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HIDDEN STORIES OF A WOMAN'S LIFE IN IRAN REVEALED THROUGH UNIQUE BOND OF TRUST BETWEEN TWO AMERICAN MOMS – ONE JEWISH, THE OTHER IRANIAN-MUSLIM

Every culture and every family has stories known only to a small inner circle. Some are hidden to protect another person, others are unspoken because they're not safe to tell, and then there are those locked deep inside because they're too painful to remember. *Nine Rubies*, by Mahru Ghashghaei as told to Susan Snyder, demonstrates the healing power of friendship and of telling the personal stories that can be shared. The book, now also available as an e-book, serves as a testament to the struggles faced by many women and children throughout the world. It demonstrates how having the freedom and courage to speak out can provide hope, strength and a powerful key to change. Sharing personal history helps people realize they don't need to endure alone.

Mahru Ghashghaei's book begins in a strife-ridden Iran with all those stories – abandonment by a father, a sister who'd been abused and tricked into marrying against her will at age 13, and a shocking family secret that very nearly destroyed Mahru's own life as a young woman. Her ability to persevere and to look for a larger purpose in life led her to nursing and to counseling young teens. She trained medical volunteers during the Iran-Iraq War and, with a group of her friends in Iran, adopted 9 orphaned boys to keep them from being put in foster care or further harmed when the country was at war.

When staying in Iran became untenable, Mahru left her two beloved sisters, and her mother (who she eventually brought to the United States). She started a new life here with her husband and her sons, but still stayed connected with her family in Iran, and she kept parts of her own story buried. She could not have imagined that attending a parent workshop given by Susan Snyder, who runs an educational consulting company in Connecticut and who had begun collecting family oral histories, would give those stories new purpose and take on a life of their own. Mahru and Susan's initial trust began over tea as the mothers of sons who were close friends, but deepened dramatically as they found surprising connections in common and nurtured the seeds of a powerful story that needed to be told.

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Mahru, who lives in Hoboken, New Jersey, and Susan, who is in Rowayton, Connecticut, give talks and lectures together about the book and their experiences. They are finding that women and men from many walks of life tell them these bittersweet tales from the Middle East that are like their own stories – of neglect, of fear, of emotional and physical abuse, and of having been a child left to find their own means to cope when adults in their life were unable to provide sustenance.

Nine Rubies, <http://www.ninerubiesthebook.com>, is also a compelling reminder of the everyday human struggles of the people in a closed society that most of the world knows primarily through the religious and political power struggles that take place on the world stage. In doing so, it offers hope that we remember that the fallout of political action, social policy and restriction of freedom is widespread, touching every village and town, and ultimately impacting each person who has a burden to bear and try to overcome.

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Nine Rubies

By Mahru Ghashghaei as told to Susan Snyder

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