

## Our Afghan Artisans

The women who created these items are from families of Afghan soldiers who fought alongside the US Military against the Taliban. These women have experienced life in conditions that are inconceivable to us. They grew up under the repressive Taliban regime and raised families in a never-ending war zone in their country. While our artisans were unable to get any formal education or work outside of the home, they have impressed us with their unique skills, creativity and resilience. Sewing and selling these beautiful items is helping to empower the Afghan women, who feel immense pride as they develop confidence in their ability to contribute to the self-sufficiency of their families in their new country.



Always ready with a shy smile and a big hug, Beduna is a good-natured young mom who has resettled in New England with her husband, son and two daughters. Like many Afghans, she doesn't know her birthday, but is probably 29. After a rough home life, Beduna was given in marriage to a kind man, who was a farmer from a small village near the Pakistan border, before joining the Afghan army. This war-torn region was the front line of the US war with the Taliban, who attacked the US - Afghan army from the mountains of Pakistan. Though they have had a difficult life, they are a strong and loving family. Beduna's husband works second shift in a factory. The couple are proud to begin learning English and are adapting to life in America. Their eldest, a 3rd grade boy, dotes on his 3 and 1 ½ year old sisters. Beduna is very fashionable and sews her own clothes. She is incredibly proud to be earning income from her skills.



Calm and level-headed, Rabia is 31 and comes from a larger city near the Pakistan border. Her husband was a squad leader in the front line of the Afghan army and recovered from multiple gunshot wounds. He is educated and speaks 4 languages, but Rabia didn't have the opportunity to attend school. Nevertheless, Rabia is very smart, resourceful and quick to pick up English. Before the war, Rabia's husband had a tailor shop and Rabia helped with the work in the shop. Now he works second shift in a factory. Rabia has 5 young boys who do well in school and are avid soccer players. Rabia is an excellent cook and bakes bread for her family daily. She is an expert seamstress and her husband is a skilled tailor and upholsterer. They are available for custom tailoring and upholstery.



Lively, intelligent and outgoing, Zahra is 34 and comes from southern Afghanistan. She and her husband lived in the city where the Taliban was most entrenched. Zahra was not able to attend school, was given in marriage to a relative at a young age, gave birth at home to seven children and was responsible for cleaning and cooking for her husband's large extended family. Like all Afghans, Zahra is very hospitable and goes out of her way to make visitors welcome in her meticulous home. She is so vivacious that it is impossible to imagine her living life wearing a burka. Zahra's husband worked with first the Canadian and then the US Army. After being targeted by the Taliban, they fled the country with their children. Zahra's husband also works on the night shift at a factory. Zahra studied tailoring at vocational school and can make just about anything. She also does traditional Afghan embroidery. Zahra is proud to now be called a businesswoman and to contribute to helping her family become self-sufficient in America.

