went back, I'm actually the leader over there.

Women come to me for advice. I run the school. I go around helping women do embroidery that they sell. I am doing so many things that I took from Sughar, that I took from the education we provide to the other women. And I think I was sent for that.

And it was amazing to see what kind of things can happen from a very short time of education. Her husband was her slave. [LAUGHING] Sorry, it's not being recorded, right? [LAUGHING] But seriously, she would call. She had a cell phone.

She's like, yeah, I'll be coming late today and stuff like that. And it was fascinating. She came from a very, very conservative background, and to see that change, I was like, this is possible. Education can actually change anything. It might take some time, but it's going to change everything.

Before I conclude my talk, I want to talk about the real truth about that girl. I've never been able to talk about her so much. I recently only have been ready to say who she is. And because of the reality coming out so quickly in my talks, it has made it all muddled. But I'm going to be trying to be very clear.

The girl who was murdered when I was 16 years old was actually my cousin. And she was murdered by my older uncle, my father's eldest brother. And he was the same person who murdered his wife and wanted another wife. And so after more than a decade when he killed my cousin, I had started fighting against it, and so fighting against him.

But according to the culture, the family's rules, I was not able to talk about the story. And I only was able to talk about it when in 2014, December, I went back to Pakistan after some time here. And my mother told me that he was diagnosed with cancer, and he was paralyzed. And I really needed to go see him.

I went there where he was. And I had never seen him like that. He had no ability to speak, no ability to sit up. He was lying on the floor lifeless. His head was in the lap of my cousin, the sister of the girl who was murdered. And she was feeding him soup and patting his head and talking very kindly to him.

I just can't believe people's strength sometimes, so much strength in that girl. But when I entered the room, when I entered the house, he was unable to talk before that. And he looks up to my cousin, and he looks at the door. And he says has [? Hadjer ?] arrived? And that is the name of the girl he murdered.

And so when he looked at me, close to death, he actually did see the cousin who was always, always with me. And I refused to talk about her anywhere I went. That was shameful because I felt like I was part of that society where they do make girls invisible, or they are vanished once they are killed. And so I've made it my goal to talk about her. But it took time. It took a whole year to be able to come to a place where I can talk about her and say more details and write about her as well.

Right after that, it gave me courage to talk to her sister, who is my age, [INAUDIBLE]. I was like, I know we've never discussed this because it's so hard for me and you. Can I ask you one thing? I would help you if it took my whole life. I would help you if I die in the process. Please tell me the truth.

I said, what do you want to do to avenge the murder of your sister? And I was very afraid she was going to start getting angry and talk about all those people who let it happen, because her sister was practically taken out of the doors of the house and murdered publicly. And the next thing I knew, this girl's like, I want to build a school in that same area where she was murdered, so the children of the people who let that happen would never let that happen to another girl.

And I was shocked. Here's a girl who's seen murder so closely, who's seen devastation so closely, was ready to fight with love, fight with education. And I made a decision that I would never fight. I wouldn't call this a fight. It's just the way of giving love.

We've decided to make the school very soon. And we're going to start collecting donations and start at a very small level. But it really helped me understand that without education, we cannot solve any problem at all. People can spend so long talking about this issue, and that issue, and that issue, but nothing would be solved until we put everything we have into education of people, and children, and women in those communities. Thank you so much.

[APPLAUSE]

**KAREN**

**WEATHERMON:**

Good evening. My name is Karen Weathermon. And I'm Co-director of the Common Reading Program. My co-director is Susan Poch. And I also direct the First-Year Focus program, which many of you were involved this fall. It's my pleasure now to facilitate the question and answer period for Ms. Brohi.

So audience members, you'll note that there are two microphones here in the front on either side. And if you'd like to ask a question, we ask that you move toward the microphones at this time. And audience members joining us remotely this evening, you can ask questions by using the chat box which should be available on your screen as you view the live stream. Or you may tweet a question @WSUglobal. And the Global Campus people in the room will convey the questions to us.

And this is an important announcement. If you're a student, again, at the conclusion of the



question and answer, there will be an announcement about verification of attendance for this evening's event. Greek life members, if you are here, there is a table outside the ballroom where you can also verify your attendance with the chapters.

