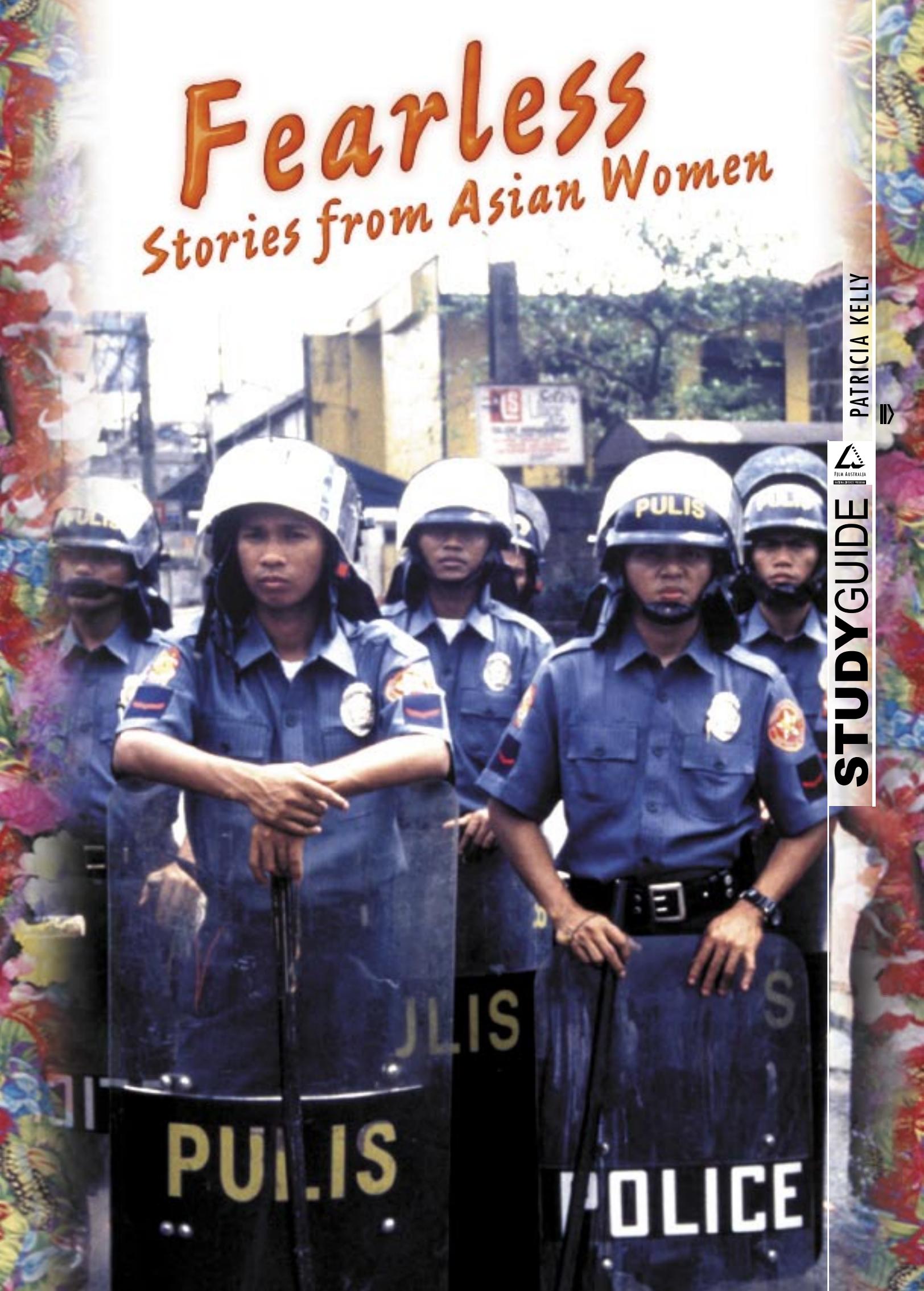


# Fearless

Stories from Asian Women



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STUDYGUIDE

PULIS

POLICE

## INTRODUCTION

**F***earless: Stories from Asian Women* is a four-part documentary series about women from various Asian backgrounds: Doris, a Filipino, Fathima an Indian, Taslima from Bangladesh and Hien, a Vietnamese-Australian. Despite differences in ethnicity, culture and religion, what links these women's stories is their commitment to human rights. All have had the courage to speak up in the hope of improving the lives of others who are not able or willing to speak for themselves.

*Fearless* allows them to tell their stories and examines the issues that incite them to action, their personal motivations and their hopes for the future. Each episode offers opportunities to explore some difficult issues of the twenty-first century—equality, injustice and women's rights—and how such issues impact on individuals and communities in a globalized world.

**Programme 1:** *Explosive Devices* (Doris Nuval, Philippines)

**Programme 2:** *The Price of Freedom* (Taslima Nasrin, Bangladesh)

**Programme 3:** *Breaking the Caste* (Fathima Burnad, India)

**Programme 4:** *Heart on the Sleeve* (Hien Tran, Vietnamese-Australian)

(Detailed synopses appear in Part 2.)

