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Excerpt of Malala Yousafzai's Nobel Peace Prize Lecture

By Malala Yousafzai 2014

Malala Yousafzai (born 1997) is a Pakistani education activist and the youngest-ever Nobel Prize laureate. Yousafzai was born in Swat District, Pakistan, and her family ran a chain of schools in the region. When Yousafzai was 14 she was shot in the head by the Taliban, an Islamic extremist group, for her advocacy of equal education. Following her recovery, she continued to advocate for education. In the following speech, Yousafzai discusses her commitment to education. As you read, take notes on how access to education is different around the world.



"A heroine, a survivor": Malala Yousafzai receives the 2013 Sakharov Prize by European Parliament is licensed under CC BYNC-ND 2.0.

Your Majesties, Your royal highnesses, distinguished members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee,

Dear sisters and brothers, today is a day of great happiness for me. I am humbled that the Nobel Committee has selected me for this precious award.

I would like to thank my parents for their unconditional love. Thank you to my father for not clipping my wings and for letting me fly. Thank you to my mother for inspiring me to be patient and to always speak the truth — which we strongly believe is the true message of Islam. And also thank you to all my wonderful teachers, who inspired me to believe in myself and be brave.

I am proud, well in fact, I am very proud to be the first Pashtun, the first Pakistani, and the youngest person to receive this award. Along with that, I am pretty certain that I am also the first recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize who still fights with her younger brothers. I want there to be peace everywhere, but my brothers and I are still working on that. (Q1)

This award is not just for me. It is for those forgotten children who want education. It is for those frightened children who want peace. It is for those voiceless children who want change.

I am here to stand up for their rights, to raise their voice... it is not time to pity them. It is not time to pity them. It is time to take action so it becomes the last time, so it becomes the last time that we see a child deprived of education.

Education is one of the blessings of life — and one of its necessities. That has been my experience during the 17 years of my life. In my paradise home, Swat, I always loved learning and discovering new things. I remember when my friends and I would decorate our hands with henna(2) on special occasions. And instead of drawing flowers and patterns we would paint our hands with mathematical formulas and equations.

We had a thirst for education, we had a thirst for education because our future was right there in that classroom. We would sit and learn and read together. We loved to wear neat and tidy school uniforms and we would sit there with big dreams in our eyes. We wanted to make our parents proud and prove

2. dye used to color the hair and decorate the body

that we could also excel in our studies and achieve those goals, which some people think only boys can. Q2

But things did not remain the same. When I was in Swat, which was a place of tourism and beauty, suddenly changed into a place of terrorism. I was just 10 when more than 400 schools were destroyed. Women were flogged(3). People were killed. And our beautiful dreams turned into nightmares.

Education went from being a right to being a crime.

Girls were stopped from going to school.

When my world suddenly changed, my priorities changed too.

I had two options. One was to remain silent and wait to be killed. And the second was to speak up and then be killed.

I chose the second one. I decided to speak up.

The terrorists tried to stop us and attacked me and my friends who are here today, on our school bus in 2012, but neither their ideas nor their bullets could win. Q3

We survived. And since that day, our voices have grown louder and louder.

I tell my story, not because it is unique, but because it is not.

It is the story of many girls.

Though I appear as one girl, though I appear as one girl, one person, who is 5 foot 2 inches tall, if you include my high heels (It means I am 5 foot only). I am not a lone voice, I am not a lone voice, I am many.

I am Malala. But I am also Shazia.

I am Kainat.

I am Mezon.

I am Amina. I am those 66 million girls who are deprived of education. And today I am not raising my voice, it is the voice of those 66 million girls. Q4

Sometimes people like to ask me why should girls go to school, why is it important for them. But I think the more important question is why shouldn't they? Why shouldn't they have this right to go to school.

Dear sisters and brothers, today, in half of the world, we see rapid progress and development. However, there are many countries where millions still suffer from the very old problems of war, poverty, and injustice.

We still see conflicts in which innocent people lose their lives and children become orphans. We see

many people becoming refugees in Syria, Gaza and Iraq. In Afghanistan, we see families being killed in suicide attacks(10) and bomb blasts.

Many children in Africa do not have access to education because of poverty. And as I said, we still see girls who have no freedom to go to school in the north of Nigeria.

Many children in countries like Pakistan and India, as Kailash Satyarthi mentioned, especially in India and Pakistan are deprived of their right to education because of social taboos,(11) or they have been forced into child marriage or into child labor. Q5

In my own village, there is still no secondary school for girls. And it is my wish and my commitment, and now my challenge to build one so that my friends and my sisters can go there to school and get quality education and to get this opportunity to fulfill their dreams.

This is where I will begin, but it is not where I will stop. I will continue this fight until I see every child, every child in school.

It is not time to tell the world leaders to realize how important education is — they already know it — their own children are in good schools. Now it is time to call them to take action for the rest of the world's children.

We ask the world leaders to unite and make education their top priority.

The world can no longer accept, the world can no longer accept that basic education is enough. Why do leaders accept that for children in developing countries,(15) only basic literacy is sufficient,(16) when their own children do homework in algebra, mathematics, science and physics?

Leaders must seize this opportunity to guarantee a free, quality, primary and secondary education for every child.

Some will say this is impractical, or too expensive, or too hard. Or maybe even impossible. But it is time the world thinks bigger.

Dear sisters and brothers, the so-called world of adults may understand it, but we children don't. Why is it that countries which we call "strong" are so powerful in creating wars but are so weak in bringing peace? Why is it that giving guns is so easy but giving books is so hard? Why is it that making tanks is so easy, but building schools is so hard?

We are living in the modern age and we believe that nothing is impossible. We have reached the moon 45 years ago and maybe will soon land on Mars. Then, in this 21st century, we must be able to give every child quality education.

Dear sisters and brothers, dear fellow children, we must work... not wait. Not just the politicians and the world leaders, we all need to contribute. Me. You. We. It is our duty.

- 3. beaten with a stick, especially as punishment
- 10. a violent attack in which the attacker expects to die in the process
- 11. something that is prohibited
- 15. poor agricultural countries that are seeking to become more advanced economically and socially
- 16. Sufficient (adjective): adequate; enough

Let us become the first generation to decide to be the last, let us become the first generation that decides to be the last that sees empty classrooms, lost childhoods, and wasted potentials.

Let this be the last time that a girl or a boy spends their childhood in a factory.

Let this be the last time that a girl is forced into early child marriage.

Let this be the last time that a child loses life in war.

Let this be the last time that we see a child out of school.

Let this end with us.

Let's begin this ending... together... today... right here, right now. Let's begin this ending now.

Thank you so much.