So as people make their way toward the microphone, I encourage you to do that at this time. I'll ask the first question. And it's really been my pleasure to spend the day with Ms. Brohi and watch her interact with students in various classes and also with a leadership group here with student involvement.

And so one of the things that I know about your work is that you not only have founded and directed The Sughar Foundation and societies in Pakistan, but that you also have begun ventures here in the US. And I wondered if you would tell us a little bit about the ventures that you have started here and how you see them as an extension education project that is so dear to your heart.

**KHALIDA BROHI:** Yeah, you see, I have a really big dilemma. I often joke that it's mine and Malala's, because we both are in love with our country. But at the same time, we have these topics that we really want to talk about, that need to be talked about. And they involve murder. They involve violence, which is unlike what we want to talk about our country. We don't want to give that image.

And so last year, I got married and came to Los Angeles, where my husband's from. And for the first time, I discovered that people actually had this fear towards Muslims that I had been denying all these times, every time I would come to the US. People were literally afraid of me at places I would go. They would walk away. Or rooms would empty when I would walk inside, things like that.

And so we decided that we want to create an environment where people would really find out what true Pakistan is that I lived in, that I spent my childhood in, the beautiful things that are there, and the beautiful parts of the cultures. So we actually used our wedding money and launched The Chai Spot. It's a social enterprise. It's based in Sedona, Arizona.

It's a small store. It's actually a really big store. It's like this big. And it's decorated like a house in Pakistan.

And it's got products that are made by women, dresses, and colorful things, and tapestries. And also chai, so when people come in, we've made it so that they use their five senses to get

involved in everything that's around them. They're transformed into a different world where they see that things are much different than what they hear in the media. And we recently opened our second location. And it's been going fantastic.

**KAREN WEATHERMON:** Do we have anyone from the audience who would like to come to the microphone to ask a question?

**SPEAKER 1:** [INAUDIBLE]

**KHALIDA BROHI:** The Chai Spot, come visit us. Seriously, it's beautiful

**SPEAKER 1:** [INAUDIBLE]

**KHALIDA BROHI:** The chai means chai tea. I know. I've stopped saying that. It means "tea tea."

**KAREN WEATHERMON:** Another question that I might ask you to tell us a little bit about. I have heard you in other interviews talk about the marriage of your parents. And I think that's really quite a remarkable story. And again, which I think had a real foundation for your mom being an advocate for your own education. Would you share that story?

**KHALIDA BROHI:** Yeah, I've just talked about it in so many of my interviews, I thought I shouldn't repeat it. But it's one of the basic stories that shaped us. And my mom was 9 years old when she was exchanged into this marriage. And she was given off to three men to choose. So these men had to choose who ever wanted her as a wife.

So the eldest was 44. The other was 32, and then was my father, who was 13 at that time. And who was going to school, like I said, how he discovered education. And so he was also forced into this marriage. My mother was forced into this marriage. And right after the wedding, my father had left the house because he thought his manliness was challenged.

So he started going and living in his friend's house, and he started getting his education full-fledged. He went to university. And in his college life, in his university life, he saw girls who were actually able to read, who were actually able to talk about things that were really important to him. And so he was like, maybe I should marry again, a woman who is actually able to talk about politics to me because that's important for me.

And so he decided that. And he was able to approach someone who he had his eyes on. And she was brilliant.

But then he thought, when the day came when they were actually going to ask the proposal for her hand in marriage from her parents, he remembered the day when my mom was 9 years old, wearing the red dress of a bride, crying for her mother. She had no idea what a wedding was. And he thought that if my love is with education, maybe if I go back and educate my wife, maybe I'll fall in love with her. And just like that, just like a crazy person, he left in the middle of his university.

And he got books for my mom and went back to the village. And held her hand, and helped her write the ABCs, alif be pe's, everything. They fall in love. It became the most beautiful story in the whole town and in that whole area. It was very scandalous for many people, even if they were married.

But my mom learned how to read and write. And she started writing in a diary. And then decided that her children would be educated. That's why they had moved from there, so we could go to school.