## CURRICULUM LINKS

The programmes are particularly suitable for upper secondary and tertiary students in the areas of:

- Australian Studies
- Business Studies (Programme 4)
- English
- Futures Studies/Futures Education
- International Law
- Justice Studies
- Legal Studies
- Media Studies
- Peace Studies
- Personal Development
- Politics
- Studies of Society & Environment/  
Human Society & Its Environment
- Study of Religion
- Women's Studies

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is presented in two parts.

Part 1 presents general themes and suggested discussion points/activities.

EPISODE ONE – *EXPLOSIVE DEVICES*. MANILA, FEBRUARY 2002

CHILDREN PLAYING IN SQUATTERS SLUM

COVER IMAGE FROM EPISODE ONE – *EXPLOSIVE DEVICES*

MANILA, FEBRUARY 2002. RIOT POLICE AT POLITICAL RALLY

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS SAMANTHA KELLEY



Part 2 looks at the individual programmes in more detail, covering some but not all of the issues that are raised.

## PART 1. GENERAL THEMES

### 1. HUMAN RIGHTS: WHAT DOES THIS TERM MEAN?

- Visit the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's web site, Youth Challenge, at [www.hreoc.gov.au](http://www.hreoc.gov.au), which offers a unit of work designed to help students understand this complex and vital topic. The learning outcomes are clearly set out and supported by resource sheets ready for classroom use. These include *Human Rights*

*Brainstorm, Human Rights in Australia and Human Rights Treasure Hunt*. The site also links to other related resources.

- Visit Human Rights Watch at [www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org) for information about the extent of human rights concerns in the world today.

### 2. SHOULD WE TAKE ACTION?

*It is necessary only for the good man [sic] to do nothing for evil to triumph.*<sup>1</sup>

—Attributed (in a number of forms) to Edmund Burke (1729-97), but not found in his writings. (You may wish to update

it to read 'person' rather than 'man' and to discuss your reasons for doing so.)

- Using one or more of the women depicted in this series as a case study, argue for or against the idea conveyed by this quotation. This could take the form of a debate, role play, pictorial study or poster.

### 3. WHAT CAN ONE PERSON DO?

The themes raised in this series are serious and globally relevant. It is important that students feel that they can



take personal action in an appropriate manner if they are so motivated.

- Amnesty International is an organization that works to defend human rights all over the world. Its web site at [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org) has a link where students can research issues in a country of their choice. They could also help to free a prisoner of conscience by taking part in a current campaign. Examples of letters are provided so that students can follow the protocols for writing to governments on behalf of prisoners.

#### 4. LIFE DEFINING MOMENTS

Each woman profiled identifies special moments or critical incidents in her life that changed her forever. For example, Fathima Burnad started a women's liberation group in response to the rape and vicious stabbing of an 11-year-old girl.

Ask students to:

- Choose one of the women in the series and identify a life defining moment for her.
- Write a newspaper article or television script about the moment you have chosen and how it affected the person.
- Compare this moment with another moment that you identify from a news report concerning any person.
- Draw up a character profile of one of the women. What are the strengths that have enabled her to survive? Illustrate your choice through an incident from the relevant programme that best exemplifies these qualities. What weaknesses, if any, can you identify?
- Identify two people whom you consider to be role models. You might choose one from your family, friends or community and another at a national or international level. Prepare a profile of one of these people and share it with another class member.

#### 5. THE CONCEPT OF ASIA

What do we mean by Asia? Geographically, the most significant fact about

Asia is its vastness. Its total area is approximately 43.7 million km<sup>2</sup>, more than four times the size of Europe, a third as large again as Africa and as big as North and South America combined. Australia's land mass (approx. 7.69 million km<sup>2</sup>) would fit into Asia over five and a half times!<sup>2</sup>

- Using an atlas, identify what countries comprise Asia. (Remember to include East Timor, the newest nation, which may not be shown as such.)

And what of Asia's other characteristics? Lead students to discover more, particularly about the diversity of its peoples, by undertaking the suggested activities:

- Ask students to choose one Asian country and prepare a brief oral report to present to the class. Agree on the headings that would be necessary to make these reports useful and comparable.
- In describing cultural, political, economic and other factors, how meaningful are the terms 'Asia' and 'Asian'? Ask students to identify both appropriate and inappropriate examples of generalizations and to suggest more specific terms for the inappropriate usages. Include discussion about the sub-title of this documentary series, 'Stories from Asian Women'. What does the use of 'Asian' in this context mean? Is it an appropriate usage?

#### 6. WOMEN AND OPPRESSION

Taslima says: 'Women are oppressed everywhere, more or less, but oppressed.'

- What evidence can you find in these programmes to illustrate that Taslima's statement is true in the world today and in Australia in particular?

