

TechNews

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McCormick Tribune Campus Center
Room 221
3201 South State Street
Chicago, Illinois 60616

E-mail: editor@technewsiit.com
Website: http://www.technewsiit.com

TechNews STAFF

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Opinion Editor	Shreeyeh Rajan
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ILLINOIS INSTITUTE
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Documentary shows importance of educating women

By Shreeyeh Rajan

OPINION EDITOR

"When you educate a girl, there is a ripple effect that goes beyond what you would get from normal investment... When you educate a girl, you educate a village." - Sheryl WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide*. Last Monday, I saw the free screening of *Half the Sky*. Honestly, even though we watched only half of the film, I was really moved. There are millions of girls around the world who aren't able to obtain an education due to poverty and inequality. Statistics show that for every 100 boys out of school in Yemen, there are 270 girls in Yemen, 316 girls in Iraq and 426 girls in India. Every single day worldwide, 200 million girls wake up and don't go to school.

Giving you a brief abstract of this screening, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* is a television series that showcases women suffering in the most difficult circumstances shot in 10 countries: Cambodia, Kenya, India, Sierra Leone, Somaliland, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Liberia and the U.S. The film focuses on various global issues like sex trafficking, lack of education for girls, maternal mortality, economic empowerment, gender-based violence and intergenerational prostitution. The basic idea of this film is A-list celebrity advocates travelling to these countries, realizing how extreme these girls' situations are and figuring out solutions to fight for them.

The two main solutions for these problems are awareness and education. From education evolves awareness, and with awareness, women have greater control over financial resources and are more likely to invest those resources in their families' health, nutrition and education. Education isn't given as much importance to girls as it is to boys in most of the developing nations. To emphasize this fact, the film travels to Vietnam with actress Gabrielle Union to deeply understand this problem. One of the program officers from Room to Read - a global organization that has transformed the lives of 6

million children in Africa and Asia through education named Bich Thi Vu explains how girls are treated. She says, "My father thought that girls are nothing. One boy is one child, but ten girls are not equivalent to one child." That sentence, though so small, means so much. It shows how girls and women are valued in societies in African and Asian countries. From a very young age, girls are considered much lower than boys no matter how strong or smart.

To engage in this problem, the film meets a bold 14-year-old girl named Nhi Nu

ation would drop out of school, she replies quite prudently, "If I don't, I'll be selling lottery tickets for the rest of my life." As Gabrielle Union responds to her condition, "It's really phenomenal to see what she's able to accomplish without a mother and without a parent who's willing to show her any kind of love and support." This isn't just the case for this family. Families that have at least one girl give no more importance to the hard work of the female. Many of those families literally believe that if 'she' was a son, 'she' could be so much more helpful. In terms

of help, families mean physical work, disregarding education. Every family expects a male child. And if 'by accident' a female child is born, it's not good. Boys are expected to study well and prosper, while girls are expected to accept the criticisms and remain in the same under-rated condition of doing household work. If girls somehow are educated, families ignore the benefits of a good education and focus more on the difficulties of getting a husband.

Most people seem to underestimate a girl's education. When a girl is educated, she has fewer children. She not only manages money well, but also saves up for her family. She spends less money on tobacco and alcohol. A girl's education transforms lives and improves the economy. When women are given the chance to have their own business, dynamics in the household increase and this driving force is further applied in the community, then the society. So, women and girls aren't the problem. They

are the solution. Sheryl WuDunn clarifies this in a TED

talk. She explains an incident that happened when Bill Gates was travelling through Saudi Arabia. He was speaking to an audience that was divided into two different sections based on gender. One of the male members raises his hand and asks, "Mr. Gates, we have here as our goal in Saudi Arabia to be one of the top ten countries when it comes to technology. Do you think we'll make it?" Bill Gates, after staring out in the audience, replies, "If you're not utilizing half the talent in the country, you're not going to get too close to the top ten."