**KAREN** Yes, we have a question here at this mic.

**WEATHERMON:**

**SPEAKER 2:** [INAUDIBLE] married a [INAUDIBLE] really long [INAUDIBLE]. And I was really invested in [INAUDIBLE] about it. And I'm basically [INAUDIBLE]. So it brings back [INAUDIBLE]. I told my mom and [INAUDIBLE] And when I [INAUDIBLE] was like, [INAUDIBLE] So that's all I can do right now. But I just really want to know, do we really need a lot of money to start it, as you say, with policies and everything?

**KHALIDA BROHI:** To start working as an entrepreneur?

**SPEAKER 2:** [INAUDIBLE] but it doesn't work there, but you're still on your own for that.

**KHALIDA BROHI:** So interesting, that's a very important question actually. And believe me, we don't need money for anything, nothing at all, for relationships, for starting a new life, for starting something new, nothing at all. For organizations, we decided that we weren't going to ask anyone else. Just like that for Sughar when I started, we didn't invest anything

In it. In Pakistan, there's a word-- I don't know how many people speak Hindi here-- called juggaar, if you know about that. Making something from anything, from scratch, like there would be scraps of something, and you would make them into a dress, that's juggaar. In

Pakistan, we use that a lot. And we make things happen with no resources. And so we had learned that. And when we came to the US, there was one month in our wedding, and we decided to cancel it and put that money into this business. It wasn't a lot of money.

But it got us that space, and it got us some products. It got us started working with the women, and that was all we needed. So just using whatever we have, it's really important to go with it.

But more than anything, in this country, WiFi is so available to anyone. Over there, it's thought of as gold. You have WiFi? My friends still ask these questions. And I'm amazed how when I come to the US, you can like intend for a website, and it appears like magic.

Over there, it's not like that. It takes a lot of time for a website to appear, for things to be done. People would spend a whole night putting on a Facebook page and things like that. Just getting online and starting what you want to start, it will get you the funds and the people you would need to start.

[AUDIO OUT]

**KHALIDA BROHI:** It depends on what you want to do. Always we do need the people, because if they're not doing anything, they're building the strength of the team. One person would always feel like maybe it's not the right thing. Maybe I'm not doing it right, or have doubts about themselves.

What I did was I found the people who were around me, my friends, cousins, and everyone, and I just had to transfer my fire into them. I was very, very passionate about this topic. I was extremely angry. I spent five to six years of my 10 years of this journey in anger.

But then there was a time I learned about forgiveness and gave up on anger. But that anger became a fire, and it went to the people. And we had 13 people in the beginning, and then hundreds later. But when the organization started, we only needed five. So those were the full time people who were helping us without any pay for many, many months. Yes?

**SPEAKER 3:** We have studied in English history about what Muhammad taught, or , Christianity, what we are taught. What happened that people started killing each other even in the religion? What changed? Did they forget their [INAUDIBLE] with this [INAUDIBLE]. Did they study their holy books or like that?

**KHALIDA BROHI:** You see, the problem is when we talk about these topics here, once again, the whole conflict

of what can we talk about in a speech like this-- am I going to talk about my full life, when I did jump into gardens, when I did run around playing with my sisters, when I did dance on the traditional songs. So many beautiful things did happen. And they still happen. Not everyone is after their sister or their mother. So things are not very bleak.

But because if they're beautiful, these things still happen, and people don't know about them. They happen behind doors, and that is where we need to go and tackle them. But what happened, starting from the beginning, is it never was brought from the religion. So they never learned it from the book.

You see, everybody starts reading the Holy Quran in Arabic, and nobody speaks Arabic. So we don't know what is there. And we look to the mullah, the scholar, to tell us what's going on in it.

The day my husband started getting interested in Islam, we got an English holy book, Holy Quran. And I'm like, oh, my god, just because of him, I came towards Islam. I found out what is there. We started questioning things. We started looking online.

There was an enormous wealth of knowledge that we had not reached. And so we had so much to talk about when we go back. And things just change when you learn about them.

I often tell the story. I don't know if you guys read Paulo Coelho. Is that how you pronounce it? *Alchemist*, the guy who wrote *The Alchemist* book, very famous. He wrote another book called *Flowing Like the River*.

And in that, there is a story where he talks about a monk and a cat. And he says that there was a monk, centuries ago. There was a monk, and he had a cat in a temple. And that he would start the prayers when the cat was sleeping next to him. A long time passed, and he died, and the cat was there.

