



Mountain to Mountain: A Journey of Adventure and Activism for the Women of Afghanistan

Shannon Galpin

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Being inspired to act can take many forms. For some it's taking a weekend to volunteer, but for Shannon Galpin, it meant leaving her career, selling her house, launching a nonprofit and committing her life to advancing education and opportunity for women and girls. Focusing on the war-torn country of Afghanistan, Galpin and her organization, Mountain2Mountain, have touched the lives of hundreds of men, women and children. As if launching a nonprofit wasn't enough, in 2009 Galpin became the first woman to ride a mountain bike in Afghanistan. Now she's using that initial bike ride to gain awareness around the country, encouraging people to use their bikes "as a vehicle for social change and justice to support a country where women don't have the right to ride a bike."

In *Mountain to Mountain*, her lyric and honest memoir, Galpin describes her first forays into fundraising, her deep desire to help women and girls halfway across the world, her love for adventure and sports, and her own inspiration to be so much more than just another rape victim. During her numerous trips to Afghanistan, Shannon reaches out to politicians and journalists as well as everyday Afghans — teachers, prison inmates, mothers, daughters — to cross a cultural divide and find common ground. She narrates harrowing encounters, exhilarating bike rides, humorous episodes, and the heartbreak inherent in a country that is still recovering from decades of war and occupation.

Mountain to Mountain: A Journey of Adventure and Activism for the Women of Afghanistan Details

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From Reader Review Mountain to Mountain: A Journey of Adventure and Activism for the Women of Afghanistan for online ebook

Anna says

I was a little bit disappointed by Mountain To Mountain but I think it is because so many of these stories are just really great and inspiring and the bar is too high. What I liked the most about Galpin's memoir is the unfair discrimination against women that have careers in dangerous places or in dangerous professions because they are mothers and yet fathers get a pass. She makes an eloquent and heartfelt argument and she is, of course, right. What I liked least was her insistence that she shouldn't be asked about Greg Mortenson when she actually worked for him - I really don't know what she thought would happen! Her description of being raped as a teenager was raw, suitably upsetting and quite profound. A terrible thing.

Benish Khan (Queen.Beenie) says

I like how rich in detailed this book is about Afghanistan. I love reading cross cultural books and memoirs, this was a book I enjoyed from beginning to end. The writer Shannon shows a different insight into the lives of Afghanistan and Afghan women. I honestly had not heard of women in Afghanistan bike riding especially wearing a burka. The concept of this memoir is original and unique.

It was exciting for me to get into the book, but it was a bit slow afterwards. Shannon Galpin has transformed the lives of Afghan women. She was a young rape survivor, and now is a global activist. She was the first woman to mountain bike ride in Afghanistan which is quite daring. It's pretty easy to bike ride in western overseas, but in Afghanistan it is illegal. I'm glad she does it though!

She's not disrespecting the culture or the law at all. Her apparent love for the women of Afghanistan clearly shows. She's challenging the law, there's a difference. As a Muslim, I'm aware that there is no law in Islam itself that states women cannot bike ride. As long as they have their husband's, father's or brother's permission, they can. In Afghanistan, the government is being extreme with most of their laws, so I'm glad Shannon made a change!

I liked the book beginning to the end. It's great to read a success story! I didn't find any major flaws with it, only that it was slow at some parts. It's a well written novel based on real life incidents. I like how passionate the author is about Afghanistan and starting a women's movement. She engages the reader to do something more meaningful one day. She left everything behind in her life to change the lives of others. I hope one day I can make a difference like she did. Mountain to Mountain is an inspiring that I recommend everyone should read.

Disclosure: Review copy was sent free of charge from St. Martin's press in exchange for an honest review.

Pat says

Shannon Galpin is an activist, mountain biker and founder of the non-profit organization Mountain2Mountain. This book is her story of the journey she has taken since deciding to visit Afghanistan in the mid 2000's. She has broken down barriers by using her bike to travel across a lot of war torn Afghanistan visiting women's prisons, speaking to politicians, schools and eventually deciding to focus on women's rights. Galpin has been to Afghanistan many times, taking computers to schools, focusing on women in prison and the children that live with them. She was the first woman to mountain bike in Afghanistan, in a country where women are not allowed to bike ride. The book follows her journey as a single mother who decides that she wants to make a change in the world and bring awareness to the plight of women who suffer inequality due to either a government or religious mores.

The book is at its most powerful when she talks about her experiences traveling through a country that is still a war zone. Bombings, bandits and the risk of being kidnapped are ever present, but she bravely goes to various parts of the country to meet with different locals to see how she can make a difference. She details the single most changing point in her life; being raped and almost killed in Minneapolis. It is through sharing this most secret part of her life, that she begins to acknowledge that it no longer has power over her and that she is not a victim; just as she views the women in Afghanistan as not being victims. It is evident that she loves the people of this country and the rugged beauty that she explores. Galpin also realizes that she is being held to a different standard than men who do similar work in dangerous countries. Why as a single mother is she putting herself at risk, how can she leave her daughter for weeks at a time? She discusses this double standard.

"Mothers are simply not allowed to take the same risks as fathers according to the public conversation, and those that do are judged harshly....yet I find myself pondering for the first time in my adult life, "If I were a man, this wouldn't even be an issue." It wouldn't. Fathers travel for work all the time. Fathers often make their careers the priority over family." " I look at the example I'm trying to set for for Devon. Through my actions, I am showing her that involvement in the global community is important, and that one person can make a difference. I am raising a daughter who who will have a strong sense of self. I hope that when she becomes a mother, she will continue to follow her dreams and stick to her ideals rather than give them up when she has her own children; the two are not mutually exclusive."