The Women's Rights Division of Human Rights Watch web site begins:

*Millions of women throughout the world live in conditions of abject deprivation of, and attacks against, their fundamental human rights for no other reason than*

*that they are women.*

Ask students to:

- Find evidence from this site at [www.hrw.org/women/index.php](http://www.hrw.org/women/index.php) or other resources to justify the above quotation.
- Identify human rights that girls and women in Australia might take for granted. Are they available equally to all women in all communities in Australia? If not, why not?
- Identify what they believe are the main concerns of Australian women today.

#### 7. WORKING FOR CHANGE

Each of the women profiled is working for change. After a privileged upbringing, Doris Nuval was later exposed to the realities of the poverty of her fellow Filipino citizens and became a terrorist. Now she is a major figure in public educational television. Fathima is attending international conferences to further the Dalit's cause and that of women within the Dalit community. Taslima is an internationally recognized speaker and writer working on behalf of oppressed women everywhere. Hien Tran now works on ethnic radio in Australia as well as being a union representative working for the betterment of all female outworkers in Australia.

- From each programme, identify the main issues that concerned these women when they began their lives as activists. What are their major concerns today? What has changed and what has remained the same?
- After watching each programme, read the official synopsis (see Part 2) and discuss it in pairs.
- Write your own synopsis based on your own understanding of the film. What would you add, delete or change from the original? Give reasons for your suggestions.
- Freeze the title frame in which Taslima Nasrin is looking out of a window with the words, 'the price of freedom' juxtaposed with the image. What do you think the filmmakers' reasons were for choosing this frame and title? Identify the arguments they might have used to



EPISODE ONE – EXPLOSIVE DEVICES.  
MANILA, FEBRUARY 2002

DORIS NUVAL (IN WHITE HAT) AT POLITICAL  
RALLY

support their choice.

- Include comments on the choice of music. How effective is it in reinforcing the visual message?

## PART 2. THE PROGRAMMES IN DETAIL

### PROGRAMME 1: EXPLOSIVE DEVICES

#### SYNOPSIS

Growing up, Doris Nuval had a privileged life in the Philippines. Her father was friend and adviser to the president, Ferdinand Marcos. But when Doris eventually discovered that the government was deeply corrupt, she became passionately involved in the political underground. At the age of twenty-eight, she planted a

bomb designed to bring world attention to the dictatorship. In this programme, Doris reflects on her double-life as tourism official and terrorist and describes her transformation from public enemy number one to public broadcaster. Her motivation, however, remains the same: an unyielding commitment to justice and equity for the Filipino people, no matter who is in power.

#### KEY TERMS

*Colonialism, corruption, messianic, fanatic, terrorist, picket line, strike, martial law, subversion, leftists, rightists, activists, dictator, judiciary, constitution, violation, idealistic, incommunicado*

Context: The Philippines [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_the\\_Philippines](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Philippines)

[\\_%28900%E2%80%93931521%29](https://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/special/philippines/)

This is a timeline of the history of the Philippines, featuring detailed but brief explanations of the:

- Precolonial period
- Spanish colonization
- American colonization
- Japanese colonization
- Birth of the third republic
- Marcos regime (30 Dec. 1965 - 25 Feb. 1986)
- Aquino administration
- Ramos administration

#### DISCUSSION

- What elements of these various cultural influences are expressed or evident in this programme?

- Who was Ferdinand Marcos and why did his regime inspire desperate acts, such as Doris'?

#### ACTIVITIES

- Ask groups or individuals to research one of these time periods using various sources. Their feedback could be in the form of a chart, a report to the class, an interview with a simulated 'expert' or an article for a student newspaper or web site.
- Research the position of women, minority groups and the status of various religions at these various times or currently. What is similar to and different from the position of women in Australia? What indicators would students use to determine the status of women in any society? Students may wish to consider different groups of women, e.g. adolescents, mothers, the aged, Indigenous.

#### THE FACTS

On 19 October 1980, Doris Nuval planted a bomb in the Philippine International Convention Center. Her target was the feared dictator, Ferdinand Marcos.

- Based on her explanation in this programme, what did Doris believe at that time? Do you think she has shown remorse for her actions?
- How did stereotypes of 'terrorists' hamper the Marcos government in their search for Doris at that time?
- To what extent do you think that these stereotypes have been broken today?

#### AUSTRALIA'S NEW ANTI-TERRORISM LAWS

At the time of the event, actions such as those taken by Doris may not have constituted a crime under Australian federal law. That is not to say, however, that prosecution, perhaps under a state system, would not have been possible.

Since the World Trade Center attacks of 11 September 2001 and the Bali bombings of 12 October 2002 there have been

a number of legislative and other legal developments in Australia. The main legislation made after 11 September 2001 is now contained in the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Commonwealth) and in the Criminal Code Regulations 2002.<sup>3</sup>

Included are six new anti-terrorism laws, one of which means that it is a crime to plan, support or engage in a terrorist act, or to train with or be a member of a terrorist organization.

- Find out more about Australia's new anti-terrorism laws and proposed legislation amendments (see Further Resources).

#### DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL

Here is a quote regarding the effects of ignoring the law and detaining suspects without trial.

*Under the martial law Marcos disregarded the constitution. For instance, he violated the provision which guaranteed the Bill of Rights (Article III). Upon his orders, the military picked up and detained thousands of Filipinos suspected of subversion. Among them were his critics and political opponents ... Hundreds of detainees were tortured by their captors. Some disappeared and were never found again. Many were held in military detention camps for years without trial.*<sup>4</sup>

#### DISCUSSION

- In 1972, when Marcos set up martial law, he said it was 'to save our republic and reform our society'. Did he do either of these things?
- What are the legal and ethical issues involved in holding prisoners without trial?
- When Doris was arrested she was held incommunicado in a torture room. She says she was visited by the CIA and FBI who first tried to buy her cooperation and when that didn't work said, 'little hands, little feet', by which she thought they were threatening to hurt her young son. What was Doris' choice? What price did she pay for her choice? How did

it affect her family, particularly her son?

- What civil rights could be adversely affected by new Australian laws that enable ASIO to detain and question persons over sixteen years of age for purposes of investigating terrorism offences? Research the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Australia is a signatory. Are there any possible contraventions?

#### ACTIVITIES

- Read the section of George Orwell's book, *1984*, in which the central character is faced with a choice by his torturers.
- Watch the film *Gandhi*, or a more recent Indian film released for general exhibition, *Monsoon Wedding*. Similarly, *Cry Freedom* deals with human rights and the effects of racism in South Africa. What are the choices facing the main characters? What choice does each person make and what are the consequences for them and their families?

#### STRIKES AND PICKET LINES

Doris became involved in unions; there was a strike and management tried to break the picket line when Doris was present.

#### DISCUSSION

- What did Doris witness at the strike and how did it affect her life?
- Why is it so important to strikers that a picket line not be crossed and so important to their opponents to break or cross it? Discuss the connotations of the words break and cross in this context.

#### ACTIVITY

Imagine the mental process Doris might have gone through after her experience at the demonstration at which a man was beaten to death in front of her.

- Write a diary entry for Doris as she might have written it, from when she arrived at the demonstration to



EPISODE TWO – THE PRICE OF FREEDOM  
SWEDEN, MARCH 2002.

TASLIMA NASRIN. BELOW: CREW (LR)  
LAURIE CHLANDA, IAN PUGSLEY &  
MATHEW KELLEY AT FROZEN LAKE

when she made her decision to leave home and live with the workers.

## EPISODE 2: THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

### SYNOPSIS

In 1994 a young poet from rural Bangladesh plunged the country into a wave of general strikes and mass protest. Her crime: to write her thoughts about how religious fundamentalism has consigned women to a secondary role in modern society. For her outspokenness, the nation's religious leaders issued a fatwa against her, literally putting a price on her head. This is the story of Taslima Nasrin, now living in exile in Sweden, and how she continues to rail against the forces of oppression despite attempts to silence her.

### KEY TERMS AND PEOPLE

*Bangladesh, sexism, discrimination, Islam, fatwa, Allah, the Koran, asylum, Utopia, feminist, fundamentalist, Salman Rushdie, jihad*

### INTRODUCTION

Taslima is critical of all religions, not just Islam. She reads her poem:

*May the pavilions of religion be ground to bits,  
Let the bricks of temples, mosques, gurdwaras, churches  
Be burned in blind fire, and upon those  
heaps of destruction  
Let lovely flower gardens grow, spreading their fragrance  
Let children's schools and study halls  
grow, for the welfare of humanity.*

### DISCUSSION

- What is your response to this poem? Taslima reads it in a soft voice, but would you describe it as angry? If so, what evidence can you identify from her experiences to justify or explain her anger?
- How would you explain the message and form of this poem? To whom is it addressed?
- Who might it offend? Why?
- What does freedom of expression

mean to you? What would be your 'price of freedom'?

### ACTIVITY

- Ask students to find out who Salman Rushdie is and what led to a fatwa being issued against him.

### POLITICAL ASYLUM AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

Taslima's writing and commitment to women's rights has, she says, 'made me leave my home, my birthplace'. She now has asylum in Sweden.

- Discuss what would have happened to her if she had not been offered asylum by Sweden.



TheHumanRightsWatchwebsite contains a critical report on Australia's attitude towards and treatment of recent asylum seekers, at <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/country-chapters/australia>

- Read this report and summarize the main criticisms.
- Compare these criticisms with Australian media reports on the same issues.
- Prepare an anonymous class survey on attitudes to the government treatment of asylum seekers. How many agree with detention? How many disagree? What reasons do they give for their opinions?
- What do students know about detention in Australia? Following is a report from Human Rights Watch based on an interview with a young detainee.

#### Detention inside Australia

*A fifteen-year-old Iraqi boy, detained by Australia for over two years while his family sought asylum, described his desperation that he has not been allowed to go to a normal school for the duration of his detention: 'I am like a person who is drowning and is holding themselves up by one arm, but my arm is getting tired and it will soon be easier to just let go.' He had already attempted suicide on more than one occasion.*<sup>5</sup>

- Ask students to write a response to the boy's statement. They may wish to send it to a Member of Parliament.