Another monk came. A long time passed, the cat died. They brought another cat because the cat was there. It was a habit.

A long time passed, the monk changed. And so whenever the monk would go, they would bring another monk. But whenever the cat would go, they would bring another cat. Until today, now they think it's a religious belief that whatever you ask him to pray for you, would not be accepted until you put a cat next to him.

Serious stuff, these are the things we create. And there comes a day when we start thinking if God actually sent an angel to tell us we should kill our sister. So one time when we challenge them, using the same text they use, misusing Islam, they have been doing that for a long time. Just showing them evidence what Muhammad used to do for his wives, it changes everything.

**SPEAKER 3:** [INAUDIBLE]

**KHALIDA BROHI:** Of course.

**SPEAKER 4:** Hello, we have a question from the Global Campus. Our question comes in from Damian. He asks, I live in an area of Georgia where many people have an immediate suspicion of Middle Eastern cultures. Do you have any suggestions on how to begin a dialogue and to demonstrate that all cultures have both positive and negative aspects, and that much of the issue is a lack of education?

**KHALIDA BROHI:** OK, oftentimes, we tried really hard with people who are very, very against the discussion that we're trying to have with them. And I think it's a bad idea to go with those people. Always go with the peers they have who are actually agreeing to listen to you, who are not on the same page, but who would actually say yes. And slowly bring in the people who are around them, and get them to talk to each other.

One of the best things that are happening is intercultural dialogues workshops that bring people together, a platform where it's fun. You do activities. They're very informal icebreakers where people actually see each other as humans.

I don't talk about this often, but since I've been talking a lot about my wedding today, my husband was not Muslim. And my family was super against him. And how do I get them to listen to me? He's Italian American, living in LA, grew up here.

There was no chance. They were about to kick me out of the house. And the only way was for us to have them meet. And so we had to trick my family into meeting him and his family. It worked.

In three days, we got engaged after three days of their meeting. When humans see each other, when they look into their eyes, and like these lights that are blinding me, they actually can really go and really understand what's going on in each other's hearts. And listen, if any of your friends still have problems creating a platform like that, I would love to help. I'm very passionate about providing a platform like that.

**SPEAKER 4:** Thank you.

**KHALIDA BROHI:** Of course.

**SPEAKER 5:** Hi, my question is--

[AUDIO OUT]

**KHALIDA BROHI:** Wow, a feminist in America or a feminist elsewhere?

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

[AUDIO OUT]

**KHALIDA BROHI:** Well, feminist has been misused so much that I don't even go there. But if we think about the feminism that actually started the way it did, it was balanced. And it meant that both of our genders have to go further together.

I recently gave a talk at a women's forum where 600 amazing women leaders were sitting in the audience. And I was on the stage. I, thank God, I could actually see everyone. And I saw their dresses, and it was very different.

It wasn't what I was wearing. It wasn't shiny or something. And I told them what we do at Sughar centers. We show these women one graph that is very easy for them to use. There's actually a technique called participatory rule appraisal, which you use pebbles, hand gestures, or anything to help people understand who do not go into maths or people at community level.

We tell these women that Muhammad, peace be upon him, says that if you are a Muslim, your men and women should be shoulder to shoulder. And we say that you are here, and your men are here. And so we help them understand that in six months, they have to come here.

So we help them come here. Every month, they tell us where they are. And now, when I came to the US, I was like women here have freedom, education, everything. They've got it all. But the problem is they're still here.

And I just couldn't believe it. That realization was very shocking. What is it lacking that's not helping them come to that level?

And can I tell you something? Women don't want to be shoulder to shoulder to men here. They want to be the men. And that's a problem because if we remove a gender completely and come to that position instead of them, we would create a lot of problems.

And that is why whenever women are like, can I go a little higher than my husband? I'm like, come back. You have to be at the same level. A balanced society would eventually create balance and equality.

[AUDIO OUT]

**KAREN** I think Charles had a question.

**WEATHERMON:**

**CHARLES:** [INAUDIBLE] Is there any kind of hearing? Is there any kind of legal recourse to contest this accusation that takes place within the society? Or is it just the men that say, we think that she's done this? And therefore, they're justified in carrying out this honor killing. How does that work in more detail?

