

# NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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## CIVIC PHOTOGRAPHY EXHIBITION BY AFGHAN AND PHILADELPHIA STUDENTS LAUNCHES AT THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER ON MAY 14

Philadelphia, PA (April 14, 2010) – Students from Marefat High School in Kabul, Afghanistan and Constitution High School in Philadelphia, PA have collaborated on an unprecedented civic photography exhibition, ***Being “We the People”: Afghanistan, America and the Minority Imprint***, which will debut simultaneously at the National Constitution Center and the National Museum of Afghanistan on Friday, May 14, 2010. The student-created exhibition will be on display in the Center’s Posterity Hall through September 26, 2010. Admission is FREE with regular museum admission.

Equipped with digital cameras, the 21 students – many of whom had never held a camera before – learned how to conduct documentary photography and ventured into their communities to capture images of freedom, religious expression, protest, and other civic themes. Their photographs, portraying everything from weddings to parades and prayer services to political demonstrations, explore how minorities in different democracies perceive themselves as citizens and how they define citizenship.

Beginning in July 2009, students from both schools shared their work and ideas online at <http://beingwethepeople.shutterfly.com/>. In March 2010, the Afghan students traveled to the United States and met face-to-face with their American counterparts to curate the exhibition. Together, the students scoured through over 500 photographs in order to select pairs – one image from each country – that showcase both the striking differences and startling similarities between Afghanistan and the United States. They also wrote accompanying captions, explaining the circumstances under which the photographs were taken.

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## ADD ONE/BEING “WE THE PEOPLE”

“The camera taught me how to capture moments,” said Fatima Jafari, 16, of Marefat High School. “It is inspiring to be able to deal with living moments in a still frame. I have a tough future ahead, but I am determined not to surrender to the harsh realities of my community and my time. I want to be instrumental for a better change in my fate, and one of the ways I can accomplish this is through photography. There is a lot that can be said through the camera; it is a miracle.”

“This has been one of the single greatest and most poignant projects I've been involved in,” said Ian McShea, a senior at Constitution High School, who taught himself Dari in preparation for the Afghan students' visit to the United States. “Meeting the Afghan students has taught me volumes of things that I didn't know about Afghanistan, Islam, and the Muslim world in general. I have regained faith, not only in humanity, but especially in my own generation, my global brothers and sisters.”

“This enriching cultural exchange has sparked an important conversation about the meaning of citizenship, and the students are shining examples of active citizens,” said David Eisner, President and CEO of the National Constitution Center. “The exhibition will have a profound effect on visitors, who will be fascinated and shocked by the parallels in the photographs, the products of a visual dialogue between young people in two vastly different democracies.”

Visitors to the exhibition will have the opportunity to join in the dialogue. A total of 70 photographs will be on display, but additional images will be accessible at electronic touch-screens, where guests of both the National Constitution Center and the National Museum of Afghanistan can peruse photo pairings and recommend those that resonate with them most. Through internet connectivity, users in both countries will see how their recommendations compare with those made by other visitors to the Center and the National Museum of Afghanistan.

The photographs will live in perpetuity on the National Constitution Center's website at [www.constitutioncenter.org/international](http://www.constitutioncenter.org/international).

## ADD TWO/BEING “WE THE PEOPLE”

*Being “We the People”* is part of the National Constitution Center’s International Engagement Project, which is dedicated to establishing international exchange and promoting constitutional principles to emerging democracies through educational and civic learning initiatives.

The American Association of Museums awarded the Center a Museums & Community Collaborations Abroad grant to support the exhibition. Museums & Communities Collaboration Abroad is a program of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the US Department of State in partnership with the American Association of Museums.

The National Constitution Center, located at 525 Arch St. on Philadelphia’s Independence Mall, is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of the U.S. Constitution and the ideas and values it represents. The Center serves as a museum, an education center, and a forum for debate on constitutional issues. The museum dramatically tells the story of the Constitution from Revolutionary times to the present through more than 100 interactive, multimedia exhibits, film, photographs, text, sculpture and artifacts, and features a powerful, award-winning theatrical performance, “Freedom Rising”. The Center also houses the Annenberg Center for Education and Outreach, which serves as the hub for national constitutional education. Also, as a nonpartisan forum for constitutional discourse, the Center presents – without endorsement – programs that contain diverse viewpoints on a broad range of issues. For more information, call 215.409.6700 or visit [www.constitutioncenter.org](http://www.constitutioncenter.org).

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