

Activist of the century uses pen, ink to make change

BY BRENT EISENBARTH
STAFF WRITER

A flash of light engulfed the school bus when the Taliban shot Malala Yousafzai. Fired at point blank, the bullet ricocheted off a cupped portion of Malala's skull.

Malala was saved. But what could a 16-year-old girl have done to instigate a death order from the Taliban?

In 2009, the BBC began publishing Malala's journals detailing life under Taliban rule, where women were strictly prohibited from attending school.

"All I want is an education, and I am afraid of no one," Malala said.

As Malala voiced activism for women's education, the Taliban unsuccessfully attempted to silence her. Instead, they invited global attention to Malala's stand in the fight for women's education.

Since her recovery, Malala has implored the U.N. to support women's education, published her memoir, "I am Malala," been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and founded the Malala Fund, an organization that supports women's education

across the world.

"Education is everything," said Julie Burke, assistant professor of education studies. "In order to be empowered in the world ... in order to be able to take advantage of opportunities, you need some tools.

"You need to be able to read, to write and to compute."

With this in mind, Malala has been channelizing media-frenzy energy to maximize the Malala Fund's impact. The organization's first grant provided financial support for 40 girls at Malala's Pakistani school — girls who would have otherwise left school to perform domestic work.

"Let us turn the education of 40 girls into 40 million girls," Malala said to the Women in the World summit in New York City.

Since its founding last year, the Malala Fund has established schools in Pakistan in an effort to change old practices that stigmatize women's education.

"She's got guts, beyond guts," said Lana Abutabanja, Palestinian Early College senior. "She has the courage to speak out amidst a culture that says, 'women are not supposed to do that.' I really think she's a hero."

Jeremy Rinker, visiting assistant professor of peace and conflict studies explained Malala's hero effect.

"There is something to be said about the role that storytelling and experience of conflict play into the legitimacy of a nonviolent activist," he said.

Even beyond women's education, change is eminent in the Muslim world. From the Arab Spring to Malala's movement, the relationship between the activist and media is becoming even more critical.

"Malala's youth and the terrible violence committed against her has catapulted her into world fame," said Diya Abdo, associate professor of English, in an email interview. "This kind of exposure can be beneficial if she remains in control of her narrative and cause and doesn't allow them to be co-opted by others."

Malala's nonviolent activism and forgiveness have not fallen on deaf ears. Millions across the world have joined the "I am Malala Movement," declaring their support for women's education rights through social media and donations to the Malala Fund.



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Malala Yousafzai has lead millions of people to support women's education.

"(Malala's stand) will anger a lot of people, because they will see her as choosing to be more Western than being whoever she is," said Abutabanja. "But it will change the minds of the females who will speak out and say, 'no, I want to be educated.'"

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Solar suitcase saves women, children

BY TY GOOCH
STAFF WRITER

What happens when a health clinic in a developing nation loses power?

Hal Aronson, co-founder of We Care Solar, saw the consequences himself as his wife served at a clinic in Nigeria.

"Women did not get the care they needed," said Aronson in an email to The Guilfordian. "Many would lose their babies or die because doctors could not serve them, as they did not have the light necessary to diagnose and treat."

As maternal death rates increased, Aronson realized the need for change and designed the We Care Solar Suitcase.

At \$1,500, Aronson's solar-powered suitcase provides backup electricity to health clinics in the developing world.

Its impact? "More women are surviving childbirth," Aronson said.

CNN reports that after the suitcase was installed in Nigeria's state hospital, the death rate for women decreased 70 percent.

While the suitcase provides relief to women it also benefits the population as a whole.

"More people come to the clinics because the clinics are lit up at night," said Aronson.

Ezra Zerihun, an Early College senior whose parents are native Ethiopians, saw the impact himself when he visited his parents' hometown.

"Because of the light, the clinics felt safer and more suitable for treatment," said Zerihun.

This illumination encompasses not only Nigeria and Ethiopia, but many other countries as well.

"We have distributed over 400 Solar Suitcases to over 25 countries," said Aronson's wife Laura Stachel, co-founder of We Care Solar. "Most recently, we have worked with UNICEF in Uganda and the U.N. Fund for Population Activities in Sierra Leone."

The distribution process is laborious, however, and installation requires training.

But logistics have not deterred Aronson and Stachel from continuing We Care Solar's mission.

"Sometimes, individuals carry these suitcases as luggage on planes and canoes down a river," said Aronson. "For large projects, we air-freight a pallet of suitcases to a country and work with the local nongovernmental organizations to deliver and install the systems."

Unfortunately, Aronson and his team cannot be everywhere at once.

Spearheaded by only six core members and a handful of volunteers, We Care Solar had to find an alternative method to train health care providers in remote locations.

"I have four training videos on our website, wecaresolar.org, to teach people how to use, install and maintain the suitcases," said Aronson.

While helpful, these training videos don't satisfy the organization's need for manpower. We Care Solar relies heavily on volunteers and welcomes interested students with open arms.

"If there are students who truly want to serve, I am very open to involving them," said Aronson.

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