Galpin also set up a traveling art exhibit in Afghanistan that were scenes of photos taken in Afghanistan. She became a huge supporter of public art in a country where most people cannot take advantage of art. On one of her recent visits, she discovers that a women's cycling team has been established. She begins working with these women and the men's team by bringing over bikes, parts and working with the Afghanistan coach. She is astounded at the courage the women exhibit by putting themselves on a bike in a country where a woman straddling a bicycle is viewed as lewd. I discovered after reading this book, that the Afghanistan women's cycling team had been up for a Nobel Peace Prize. Also, I found surprising that it was only in 1984 that the U.S. sponsored a women's cycling team for the Olympics. After one hundred years when American women had started riding bicycles, they were allowed to ride in the Olympics.

A great read and whereas a lot of us cannot physically make changes globally, Galpin asserts that we all take a look around us locally in our own communities and follow our passion regarding helping make a change; whether it is with the homeless, the mentally ill, children in need etc.

This book was a win on GoodReads and this is my honest review. Thank you St. Martin's Press.

Emily at Reaching While Rooted says

Shannon's story was a refreshing change in perspective. Her vantage point as an "other", a woman bit a foreigner allowed her access to a viewpoint of the Middle East few get to see. Throw in a bike, schools, and women's rights and you have an inspiring memoir.

Heba says

I finished the book only because I wanted to know more about the Afghans and their daily life from the author's point of view, but I didn't like the level of details she used to describe everything, I found it boring and sometimes distracting.

Also I didn't like the order of the chapters, expected a book about Afghanistan and got only half of the book about the Afghanistan experiences and the other half about the writer's personal life, her family and her past, which I wasn't expecting half the book to be dedicated to.

But although I didn't enjoy reading the book that much, I'm glad to know about her experience.

Cindy says

Although Ms. Galphin's experiences in Afghanistan are covered, this book is more a story of her finding her way past a life crisis to a meaningful life. Also, I expected more pictures.

Amanda Corry says

Hoped to learn more about Afghanistan. More of a personal journey.

Nancy says

I read this in fits and starts due to a mild disinterest. I thought, oh dear, another Afghanistan do gooder... but it's different since this is the story of a woman who has devoted her life to the women of Afghanistan and tied in her passion of cycling. Her descriptions of the women's lives she comes to know in prisons and on the streets is of interest but overall, it was not remarkable, nor did it spur me into giving it all up and moving there myself.

Mary says

a little misleading, not so much about the bike.

young mom goes to Afghanistan to help, in her own way.

unfortunately I didn't really like her. probably biased cuz I didn't like her leaving her young child to go do

her own thing. she has an inspiring story but I'm more of a rule follower and she is not, not sure if she's altruistic or just selfish.

Donna Carroll says

I couldn't get into the characters of the book. Although the author is writing about her experiences in Afghanistan, I felt no connection to the people, or her organization. There was little to no details, which would have made it interesting.

Paul says

Thought I'd like it more, got really slow & turned into a story of personal aggrandizement & I finally couldn't keep slogging away anymore.

Heena Gahlon says

I received the book for free through Goodreads First Reads. I had mixed feelings about this book at first. It started off exciting and then got real slow. But as the story progresses you start to see that each part of the story intertwines to a climax that weaves the whole story together. This book is rich in detail painting Afghanistan not only in images the media portrays but a very different view. One full of amazing landscapes and the culture and soul that drive the Afghani people. Sometimes it almost felt like I could close my eyes and be led on an exploration of the beauty of this country. Shannon shows not only a unique insight on life from a different perspective, but she paints the story of why we as a nation should help others, that the "silver lining" of one moment can lead to helping so many others. It inspires and relates two very different worlds. Definitely would recommend this book, it inspired me to want to do more in this world.

Gail Owen says

The story of Shannon Galpin's own personal growth was truly the most predominate story in this book. There were many times that the anecdotes of loose bowels or head scarf problems overshadowed what she was accomplishing in her trips to Afghanistan. A co-author could have helped her better focus her storyline.

Laura says

Shannon tells about the struggles women experience yet others feel to embarrassed to talk about. Opening up about the difficult times could help empower many. I hope men also read this book to realize how much women are demoralized and belittles. To not be able to ride a bike because of the act of straddling something is ridiculous yet very real in Afghanistan. I too have visited several places in the country and understand what Shannon writes, witnessed and experienced. There are some very genuine and caring people over there,

but it's very dangerous.

I too left my 3 year old son to visit Afghanistan to help the country while making the US a safer place to live. I was criticized and shamed for leaving my son, but it was the best experience and my son loves me even more for living my life.

I am also a competitive mountain biker and would love ride in the afghan mountains and with the men's and women's race team. Great experience for her.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book and thankful for Shannon's work.

Michelle says

I won a copy of this book through Goodreads First Reads. This was a heartfelt story of the author's personal tragedy and how it led her to want to help change the injustices that women of Afghanistan face. Overall, I felt the book jumped around a bit in a way that could make it hard to follow at times, but it all comes together when sticking it through to the end. I appreciated her very personal account of the events leading up to her decision to make a difference for the women of Afghanistan, and reading about the impact she made on people that she visited there on her journey.
