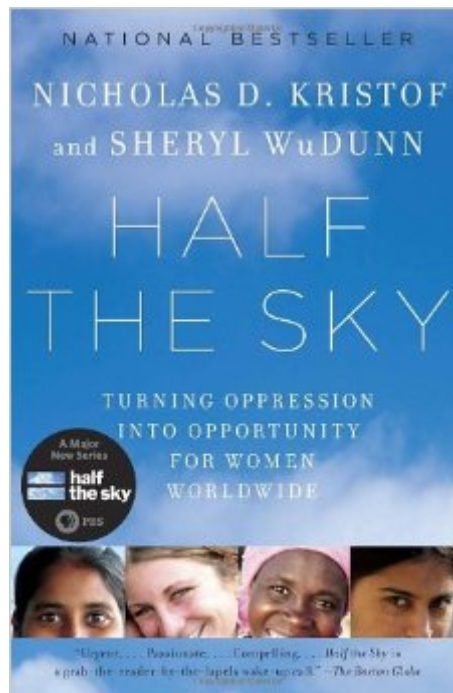


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# Half The Sky: Turning Oppression Into Opportunity For Women Worldwide



## Synopsis

#1 National Bestseller From two of our most fiercely moral voices, a passionate call to arms against our era's most pervasive human rights violation: the oppression of women and girls in the developing world. With Pulitzer Prize winners Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn as our guides, we undertake an odyssey through Africa and Asia to meet the extraordinary women struggling there, among them a Cambodian teenager sold into sex slavery and an Ethiopian woman who suffered devastating injuries in childbirth. Drawing on the breadth of their combined reporting experience, Kristof and WuDunn depict our world with anger, sadness, clarity, and, ultimately, hope. They show how a little help can transform the lives of women and girls abroad. That Cambodian girl eventually escaped from her brothel and, with assistance from an aid group, built a thriving retail business that supports her family. The Ethiopian woman had her injuries repaired and in time became a surgeon. A Zimbabwean mother of five, counseled to return to school, earned her doctorate and became an expert on AIDS. Through these stories, Kristof and WuDunn help us see that the key to economic progress lies in unleashing women's potential. They make clear how so many people have helped to do just that, and how we can each do our part. Throughout much of the world, the greatest unexploited economic resource is the female half of the population. Countries such as China have prospered precisely because they emancipated women and brought them into the formal economy. Unleashing that process globally is not only the right thing to do; it's also the best strategy for fighting poverty. Deeply felt, pragmatic, and inspirational, *Half the Sky* is essential reading for every global citizen.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I was able to read most of an advance copy of this book before Bill Drayton (founder of Ashoka: Innovators for the Public) snatched it away and ran off with it on his annual 2-week hiking trip to the mountains. I think this has to be the most important book - not just for women's rights globally but for human rights - published in my memory. Kristof and WuDunn weave together a most compelling story of how culture and customs historically suppress women. They tackle many tough, taboo topics - for example honor killing. But more importantly, they champion the stories of heroic women worldwide wholly committed to changing the many evils of the status quo. What is more, they posit a kind of general framework theory that the really important advances in human rights that are going to be made in the near future are going to be brought about by these entrepreneurial pioneering women. In essence, that the backbone of the human rights movement and of real change across all societies is going to be a direct function of brave women who give themselves permission to say "NO" to thousands of years of (to most Westerners) unimaginable oppressive cultural customs and who take it upon themselves to lead to a new way. Once you have read the book, it is very hard, if not impossible, to disagree with Kristof and WuDunn's general theme. To wit, the brave women of Iran who took to the streets to protest the results of the recent election. Among many other "super" women, HALF THE SKY spotlights the following inspirational Ashoka Fellows: Sunitha Krishnan (India), founder of Prajwala, a citizen sector organization in Hyderabad, India, fighting forced prostitution and sex trafficking, rescuing women and children from sexual exploitation, incestual rape, sexual torture, and abuse in prostitution. Her organization helps former prostitutes learn vocational skills so they can move into new careers. "Prajwala" means "an eternal flame". Sakena Yacoobi (Afghanistan), founder of the Afghan Institute of Learning, a citizen sector organization providing teacher training to Afghan women, educating and fostering education for girls and boys, and providing health education to women and children. Her organization also runs fixed and mobile health clinics that provide family planning services. Sakena holds the distinction of having been Ashoka's first Afghan Fellow. Educating women and girls was banned under the Taliban and is controversial under Islamic law. Roshaneh Zafar (Pakistan), founder of Pakistani microfinance lender, Kashf. A former World Bank employee, she was inspired after a chance meeting with Muhammad Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank. "Kashf" means "miracle" and Kashf is indeed fostering a miracle by leveraging microfinance to women to transform the role of women in Pakistani society and bringing about a poverty-free world. To date, Kashf supports 305,038 families