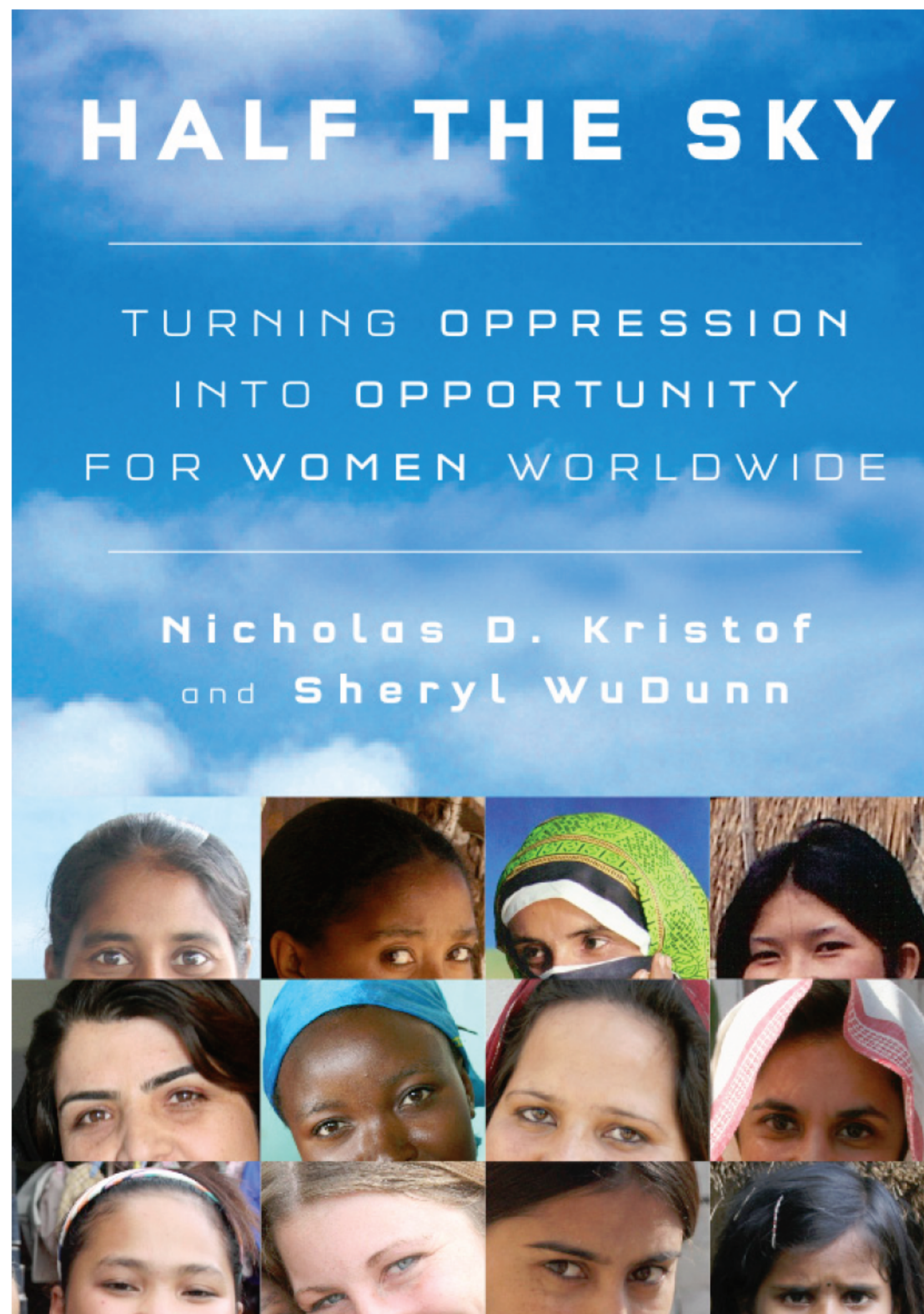


Image courtesy of witf.org

Thi Huynh who excels in her academics and has been supported by Room to Read since 2008. Her everyday life, including Sundays, basically revolves around selling lottery tickets, something she was forced to do by her father. She's the primary earner in the household and works extra-long hours in order to pay for her tuition, something her father disapproves. Abandoned by her mother due to constant beatings by her father, she is also beaten regularly if her father has had a bad day or if she hasn't sold as many tickets as before. When asked what keeps her focused in academics, when many girls in her situ-

Celebrating Diwali shows campus diversity

By Utsav Gandhi & Anita Thomas

CAMPUS EDITOR & TECHNEWS WRITER

"To me, Diwali is a time when people of all faiths can come together to celebrate core human principles--the triumph of good over evil and light over darkness. We all have more in common than we do. All the talk of lively energy, beautiful decoration, and unity has me anxiously anticipating my first Diwali celebration this year." -Anita Thomas, RA, Interfaith community, MSV

"The basic principles that Diwali is based upon, such as the victory of good over evil and wealth and prosperity, are shared by most people - which allows Diwali to be celebrated by a plethora of in-

dividuals of different faiths and beliefs. The fact that Diwali will be celebrated at IIT, the epitome of diversity, only attests to Diwali's ability to unite people from all walks of life based solely on common desires." - Mary Thomas, RA, Service Learning community, MSV

The Indian Festival of Lights (Diwali) began yesterday. The festival starts with Dhanteras, on which most Indian business communities begin their financial year. Amavasya, the third day of Deepawali, marks the worship of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth in her most benevolent mood, fulfilling the wishes of her devotees. The fifth day is referred to as Bhai Dooj, and on this day sisters invite their brothers to their homes.

To celebrate Diwali, two RAs in MSV have organized a special event. A campus-wide program, Mary Thomas is planning a cooking lesson based on traditional Hindu food served during Diwali and Anita Thomas is putting together passive Diwali elements. Rangoli designs and fake candles will fill the room. Diwali place mats and/or tablecloth will provide interesting Diwali facts including the many religions that celebrate this holiday.

The cooking lesson will take place Sunday, November 18 @ 5pm in the East Hall basement in MSV. Non-residents of MSV are also welcome; just let the front desk assistant know that you are there for the program.