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## **Seattle Resident About to Embark on a Women's Delegation to Afghanistan**

### **Kristie McLean Will Explore Women's Role in the Post-Taliban Era**

Seattle resident Kristie McLean will depart the United States on March 3rd to participate in a women's delegation to Kabul, Afghanistan, where she hopes to gain first-hand insight into Afghan women's perspectives on their lives and the future of the country.

Although Afghanistan is mostly gone from the news headlines in the United States, signs of the armed conflict that have raged in that country for more than three decades are still visible throughout Afghanistan, as are signs of change, especially for Afghan women. Women were banned entirely from participation in public life under the five-year long reign of the Taliban, but now they are working publicly and tirelessly throughout the country to improve all aspects of life there.

Kristie McLean will be traveling to Afghanistan from March 3rd – 16<sup>th</sup> with the human rights organization Global Exchange. During the trip, called "Women Making Change," she will meet with women from all sectors of Afghan society as well as with leading politicians and activists. She will also explore Afghanistan's rich cultural heritage and visit grassroots and non-governmental organizations. And she will experience first-hand the critical work being done in fundamental tasks ranging from sustaining peace and restoring Afghanistan's crumbled infrastructure to developing educational institutions and repairing damaged cultural treasures.

Last year, participants on the "Women Making Change" delegation visited organizations such as Afghans4Tomorrow -- an NGO that founded and runs three schools for girls; PARWAZ – an organization devoted to providing micro loans to Afghan women to create small businesses that can end the cycle of poverty; and the Afghan Human Rights Commission. They also met with representatives of the Afghan Women Judges Association and a number of candidates for Parliament who were awaiting the results of the country's election.

**Writer and Photographer Kristie McLean is available for interviews before and after her trip to Afghanistan. She can be reached at (206) 323-7057. During the trip, she can be reached by email at [travelpoet@hotmail.com](mailto:travelpoet@hotmail.com).**

Global Exchange, the organization sponsoring the women's delegation to Afghanistan, has been offering socially responsible Reality Tours since its founding in 1988. These tours give travelers opportunities to explore the impact US foreign and economic policies around the world, while highlighting the hope and resilience of local communities. In addition to Afghanistan, Global Exchange

offers tours to Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Cambodia and Laos, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Iran, Ireland, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Palestine/Israel, South Africa, Syria and Lebanon, Tanzania, Venezuela and Vietnam.