

Human Rights & Human Welfare

Volume 9

Issue 10 *October Roundtable: An Annotation of "The Women's Crusade" by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn*

Article 1

10-1-2009

October Roundtable: Introduction

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Recommended Citation

(2009) "October Roundtable: Introduction," *Human Rights & Human Welfare*: Vol. 9: Iss. 10, Article 1. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/hrhw/vol9/iss10/1>



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October Roundtable: Introduction

Abstract

An annotation of:

The Women's Crusade. By Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn. The New York Review of Books. August 17, 2009.

Keywords

Human rights, Women's rights, Developing countries, Political rights, Economic rights

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[**The Women's Crusade. By Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn. *The New York Review of Books*. August 17, 2009.**](#)

An Annotation

Women's Human Rights

This month's roundtable centerpiece by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn focuses on the various challenges faced by women and girls in developing countries, with a special emphasis on how enhancing their rights could strengthen political and economic development within their societies. The authors emphasize that the continued patterns of injustice against women are at the center of the contemporary human rights agenda not only due to its immediate political and economic urgency, but also as a moral concern.

“In the 19 th century, the paramount moral challenge was slavery. In the 20 th century, it was totalitarianism. In this century, it is the brutality inflicted on so many women and girls around the globe: sex trafficking, acid attacks, bride burnings and mass rape.”

The statistics on the plight of women worldwide give a clear picture of persistent patterns of violence, poverty, denial of freedoms, as well as the lack of economic autonomy that women have historically suffered. **“It appears that more girls and women are now missing from the planet, precisely because they are female, than men were killed on the battlefield in all the wars of the 20th century. The number of victims of this routine “gendercide” far exceeds the number of people who were slaughtered in all the genocides of the 20th century.”**

Kristof and WuDunn identify education as one of the key means to improve gender equality and economic development locally. **“In many poor countries, the greatest unexploited resource isn't oil fields or veins of gold; it is the women and girls who aren't educated and never become a major presence in the formal economy. With education and with help starting businesses, impoverished women can earn money and support their countries as well as their families. They represent perhaps the best hope for fighting global poverty.”**

Our panelists this month take this article further, by indicating that there is a need to look at women's rights as a global phenomenon and not just as a struggle within the developing world. Furthermore, apart from improving women's educational capacities individually, it is fundamental to evaluate the structural conditions causing disparities among nations and the impact of global economic forces on women. According to our contributors, it is essential to recognize that women around the world face transnational patterns of abuse linked to the broader failure of the global economic order and the international political structure to secure their rights and meet their needs.

These issues and others are considered in this month's Roundtable.