

## The Stoning of Soraya Diversity Training Guide

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**Received:** October 25, 2019; **Published:** February 18, 2020

The movie, *Stoning of Soraya*, can be a bit challenging to watch on many levels. This is a very intense movie which shows the graphic details of Soraya, who is stoned to death by her community. It is always my desire to expose my students in the Counseling Diverse Populations class to various cultures and ethnicities that are not just limited to the United States of America. This was a movie I used when I was on a deployment with the United States Army in Afghanistan as a Civil Affairs Officer. I had the honor of training service members who worked in the local villages; therefore, it was my goal to ensure they had some knowledge concerning the culture they were working with.

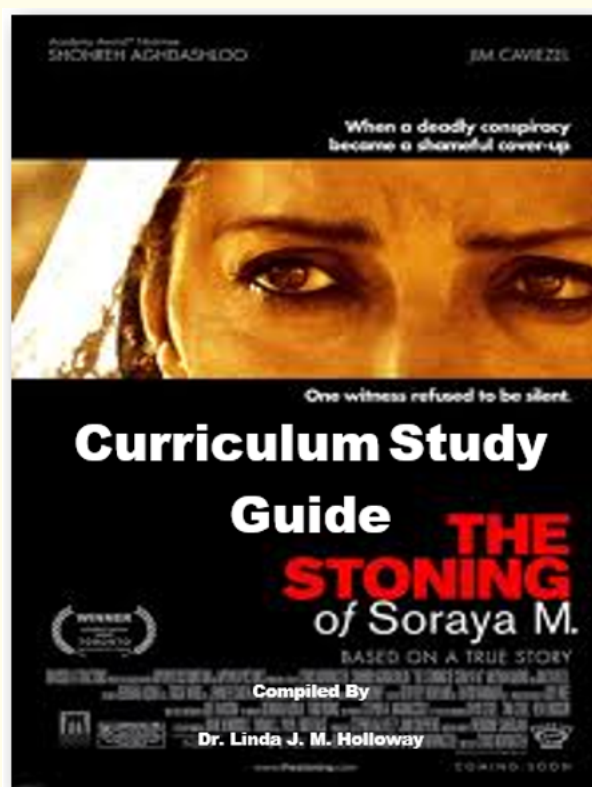
When I arrived back home to the states, I wanted to share my experiences with my students. As part of my teaching style, I use movies to teach concepts. Therefore, it was natural for me to incorporate this movie into my Counseling Diverse Populations class. I prepared my students by informing them there were some gross scenes in the movie. If, at any time, they felt like the movie was too much for them emotionally, they could step outside the classroom to collect themselves and then return. I was prepared to go outside of the class if a student exited the class to provide emotional support if warranted. Fortunately, when I have shown this movie, majority of the students watch it in its entirety without exiting the room. You would want to have this as an option so that you are not forcing students to watch a movie that is unbearable for them emotionally.

Overall, my students found the movie extremely enlightening and desired to learn more about my experiences in Afghanistan and the culture differences.

The *Stoning of Soraya* is a movie where Soraya's husband creates false accusations about her having an affair so he can have her stoned. His ultimate plan was to marry a younger woman.

Below is copy of my curriculum guide. I hope you find it useful and beneficial.

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*Figure 1*

**The stoning of soraya M.**

1. Who is your most favorite character in the movie and why?
2. Who is your least favorite character in the movie and why?
3. What is Mullah? What are their roles in the community?
4. I want you to think of role that men played in this movie and describe how you see them in relationship to their culture. Compare and contrast their attributes as they relate to the men you know in your culture.



*Figure 2*

- **For example:**
  - Mullah
  - Mayor
  - Journalist
  - Mechanic
  - The sons of Soraya
  - Soraya's Husband-ALI
  - Soraya's Father.
5. What role does religion and culture play in this movie? Explain and be prepared to provide examples.
  6. How would you describe Soraya's Aunt "Zaraha?" What were the things you admired most about her? Do you think she could have done anything different to assist Soraya early on in her marriage? Why or why not?

7. What exactly is spousal abuse? How is it dealt with in Afghanistan? What rights do the women have? What role does culture and religion play in this type of abuse? As a counselor, how would you assist someone who might confide in you that their husband is abusing them from this culture and your own culture?



Figure 3

8. Describe the type of abuse you witness Soraya experiencing. How would you say this impacted who she was? What impact do you think it had on her children (boys vs. girls)? Please explain and give examples.
9. Soraya has sought your agency for counseling. Explain how you would help. Be sure to include a psychosocial history along with a treatment plan. Role play your counseling session.
10. What was Soraya's husband's motivation for wanting a divorce? Explain.
11. Describe what type of relationship Ali, Soraya's husband, had with his children, particularly his sons.
  - What impact do you think he had on his little girls?
  - What do you think he meant when he stated to his sons, "This is a man's world".
  - What did he mean when he told his wife, "Do not look at me like that".
12. What was the reason(s) Soraya gave that she would not leave her husband? What impact do you think religion and culture played in her inability to leave her husband?
13. What was the relationship between Soraya's husband Ali and that of the Mullah? What tactic did he use to encourage the Mullah to initially persuade Soraya to divorce her husband?

14. What was the breaking point for the local mechanic to cave, to give in, and to trump up adultery charges against Soraya?
15. To what extent did Soraya's husband Ali go through to divorce her? Explain in detail.
16. Describe how Soraya says goodbye to her daughters.
17. What does Soraya tell her sons and the community prior to her death?
18. What are some things you admire the most about Soraya? What do you admire the least?
19. What does Zara mean when she tells the journalist, "There are snakes in this village and we cannot let them get away with this".
20. What part of this movie was the most gut wrenching and why? Please explain.
21. Why do you think Zara was so determined to get the journalist to record her story? Explain how that relates to us today when it comes to working with the women of Afghanistan.



*Figure 4*

### Recommended Readings

1. Hershey John W and Hesley Jan G. "Two Films and Let's Talk in the Morning: Using Popular Movies in Psychotherapy 2<sup>nd</sup> edition". John Wiley and Son, Inc. New York (2001).
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**Volume SP1 Issue 5 March 2020**

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