**KHALIDA BROHI:** No, exactly, that's a very important question. I am just very excited that Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy is coming here who knows a lot more about politics than me. But the only thing, the biggest that I know, is that people who do this crime are far away from the politics itself. They're way, way on the ground than the policymakers.

There's a big gap where rich people, or middle classes, or other people who are struggling to do things in their life. But the tribal communities very much at the lower level. Now, these policy makers, who have created women protection bills-- 2006, big year for us, and there are things where women can actually call places. And they can seek help and stuff like that. Recently, a bill was passed which is still in the process.

But the thing is that no matter how many legal systems are there, many men do end up going to the jail. But they can actually get forgiveness from the family of the woman, because they're the brother. So if the family of the woman who was murdered goes into the court and says, I forgive my son for killing my daughter, they actually get free.

So that's how the law works. None of that helps. What helps is those policymakers do not try to go back into the territory of tribal leaders because they are afraid as well. No one has dared to



do that.

They don't even come for times when they need the votes. We don't see their Jeeps or their big cars passing from there. These people are fully abandoned.

And until and unless they learn what's happening in the world, the education that's given to them, and see themselves-- because you see, one of the things that I want to clarify to all of you students is that education is not just going to a school and learning how to read and write. Education is the possibility of things. It's the ability to think not what is, but what can be. You know what I mean?

Like looking at a situation and thinking of how it can be changed into the most positive ways, that's education. Knowing a strategic way of changing lives, and I think that's what they need more than anything. But there are systems. Does that help?

**CHARLES:** Yeah.

**SPEAKER 6:** Hello. Well, first of all, thank you, Ms. Brohi, for sharing your story. I really do appreciate it. My question is, you speak so much about the importance of education. I guess in the Western world like here, people like myself, I'm not so educated about the issues that affect you directly. What's your suggestions on how I can be educated and more mindful of the things going on in your life and around the world, specifically?

**KHALIDA BROHI:** Travel, that's the only way. I've given up reading the news or the reports or anything. They are all now spiced up to make into a different thing.

When I came here last year, I had just celebrated many events in Pakistan with my tribe. My sisters had gone shopping for me to prepare to come to my new house. We had chai on the streets. We had ice cream in places where all these men were watching cricket on TV and just couldn't help shouting cheerfully.

And I come here, and the next day I see on TV my own country. And it was on fire. I was like, oh, my god, what's happening? I was there yesterday. Things are very dramatic the way they show them.

I was actually jokingly talking this, which is very real. In clips they would show streets that are empty. No one walks on them. And they would shoot them early in the morning when people haven't gotten out.

When the hubbub starts-- or how do you call it in America? The real cheer starts of Pakistan, nobody wants to shoot that, because that's irrelevant. So travel, wherever you can go, just go there and unfold your own myth.

**SPEAKER 6:** Thank you.

**SPEAKER 4:** Hello, we have another question from the Global Campus. We have from Zach. He asks, what is the biggest difference between life in the US and life in Pakistan that you have experienced?

**KHALIDA BROHI:** Seriously?

[LAUGHTER]

**KHALIDA BROHI:** Is that even a question? Currently, I'm going back every two months. So it's pretty intense. Every time I go there, I'm disoriented. I come here, I'm disoriented. I still haven't been able to watch TV here.

It's either that way or that way. There's no middle point. There's no balance in your TV here. Things are pretty extreme, in relationships and one night stands.

[LAUGHTER]

**KHALIDA BROHI:** But the differences are drastic. I'm learning things very, very quickly. I learned how to ride a bike. I learned how to swim or not to drown in a swimming pool. I'm actually going to learn how to drive. I went to get my test after learning this whole manual again and again.

And I went to the test place. I'm like, I go around the world. I give speeches. Whatever, I can give a little test. I go there, and I failed.

[LAUGHTER]

**KHALIDA BROHI:** And I started crying. And I would never go back there again because I'm super embarrassed now. But that's what's going on in my life in America and Pakistan. Yes?

**SPEAKER 7:** So at what point in your early education did you realize how important it was to you? And what subjects gave you that inspiration to spread your knowledge?

**KHALIDA BROHI:** So in my early education in school?

**SPEAKER 7:** I don't know. How early you were in school, and what school you went to, and what activities made you think about the world a little bit differently?

