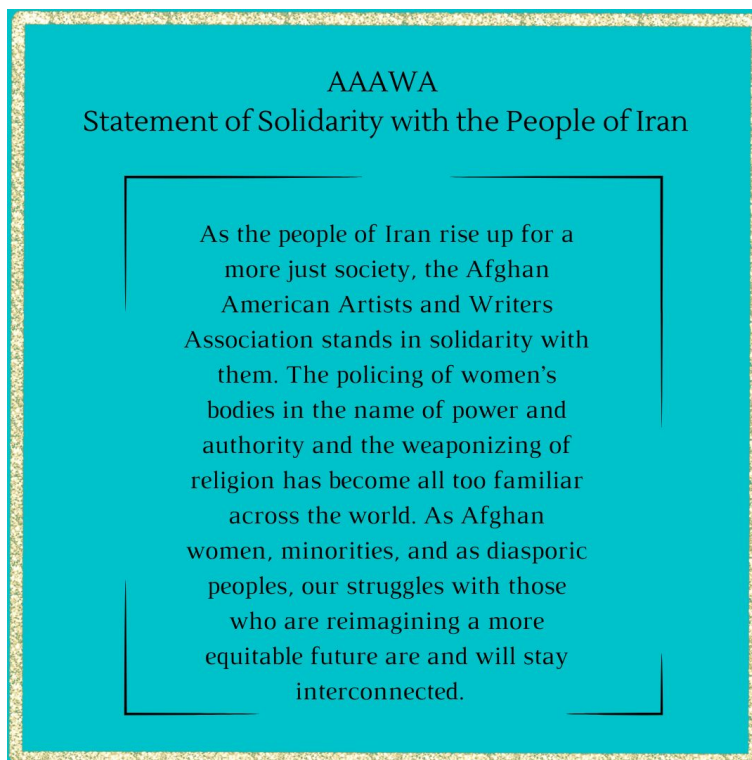


Happy fall from AAAWA! In this season's newsletter we want to take the opportunity to express our solidarity with the people of Iran as they rise up for a more just society. We are excited to introduce our newest board member, Katayoun Bahrami. We recap two events we hosted on the one year anniversary of the mass exodus from Afghanistan, and announce an exciting new talk hosted by AAAWA members at UC Berkeley's Department of Art in October 2022. Finally, we'd like to shout out two Afghan Literary Futures Project alumni who have some exciting new projects to share!



Katayoun Bahrami Joins AAAWA Board



We would like to welcome Katayoun Bahrami in joining the AAAWA Board. To learn more about Katy and her work, follow her at: @katayounbahrami.

***Welcome to the team! Can you tell our readers a little bit about yourself, your interests, and what resonated with you about AAAWA's work?***

Thank you for the warm welcome. I'm thrilled to be collaborating with such a supportive and friendly team. It is a pleasure to work with you, and I look forward to contributing my knowledge and skills.

My name is Katayoun Bahrami, and I am from Tehran, Iran. I moved to the U.S. in late 2014 as a student. My artistic interest focuses on the interaction between women's bodies as targets and performers, affected by boundaries that act as catalysts between the two. I employ photographs, videos, textiles, installations, and mixed-media pieces to express my ideas. I earned my BFA from the University of Science and Culture in Iran. I graduated from Michigan State University with an M.A. in Arts and Cultural Management—Museum Studies. I graduated last year from California College of the Arts, majoring in an MFA in Studio Arts. I am passionate about museums and am glad I had the chance to work and volunteer at contemporary art museums and galleries.

My country, Iran, and Afghanistan have always been linked through music, art, and culture. While both countries remain marked by injustice and violence, our literature and art provide a ray of hope that I appreciate and resonate with. As an Iranian, I genuinely see myself connected to AAAWA's work and mission through what we have in common and the issues that have affected our people and diaspora community through U.S. imperialism, capitalism, and misogynist laws.

***In your view, what role can art play in advocacy?***

Art pays tribute to narratives that belong to those whose voices are suppressed, or better to say, in my practice, to women. Therefore, art is an absolute political tool for social justice and advocacy.

History shows that artists used art as a form of self-expression by reflecting on their personal lives and what they had been through. Practicing visual art is constantly

growing with history; it is continuously being influenced while influencing societal and political events. As an artist, I believe that making art influences society, helping raise awareness of social and political issues. Art, as an advocate, could address and protest policies that challenge human rights in different communities. Immigration rights, health care, reproductive rights, climate change, transgender rights, white supremacy, gender equality, gun control, and sexual harassment could be examples of these challenges.

I believe that it is impressive that art has been used effectively to send public messages about social and political issues. Art and social and political issues go together because of the expressive nature of both subjects. As people, we can stand up for our rights through expression. Due to their ability to create visual interest and promote solidarity, awareness, and protest, artists play a pivotal role in society by promoting advocacy.

***What are some themes that your own art explores and what are some mediums you use?***

My research is a narrative of my personal experience of being an immigrant woman and an artist. I navigate the suspension between two states of being while celebrating my unique culture and history and rejecting oppression and injustice.

