

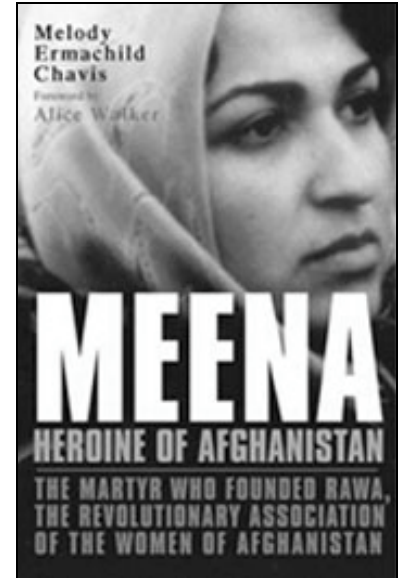
READING GROUP GUIDE

Meena

by Melody Ermachild Chavis

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Introduction to *Meena*

Meena founded the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan in 1977 as a twenty-year-old Kabul University student. She was assassinated in 1987 at the age of thirty, and lives on in the hearts of all progressive Muslim women. Her voice, speaking for freedom, has never been silenced. The compelling story of Meena's struggle for democracy and women's rights in Afghanistan will inspire young women the world over.

Meena, Heroine of Afghanistan is a portrait of a courageous mother, poet and leader who symbolizes an entire movement of women that can influence the fate of nations. It is also a riveting account of a singular political career whose legacy has been inherited by RAWA, the women who hold the keys to a peaceful future for Afghanistan. RAWA has authorized this first-ever biography of their martyred founder.

Reading Group Guide Questions

1. Meena's family was relatively privileged, but she identified strongly with very poor people. Why? Which other leaders can you think of who made similar choices?
2. How is the Sharia legal code similar to or different from the laws of your country? How did Meena hope to change Afghan law, if she could have become a judge?
3. What barriers do women in your country face? Compare women's situation where you live to their conditions in Afghanistan.

4. What are some of the advantages for women of wearing clothing that covers their bodies, in cultures that make women's modesty a high priority?
5. What are some of the advantages to women of segregation of the sexes in school, work and social life? What are the disadvantages?
6. How do you think RAWA's work would have been different if Meena had founded it as an open-membership group instead of as a clandestine organization?
7. Meena did not work alone. How did forming an organization help further her goals? Can you think of individuals in history who were effective by their individual actions? Who are some leaders you admire who formed organizations or started movements? What organization would you join? What organization would you like to start? What would be its goals?
8. What roles did the Soviet Union and the United States play in Afghanistan? What do you think is the responsibility of a foreign power to take action in countries where there are terrible human rights violations?
9. Why is literacy so important to RAWA?
10. What do you think of a woman leaving her children with caretakers in order to pursue the goal of changing society for the better? What about a man? Under what circumstances would you do this?
11. Do you think it is wrong for a mother to risk her life for a principle she believes in? Is it more wrong for a mother to do so than for a father?
12. What principles do you believe in that you would risk your life for? When have you taken even a small risk to speak up when only a few people, or no one around you would agree with you? Can you think of an occasion when you did speak up? How about a time when you did not speak up, and you wish you had?
13. What are Meena's qualities that inspire young people today?

Author Biography

Melody Ermachild Chavis is the author of *Altars in the Street* (Bell Tower), and works as a private investigator in the San Francisco Bay Area. She traveled to Afghanistan and Pakistan to interview women those knew Meena.