**KHALIDA BROHI:** School never helped me, sadly. School doesn't help a lot of people, to tell you the truth. It can be very slow for the progress of the world.

I know I'm talking in an institution.

[LAUGHTER]

**KHALIDA BROHI:** But until and unless we don't talk about practical solutions in a school, it's no use at all. And we did not have professors like the ones that are here, or in universities, many universities in the US. I did get my interest for books and for learning English, but that was from an incident where my mother, when she gave birth to me, she was 13 years old.

And so when I was growing up, she was growing up. And so have her burdens become less, my father would take me and my brother and sister and drop us off at a library. And we were very little. We were four years old, five years old. And there were no daycares.

So he would just leave us there. And he would go for his three jobs that he was doing at that time and come back late in the evening. But those days we spent in smelling the books, the environment that was given by books. And so my love for learning more about what was in those books, reading and speaking English, started from there.

I did do international relations at some point. And I went to a Christian school in Pakistan, where more emphasis was given on psychology, international relations, and sociology. So that became interesting. But schools don't do much, once again.

**SPEAKER 7:** My second question has to do with education. You said that you were trying to educate the women and also the men at the same time. Then bringing them together. And how have you been able to incorporate this in the education system over there? And specifically, trying to change how professors speak to all the students equally, or having students mixed rather than separated?

**KHALIDA BROHI:** So you were asking how did we educate them separately?

**SPEAKER 7:** No, I'm saying how are you wanting to change the way that you grew up and the way that you

were taught in education? You were saying you weren't able to have that kind of experience that you initially would have wanted. How are you planning on changing that now for the future generations?

**KHALIDA BROHI:** In the school systems? OK, I don't know how long will it take for the schools to change. It is one way of learning how to read, how to write. Schools also teach you about history, which is very important.

But I think one of the biggest things that we as organizations, like nonprofit organizations, can do is create workshops and events partnering with those schools to do activities where children are made aware of lifestyles of other people lower than them or in different cultures. So that they really understand what's going on in the world and create practical solutions. If we are not aware of some other child who really needs the food when we are having food-- the desire to give our food to them comes from when you are four years old.

And that is the day you actually become an activist. Things changed for you. For me, what happened when we were growing up, Dad knew that he had brought us away from the village. He kept taking us back. All of us would get on a bus for 11 hours, go back to the village, show our face, be there, and learn about everything that we were.

Dad always reminded us that remember who you are. There were even times he would threaten us if we weren't doing our homework that he would leave us in the village. It was awesome because we would play in the mountains. But I remember how he shaped us to understand that there were people who really needed our help. And we were being prepared to help them in some ways. Does that answer your question?

**KAREN WEATHERMON:** We conclude our question point at this time. I want to have you help me thank Ms. Brohi for coming to our campus today and sharing her words with us.

**KHALIDA BROHI:** Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

**KAREN WEATHERMON:** When Dr. Chaudhry introduced us to Ms. Brohi's work, we were so taken by someone who at the age of our students, of you, who has found her passion and found ways to bring that to fruition, to take the skills and abilities that she has to build community with others, and to make a change in the world. We really hope that for all of you who come to study with us here at

Washington State University, that you also are in the process of finding your passions and of equipping yourself with the skills and abilities and community that will help you effect the change that you want to see in the world.

Thank you so much for your questions tonight. We also, of course, want to thank Ms. Brohi for sharing her experiences and insights with us tonight, and also with classes and with the leadership group this afternoon.

I do want to remind you that we are accepting nominations right now for next year's Common Reading book. The theme that we are moving into for the coming year is frontiers of technology, health, and society. Nominations will be open until November 1st. If you have ideas about books that you would like us to consider, we hope that you will go to our Common Reading website and nominate a book there. On the Common Reading website, you may also find information about upcoming events and programs for this year series that will continue all fall and all spring surrounding this year's book, *I Am Malala*.

So the announcement tonight about verification, if you need to verify your attendance for a class tonight, there are no stamps. But instead, when you came in this evening, you were given a small sheet of paper. This proof of attendance slip is something that you can attach to a passport if you have it or take your class. Attach it to notes if you have notes. And this will serve for your attendance tonight. We will let professors know that this is what they should expect.

So thank you for coming this evening. And we look forward to seeing you next year at Common Reading events.