#### SEXISM, DISCRIMINATION AND ABUSE

Taslima wrote her first poem at age twelve: 'I want to fly through this window and I want to fly in the sky like a free bird'.

- What does this film reveal about her home life that might have led her to write a poem like that?

Taslima reports that she was the victim of abuse but was afraid to speak up.

- Discuss the issue of secrets and



when it is appropriate and necessary to speak up about issues such as domestic violence and abuse.

- Ask students to listen for what she says about her brothers, her father's attitude to her mother and the behaviour of relatives towards her.
- Ask students to research and identify local support organizations, telephone numbers and web sites for young people who may need support or counselling.
- Organize for a speaker from a youth support organization to speak to students about issues that concern them and how they can best support themselves, family or friends who may be in situations of risk. This should be planned with advice from a school counsellor or other professional.

#### RELIGION

Many Australian students come from homes where no religion is practised. Many may also have very little knowledge of the main world religions and their role in other people's lives. (See Further Resources for some starting points.) Others may be resistant to learning about any religion except the one that they practise.

- Set research tasks on world religions, so that students investigate a religion they know little or nothing about and report on their findings.
- Discuss what statements might act as 'triggers' for anger or hurt for members of various religious communities.
- Create a world religion chart with space for students to add to, and compare similarities and differences

EPISODE TWO – THE PRICE OF FREEDOM  
SWEDEN, MARCH 2002

TASLIMA NASRIN AT AUTHOR MARIA  
MODIG'S HOUSE

in relation to the themes raised in these programmes.

#### TASLIMA NASRIN AND RELIGION

Here are sites with two of many interviews with Taslima Nasrin, in which she explains in more detail her views on religion and fundamentalism. Reading these will give students a deeper understanding of her motivation and beliefs.

[www.secularhumanism.org/index.php/articles/6799](http://www.secularhumanism.org/index.php/articles/6799)

[www.villagevoice.com/arts/of-values-and-violence-7156917](http://www.villagevoice.com/arts/of-values-and-violence-7156917)

Taslima is very angry about the treatment of women in Bangladesh as she observed it growing up and working as a doctor. She says, 'I don't know about feminism, I only need to feel the pain.'

- Compare the correct way to treat women according to the *Koran*, with the actions condemned by Taslima as she reports it in her community.
- How do students account for the differences between what religions say and what their adherents may do in practice?
- Find out about the status of women in Islam. (See [www.islam-guide.com/frm-ch3-2.htm](http://www.islam-guide.com/frm-ch3-2.htm))

#### DEALING WITH ANGER

Someone says of Taslima that although she speaks quietly there is 'Rage inside in other voice'.

- From the documentary and other research, identify what causes this rage and give examples from her writing.

Taslima's 'crimes' were writing about women and sexuality, and suggesting that the *Koran* be revised. She also wrote on behalf of a Hindu community treated badly in Bangladesh. The crowds of mainly men expressing anger towards Taslima say things like, 'We won't tolerate blasphemy', 'We want Taslima



EPISODE THREE – *BREAKING THE CASTE*.  
 FATHIMA BURNAD WITH DALIT VILLAGERS.  
 KAVERIRAJAPURAM, TAMIL NADU, INDIA.  
 MARCH 2002

hanged’ and ‘Cut her tongue out’.

- What leads people to behaviour of this kind?
- What suggestions do students have to change these sorts of violent reactions?

### GUILT AND RECONCILIATION

Taslima risked her life to return to Bangladesh when her mother was dying. It was only then that she realized what a hard life her mother had had. ‘My mother got nothing. I realized how beautiful and wonderful a person she was.’

- What are effective ways of dealing with guilt and regret?
- What steps can we take every day to try to ensure that we do not have regrets like this about the way we treat those we love?

### FUTURE THINKING: UTOPIA

Taslima says:

*I dream for a wonderful world that people are living without any inequality, injustices, no oppression and no religion at all ... I don’t know what would happen in the world after two hundred years or five hundred years, but ... but why shouldn’t we try?*

### ACTIVITY

- Ask students, ‘What would your Utopia be? Imagine you are living in this Utopia. Take five or so minutes to think about where you are, what sounds you hear, what you are wearing, eating, doing.’
- What could you do on a personal level to work for this kind of future?

## PROGRAMME 3: BREAKING THE CASTE

### SYNOPSIS

Fathima Burnad is fighting to change a social structure that has existed for 3000 years. In India, where the caste

system has created apartheid-like discrimination, child labour is common and women have few rights. Worst off are the 160 million people in the landless, lowest caste—the Dalits or ‘untouchables’— who live without access to basic necessities and are often targets of violence. Fathima’s aim is to empower these people—her people—by encouraging them to take action through grass-roots organizations and rallying the support of international communities behind her cause.