in Pakistan, has disbursed \$202 million, and has 52 branches nationwide. I am not alone in my enthusiasm for this book! Last Tuesday, September 15, 2009 from 1:15 pm to 2:45 pm, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime ("UNODC") will be hosting a panel discussion and book signing with Mr. Kristof and Ms. WuDunn in the UN Trusteeship Council Chamber at UN Headquarters. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon will deliver opening remarks. Every seat (550) in the Trusteeship Council Chamber was filled. The buzz out there is that many people are coming and that everyone is very excited about the publication and significance of this extraordinary milestone work. Five out of five stars. An absolute must read for anyone who cares about women's rights or human rights. A genuine eye popper that moves so fast, tackles so much that has hitherto been taboo and unmovable, and interweaves the unbelievably positive stories of the very heroic women already leading and creating change in a tapestry that is glimpse of a brave and very different, humanitarian new world. Once you pick this book up, you will not be able to put it down. And once you have read it, you will be moved to help bring about tomorrow. Absolute proof that the glass (or the sky) is half full. We just have to give ourselves permission to make change. Or as Gandhi said, "we must be the change we wish to see." BUY IT. READ IT. PASS IT AROUND.

As a feminist, I really looked forward to reading this book. I was lucky enough to find it at a book swap and didn't have to pay for it myself. Boy, am I glad I didn't. I give it three stars for what is trying to be accomplished: raising awareness about the plight of women around the world. Despite the heroic effort to bring this worldwide tragedy to light, Kristof and WuDunn have done a serious disservice to journalism, especially of the investigative nature. While their attempts to draw attention to the oppression of women through statistics as well as grueling and gruesome stories deserve an applause, they consistently pushed ideas without revealing the whole truth. This is lying through omission. In the section on prostitution, Kristof and WuDunn routinely would dismiss Western prostitution as "voluntary" and would flippantly dismiss the idea that women of America and other Western cultures can be enslaved. Page 24 of this book really revealed how disgustingly inattentive Kristof and WuDunn have been to sexual slavery in the West. "Moreover, Western men usually go with girls who are more or less voluntary prostitutes..." Combine this with page 9, "We certainly don't think of prostitutes as slaves, forced to do what they do, for most prostitutes in America, China, and Japan aren't truly enslaved." Are they out of their minds? Either they have turned a blind eye to the nature of prostitution as a whole or they are purposefully leaving it out in order to make the culture of prostitution of more developing countries appear more bleak. Let us not forget the average of prostitutes in America is roughly 15-years-old. That doesn't sound very voluntary to me. I highly

suggest they take a look at some of Rachel Lloyd's work and maybe they'll stop spewing such ignorance. When exploring the devastation AIDS has wrecked on our planet, Kristof and WuDunn do an excellent job of illustrating how terrible the sickness has been, especially in the developing world. Unfortunately, one of their "fixes" to the problem is that "governments should encourage male circumcision, which reduces HIV risk significantly." No, it doesn't. Those studies are outdated and considered inconclusive, just as the same studies which link female circumcision to reduced HIV contraction. It's amazing how quickly they cry out against female genital mutilation of children and then call for the same to be done to little baby boys. If they mean adult-only circumcision, I would be more likely to agree since, at that point, it is the choice of the person who actually owns those genitals. But otherwise, this passage reeks of hypocrisy. Lastly, in their defense of Islam not being misogynistic, they lay large amounts of praise onto Aisha, Muhammad's "favorite" wife. Was it deliberate that they completely neglected to mention that she was married at six and raped at nine? Yes, raped. Because a nine-year-old does not and cannot consent to sexual intercourse. No, they left this out because it would have hurt the point they were making about how female-friendly the origins of Islam were. The purpose of the book, to educate and move to action, is worthy of praise. However, the direct distaste for the truth is abhorrent and it's disappointed that anything that may have undermined the authors' ideas was completely omitted. They have shamed the practice of journalism.

This may be one of the most important books I have ever read. I heard Mr. Kristof on the radio and the title caught my attention. After the first page, the book caught my heart. This is such a well researched and well written book that I could not put it down. We all realize that women the world over face challenges that women in the US never have to face. Prepare to have your eyes opened when you open this book. I dare you not to be moved, and I dare you to do nothing after reading it. The women who share their stories here are some of the most courageous and strongest women ever, and they are changing their world for the better.

When I read an advance copy of this book, I was so stunned that I contacted the authors and told them I wanted to do whatever I could to help get the word out. It is a compelling and important work -filled with riveting anecdotes and a powerful, optimistic message about the opportunity we all have to support a movement that has the power to transform lives around the world. Read the book, and then go to [...] to learn more about how Lifting Women Lifts the World.

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