In my research, I reveal a sense of responsibility as a voice of awareness from the internal struggle for liberation.

My work has fluidly evolved, informed by collective experience and childhood memories juxtaposed with my current life in the United States. I collaborated with my mother virtually and sometimes with my grandmother mystically to build a bridge between the three generations using crochet, a craft passed down through hands. I work through a series of photographs, textiles, and mixed media to amplify women's roles; I create to give voice to the voiceless.

My projects explore the relationship between women and identity as they are woven through religious and political histories. I further investigate the taboos that target women and their bodies. Farsi's handwriting encompasses my art as a critical material. I am inspired by Persian mystical literature and feminist poems to portray meaning in my work. I confront Iranian misogyny laws and disturb the sense of exile and border.

***What are you looking forward to as the newest member of AAAWA's board?***

As a board member, I strive to take the initiative and provide genuine support for AAAWA and the Afghan American community. I look forward to growing in the space that allows me to practice thoughtful stewardship, leadership, community building, engagement, critical dialogue, and innovation.

On Thursday, August 25, 2002, AAWA hosted “*An Assembly of Moths: Afghanistan, One Year Later*” — an online gathering through art. The program provided an opportunity to reflect on the somber anniversary while also affirming our humanity, preservation, and imagination through poetry, song, dance, film, and a participatory sonic healing ritual.

**Featured artists included:**

- Ali Baluch, Filmmaker
- Liala Zaray, Poet
- Mozhdeh Ahmadi, Writer
- Noor Agha Ahmadi, Filmmaker
- Parul Shah, Kathak dancer
- Qais Essar, Rabab Player
- Seelai Karzai, Poet
- Trina Basu & Arun Ramamurthy, Violinists
- Zeeshan Khan Talaash, Filmmaker
- Zelikha Shoja, Interdisciplinary artist

Response from an attendee:

*“Afghanistan and Korea’s histories are so different and yet there is the similarity of incredible pain and loss and diaspora after the involvement of the US/Western powers. I learned so much but also felt so much resonance with my own sense of personal/ethnic/national history.”*

—Hyejung Kook



Watch the full event video on YouTube.

## Recap of “Humanitarian Parole” Discussion

On Monday August 29, 2022, the Afghan American Artists and Writers Association co-hosted a panel discussion in partnership with Afghans For a Better Tomorrow and Project ANAR on Afghan experiences of humanitarian parole. One year after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, Afghan nationals throughout the world find themselves displaced and with little to no certainty about their futures. This discussion featured the perspectives of lawyers, advocates, and first-hand accounts of applicants. Panelists discussed how humanitarian parole has failed Afghan applicants; the history of HP in the context of US immigration policy; and steps we can take to advocate for fairer and more just immigration policies.

### **Panelists included:**

- Arash Azizzada, Co-Founder and Director of Community Engagement, Afghans For a Better Tomorrow
- Halema Wali, Co-Founder and Director of Community Engagement, Afghans For a Better Tomorrow
- Karla McKanders, Clinical Professor of Law, Vanderbilt University
- Laila Ayub, Project ANAR Co-Founder and Immigration Lawyer



Watch the full discussion video on Vimeo.

## Artist Panel Discussion at UC Berkeley

Scheduled for October 20, 2022

In *Emergent Archives of Afghan Diasporic Memory*, a panel discussion hosted at UC Berkeley's Department of Art on October 20, 2022, artist Zelikha Shoja and writer Hawa Arsala will discuss the power of storytelling in transforming and reimagining community identity. The panelists will examine how visual art and writing serve as unique mediums to engage with themes of ancestral identity, diasporic memory, and oral traditions of storytelling. In doing so, the discussion will explore how written and visual stories can create counter-archives to dominant representations of Afghan life. In situating these narratives as emergent, this discussion will also reference recent events in Afghanistan and their resonance for visual artists and writers in the diaspora, including the new forms of political consciousness they inspire.

The talk will be hosted on Zoom, and will take place on Thursday October 20, 2022, **starting** 12:45 PM, and end at approximately 2:00 PM. You can **register** clicking the button below.

[Register](#)

## Shout Outs

**Alexandra Millatmal**

Afghan Literary Futures Project alumni Alexandra Millatmal publishes "[Aina Mosaf](#)" — a flash fiction piece in The Margins magazine from the Asian American Writers' Workshop.

In Alexandra's layered, lush flash fiction piece, the title character subversively reflects the sacred ritual which occurs during many Afghan weddings, the aina mosaf. Aina sees herself perhaps for the first time amidst the tragedies of divorce, an ongoing global pandemic, and the hasty U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, her father's home country.

## **Liala Zaray**

Afghan Literary Futures Project alumni Liala Zaray earns second place for her poem "CNN's correspondent thinks afghani means Afghan" in the 2022 Palette Poetry Emerging Poet Prize, selected by guest judge Safia Elhillo.

Liala's poem has many surprising turns and clever enjambments which showcase the slow erosion of an entire people amidst a largely indifferent global bureaucracy.

Afghan American Artists and Writers Association

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