### KEY TERMS AND PEOPLE

*Dalit, Harijan, Untouchable, Capitalism, Marxism, pollution, population, radical, domestic violence, globalization, ex-communication, genocide, Mahatma Gandhi*

### THE CONTEXT

The Dalits claim: ‘Caste is the enemy of humanity. We have to kill caste or else caste will kill us’.



[www.imadr.org/project/dalit/Fatima.report1.html](http://www.imadr.org/project/dalit/Fatima.report1.html)

This is a report from Fathima on the situation of the Dalits in India as well as a statement from a conference at which the Dalits sought justice within India and support from global organizations to help them defend their human rights.

- Using this site and others (see Further Resources), explain what you think the Dalits mean by their claim.
- Research the caste system. This task could be divided into sections devoted to history, the different castes and the system's effects on society.

#### THE DALITS—WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Fathima says, 'Dalits are radical. The word means we demand our rights'.

*The word dalit is understood to have*



*one or more of the following meanings—'burst, split, scattered, dispersed, broken, torn asunder, destroyed, crushed'. It is a word much preferred over harijan, the term coined by Gandhi, which is viewed as condescending and having religious connotation. It has a political connotation which the legal term 'scheduled caste' does not have. The widespread adaptation of the word dalit symbolizes the change in the ideology of the dalit movement—from passive acceptance of amelioration handed out by others to a struggle carried on from within for empowerment—by fighting for their rights and against injustice. The movement emphasizes asserting a separate identity and inculcating pride in dalit cultural traditions.<sup>6</sup>*

#### EPISODE THREE – BREAKING THE CASTE

ABOVE: FATHIMA BURNAD WITH TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS, TOWNSVILLE, QLD, JULY 2002. LEFT: FATHIMA BURNAD ADDRESSING DALIT VILLAGERS, KOOZHARAMPAKKAM, TAMIL NADU, INDIA, MARCH 2002

#### GENDER OPPRESSION

There is also gender discrimination within the Dalit community. Women are routinely beaten up by drunken husbands and may be beaten for attending women's meetings. Girls are used as forced child labour and as sex workers. The reasons for this are complex.

- What are some reasons you can suggest?

Fathima's is a story of the exploitation of women in one Dalit community and the effects on the entire community of dispossession from their land and the introduction of alcohol.



EPISODE FOUR – HEART ON THE SLEEVE MELBOURNE, JULY 2002

HIEN TRAN

- Compare the situation of the Dalits with that of Indigenous people in Australia or in any other country. What are the similarities and differences?
- Read one of the essays in Arundhati Roy's book (see Further Resources).
- How does Fathima's criticism relate to the global situation of who has resources and wealth? Who benefits and who suffers as a result of globalization?
- How does international recognition help the cause of oppressed people? What other examples can you find of this in the world today?

#### GLOBALIZATION

Fathima's message to other Indians who look down on the Dalits: 'It is not their fate. It is you the rich who exploit them.'<sup>17</sup> All the dirty jobs are done by Dalits. So the caste system serves the rich.

In order to internationalize the Dalits' cause, Fathima sought international links to find justice.

- Visit the site of the national campaign on Dalit human rights at <http://www.dalitsolidarity.org/>

#### DISCUSSION

### PROGRAMME 4: HEART ON THE SLEEVE

#### SYNOPSIS

Although Australia has a first-world economy, hidden within it a third-world industry thrives. Outworkers sewing at home are paid per piece by clothing companies. They work to unforgiving deadlines, often seven days a week, for a pitiful few dollars per hour. Hundreds of thousands of workers from non-English speaking backgrounds suffer in these archaic conditions. They have no sick pay, leave, superannuation or insurance.

Now, Hien Tran, former Vietnamese refugee turned union representative, is speaking up for her fellow outworkers, trapped by their circumstances and financial need.

#### KEY TERMS

*outworker, piece-work, Vietnam war, Agent Orange, chemical warfare, defoliants, discrimination, political rights, equitable, exploitation, detention*

#### CONTEXT: WHO ARE THE OUTWORKERS?

*There is considerable evidence demonstrating the exploitation of clothing outworkers in Australia. Typically, outworkers are women from immigrant communities, disadvantaged by language barriers and discrimination, who are paid as little as \$2 an hour for an average 12-hour working day. Such poor working conditions have serious and negative consequences for the*



EPISODE FOUR – HEART ON THE SLEEVE  
MELBOURNE, JULY 2002, HIEN TRAN

HARRISFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL LEFT: HIEN TRAN  
WITH STUDENTS BELOW: WITH HER SON

*health and well-being of outworkers and their families.*<sup>7</sup>

Australia is proud of its record for fair and equitable working conditions. Melbourne may be the heart of the fashion industry but the reality seems to rely on the exploitation of outworkers. The Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union (TCFU) found that there are 329,000 outworkers in Australia; most are migrant women who earn between \$4.20 and \$5 an hour working up to eighteen hours a day.

