

Mary Prutton
Mrs. Linnerth
ENG 3UI
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Clouds That Hide The Sun

Human beings are fragile, each one deserves to have their rights protected. Yet, in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, there are many human right violations. These violations take an immense toll on the well-being of the characters. Those who have their rights most affected are the three main female characters, Mariam, Aziz and Laila.

Due to the many human right violations Mariam faces, her well-being is greatly impacted. We first see an example of this when Mariam is forced to marry Rasheed, which violates her right to consent to marriage and causes bad blood to arise between her father and herself. When the idea of marriage is first proposed, Mariam says “I don’t want to... She looked at Jalil. I don’t want this. Don’t make me.” (Hosseini. 44) As Mariam’s father breaks her trust, she becomes filled with grief and struggles to deal with these emotions. Her quality of existence and well-being are negatively impacted as she tries to adjust to her new emotions and environment. After several years of marriage, her husband becomes abusive, treating her with cruelty as well as violating her right to be treated humanely. As the abuse continues, Mariam states that “She[lives] in fear of his shifting moods... he would resolve with punches, slaps, kicks.” (89) She nows lives in constant fear of her husband. Each day she is with him, her well-being is almost constantly at risk, whether mentally or physically. Furthermore Mariam is stuck in a war

ravaged country and has no way to escape. The Taliban have forbidden women to travel which deprives the women of the right to leave their own country. When Mariam and the other female characters are caught trying to escape, a Taliban guard says, “You do realize, hamshira, it is a crime for a women to run away. We see it a lot. Women travelling alone.” (237) Mariam is forced to stay in Afghanistan, putting the quality of her life in danger and leaving her disturbed by the horrible things she endures. Finally, at the end of the novel, Mariam commits a serious crime and since she is a women she does not receive a proper trial. Mariam describes the unfair trial by saying, “There was no legal council, no public hearing, no cross-examining of evidence, no appeals.. the entire thing lasted less than fifteen minutes.” (323) Although she freely admitted that she committed this crime, the violation of her right to the appropriate trial has the greatest impact on her since this is how she lost her life. There are many times when Mariam has her rights violated and her-wellbeing affected by those who believe they are superior to her.

Aziza is another female character whose well-being is often jeopardized, as a result of the numerous times her rights are violated throughout the novel. During her childhood, Aziza lives in poverty and often finds herself facing starvation. Once, when times get particularly hard for her family, the novel states that, “death from starvation suddenly became a distinct possibility... Aziza’s ribs began to push through the skin and the fat from her cheeks vanished.” (272) During this time of her life, Aziza’s right to have a proper standard of living is violated and she almost loses her life. This leaves both her physical and mental well-being in ruins as she tries to cope with the horrors she faced. To continue, when the Taliban take over the country, they put limits on almost every right that women have, including the right to education. In the novel, Aziza tells

her mother of the secret education she is receiving. She says, “Kaka Zaman made it a point to teach [us] something everyday... but we have to pull the curtains... so the Taliban don't see us.”

(286) With the Taliban forbidding women to be educated, Aziza's chance to have a successful and prosperous life is put at risk, afflicting her well-being. With the many restrictions placed on Aziza's human rights, her well-being faces great opposition, both physically and psychologically.

Laila's well-being is also damaged, as a result of the violations against her human rights. To begin, Laila lives in a country stricken with war where she sees and hears many horrible things. Her life is filled with horror, in the novel it says that Laila “learned that Nila, Giti's mother, had run up and down the street where Giti was killed, collecting pieces of her daughter's flesh... screeching hysterically.” (160) Laila is traumatized by the terrible things that have happened to her and lives in fear. She has recurring nightmares and this affects her mental well-being, leaving her with anxiety. In addition, like Mariam, Laila also marries Rasheed and begins to experience his abusive tendencies. One day, when Laila was enduring her husband's anger, it says that, “she was being dragged by the hair... her eyes watered... and she felt the toe of his shoe connect with her left buttock. She howled with pain as he slammed the door shut. A key rattled in the lock.” (240) As Laila and her baby are locked in a room for several days, it reveals the true extent of Rasheed's cruelty. Both her own life and her daughter's are put on the line, and she would now live in fear of her husband due to the mentally scarring near death experience. Finally, as the Taliban take over, they restrict the right women have to adequate medical care. Laila is greatly affected by this violation when she is in need of a caesarian and

receives no anesthetics. When Laila is talking to the doctor, the novel states, “What do you want me to do? They won’t give me what I need... the doctor took a breath, then told Laila that the hospital had no anesthetic.. if we delay, you will lose your baby.” (259) At this time Laila does not get the health care that she needs. She was not given medication to ease the surgery and left mortified by the unbearable pain she endured. Laila’s health and well-being suffered tremendously, under the copious amount of violations that go against her rights.

As Mariam, Aziza, and Laila struggle together in an abusive home, to survive in war stricken Afghanistan, their well-beings face a great amount of adversity due of the violations against their rights. Each of the female characters undergo tremendous amounts of oppression, and are left scarred both mentally and physically. Aziza is left with severe anxiety, Laila is left traumatized by the things she saw and eventual Mariam sacrifices her own life. It is obvious to see that violating someone’s rights can leave them damaged and have tremendous long lasting effects on their life.

Works Cited

Hosseini, Khaled. *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Toronto: Penguin Group, 2007. Print. 16 Jan. 2016