#### PLANNING FOR ACTIVITIES

Michael Lembach, HSIE Project Officer of the Curriculum Support Directorate, has written a very helpful tutorial on the issue of outworkers in Australia. The paper can be found at [http://hsc.csu.edu.au/business\\_studies/employment\\_relations/ethical\\_legal/ethicalandlegal.html](http://hsc.csu.edu.au/business_studies/employment_relations/ethical_legal/ethicalandlegal.html). Although intended to address the NSW Stage 6 Business Studies syllabus, it would be a useful

introduction for any study of this topic. The tutorial includes revision topics and links to relevant web sites.

There are numerous web sites devoted to the issues around the plight of outworkers. The site at [www.caritas.org.au/learn/schools/secondary-school-teaching-resources](http://www.caritas.org.au/learn/schools/secondary-school-teaching-resources) provides web-based activities for secondary students from CARITAS Australia.

In addition, it may be possible to draw on students as a resource: some could

have casual or part time jobs and therefore experience of workplace conditions; others might know of someone who is an outworker, or even have direct involvement themselves.

- Hien says, 'I didn't do anything wrong; I fought for fair payment.' Do you agree? What is the evidence for her claim?
- Use Hien's story and other information to recreate a day in the life of an Australian outworker. Present this as a diary, a collage poster or a drama.
- Use the information about Hien's life to prepare a story featuring key events in her life and how she responded to each new challenge.
- Identify the key events between Hien being born to a poor family in Saigon, Vietnam, and when she addressed a rally in 1998 as representative of the outworkers and eventually the first Vietnamese born union representative to provide support and encouragement for outworkers.



## HEALTH, SAFETY AND CHILD WELFARE

*One disturbing fact about outwork in Australia is the incidence of children working long hours alongside their parents. The use of child labour in outwork appears to be directly related to the high pressure of tight deadlines and low prices imposed by contractors. Many families have no choice but to involve their children in the production process to get the work done.*<sup>8</sup>

### DISCUSSION

- Identify potential impacts of this work on children.
- What are the occupational health and safety issues for outworkers?
- What is the role of a trade or workers' union in relation to health and safety? What changes to work practices do you consider most critical, and why?
- Hien's son has chronic renal disease and she has a cancerous cyst on one kidney. Discuss the possible long term effects of chemical warfare on soldiers and civilians in Vietnam.

### STUDY AND WORK

Watch the segment of this programme in which Hien discusses her return to study. The only way she could re-train was to attend a special course, which involved her going by bus from Melbourne to Sydney each weekend and then returning to work. She says, 'Many people discouraged me'.

### DISCUSSION

- What might have been the motivations of Hien's discouragers?
- How can we encourage people to work for positive changes in their lives?
- What would you like people to say to you to help you?

### ACTIVITIES

- Make a list of motivating things you could say to friends and family.
- Compare these with 'put downs'.
- Make a commitment to saying only positive things for a set period of

time at school and at home. Write about your experience or keep notes for an oral report.

- Find or create a personal positive change 'mantra' or guiding saying and say it each morning for a week.

### TAKING ACTION FOR CHANGE

*We have power when we help ourselves.*

Hien's story is proof that one person can bring about change. The 'No Sweatshop Label' campaign encourages community involvement in the struggle for justice for outworkers. The site is at [www.nosweatshoplabel.com](http://www.nosweatshoplabel.com)

- Before accessing this site, brainstorm the kinds of activities you think might be suggested. Then go online and compare your list with those actions suggested.

One initiative is the Homeworkers Code of Practice, which is designed to ensure that people who work from home get better pay and conditions. Under this scheme, a new label will be sewn into garments sold by retailers who agree to support the Code.

The site also reports on an information campaign to help workers access their rights, along with a section on what individuals can do to help.

### AFTER COMPLETING THIS TOPIC

- How might doing this topic affect your behaviour as a consumer? Discuss.

### GENERAL REFERENCES

D. Nierenberg (ed.), *Correcting Gender Myopia: Gender Equity, Women's Welfare and the Environment*, DC Worldwatch Institute, Washington, 2002.

This book is useful because it is recent, short and accessible, and directly relevant to many of the issues raised by this series.

Global Exchange: [www.globalexchange.org](http://www.globalexchange.org)

A US based human rights organization dedicated to promoting environmental, political, and social justice around the world.

The Seditious Muse: Humanitarian—[www.klio.orcon.net.nz/human.html](http://www.klio.orcon.net.nz/human.html)

An extensive list of sites relating to many human rights issues. It includes religious and non-religious sites but all are devoted to issues of justice and equality.

Universal Rights Network:  
[www.universalrights.net](http://www.universalrights.net)

Created to promote the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, this site is a meeting place for the peoples of the world to share their stories about the importance of universal human rights and fundamental freedoms.

### FURTHER RESOURCES

#### EXPLOSIVE DEVICES (DORIS NUVAL)

*Go Philippines!* CD-ROM, Curriculum Corporation, Melbourne, 2002.

Explores the Philippines, its people, history, geography and cultures through a series of screen activities. A middle years teacher and student resource that also contains printable activity sheets.

*The Art of Delivering Justice* [kit], Federal Court of Australia, 2002.

A resource designed to support education about law and justice in Australian secondary schools. The book includes a teacher guide and a unit of work, In Defence of Human Rights. An accompanying video documents the work of the Federal Court and illuminates case studies.

National Security Australia: [www.nationalsecurity.gov.au](http://www.nationalsecurity.gov.au)

This web site provides a single access point for national security information from the Australian Government.

#### THE PRICE OF FREEDOM (TASLIMA NASRIN)

Faith Central:  
[www.faithcentral.co.nz/classroom](http://www.faithcentral.co.nz/classroom)

A general introduction to all major religions.

Religious Tolerance: [www.religioustolerance.org](http://www.religioustolerance.org)

A multi-faith agency that promotes the concept that everyone should allow others to follow their own faith, enjoying freedom of belief, speech and assembly, without discrimination and oppression.

Secular Humanism: [www.secularhumanism.org](http://www.secularhumanism.org)

An introduction to an alternative way of thinking about the world which is not based in religious belief but is based in values and respect for human rights.

### **BREAKING THE CASTE (FATHIMA BURNAD)**

TheDalitstanJournal-[www.dalitstan.org/journal/genocide/dalits/dalits.html](http://www.dalitstan.org/journal/genocide/dalits/dalits.html)  
Documents murder of Dalits as part of what they call 'genocide' in south Asia.

India Together: Dalit Rights and Issues: <http://www.indiatogether.org/c/caste>

Arundhati Roy, *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*, Viking, New Delhi & London, 2001.

A book of essays by the award winning Indian writer-activist. It is shocking in its simplicity and in its uncompromising criticism of 'development' in India, particularly the building of large and unproductive dams on the land of Indigenous people.

### **HEART ON THE SLEEVE (HIEN TRAN)**

Fair Wear: <http://www.fairwear.org/>  
The Fair Wear campaign is a coalition of churches, community organizations and unions. It aims to assist homeworkers in the clothing, textile and footwear industries to achieve their rights to a living wage, to organize, and to work in a safe and healthy environment.

NSW Department of Industrial Relations: Multilingual Clothing Industry Unit— [www.dir.nsw.gov.au/languages/index.html](http://www.dir.nsw.gov.au/languages/index.html)

Community language versions of 'Your Rights at Work: a guide for employees in NSW', in Arabic, Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Turkish and Vietnamese. Students who have these language back-

grounds may find it useful to assess the value of these sites for educating their communities about workers' rights.

Trinity College: Ethical consumerism and investment— <http://library.trinity.wa.edu.au/issues/consum.htm>

Good links to information on these issues.

Workers Online: [www.workerslabor.net.au](http://www.workerslabor.net.au)

A resource for the labour movement provided by the Labor Council of NSW. Use keyword 'outworker' to access a bank of relevant articles.

### **ENDNOTES**

- <sup>1</sup> Susan Ratcliffe (ed.), *Oxford Quick Reference Quotations*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1999, p. 144.
- <sup>2</sup> *Encyclopedia of World Geography*, Marshal Cavendish, New York, 1994.
- <sup>3</sup> Parliament House of Australia Library, Federal Legislation: Legislative and Other Legal Developments since the World Trade Center attack of 11 September 2001 and the Bali bombings of 12 October 2002, <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/law/crimlaw.htm#terraustralia>
- <sup>4</sup> [www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Pool/1644/timeline.html](http://www.geocities.com/CollegePark/Pool/1644/timeline.html)
- <sup>5</sup> Human Rights Watch interview no. 38, Villawood Detention Centre, Sydney, Australia, April 6, 2002. 'By Invitation Only', Page 80, at [www.hrw.org/reports/2002/australia/](http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/australia/)
- <sup>6</sup> P. Sainath, [www.indiatogether.org/dalit/dalit.htm](http://www.indiatogether.org/dalit/dalit.htm), February 2002.
- <sup>7</sup> NSW Department of Industrial Relations report, [www.dir.nsw.gov.au/pubs/Feb2002/outwork.html](http://www.dir.nsw.gov.au/pubs/Feb2002/outwork.html)
- <sup>8</sup> This is from a one page summary of a longer report, [www.awatw.org.au/fairwear/outworkers/statistics.html](http://www.awatw.org.au/fairwear/outworkers/statistics.html)

### **Fearless: Stories from Asian Women**

A Film Australia National Interest Program in association with Mask Productions. Produced and developed with the assistance of ScreenWest and the Lotteries Commission of Western Australia. Produced in association with SBS Independent.

**Classification:** PG. Consumer advice: Adult Themes, Low Level Coarse Language

**Writers/Directors:** Mathew Kelley, Peter Du Cane

**Producers:** Samantha Kelley, Peter Du Cane

**Executive Producers:** Franco di Chiera  
**Year:** 2003

**Duration:** 4 x 26 minutes

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