

## Malala: Stronger Than Violence

None of the fourteen female students took notice when their school truck stopped. On the crowded roads of Pakistan, such stops were common. Suddenly, two men wearing masks hopped onto the truck. “Which one is Malala?” one of them asked. No one replied, but a few looked toward fifteen-year-old Malala Yousafzai. The man shot Malala in the head and then hopped off and disappeared. Blood dripped from Malala’s head, and she fell to the floor.

Malala grew up in a beautiful city in northern Pakistan. Unfortunately, this region was under Taliban rule from 2007 to 2009. The girls there were forbidden to go to school, and over one hundred girls’ schools were blown up. Malala was one of the few girls to continue her education. Her father, a school principal, urged her to keep studying, even though many Pakistani women got married in their teens and had great difficulty attending school. Malala believed that no one could take away others’ right to education. She thus became an advocate of equal rights for female students. In 2009, she started writing blogs for the BBC about life in a society controlled by the Taliban. Although this annoyed Taliban leaders, she continued speaking out about girls’ educational rights.

When her story became known, the Taliban threatened to kill her. On October 9, 2012, when the Taliban carried out their threat, the whole world was shocked. Miraculously, the brave girl survived surgery at a local hospital and was then flown to Britain for further treatment. For several months, she had trouble speaking but eventually recovered in full. Her struggle attracted the whole world’s attention. Many were inspired by her efforts, and over two million supporters worldwide signed a statement calling for equal education in Pakistan. All this attention persuaded the Pakistani government to adopt a new policy ensuring equal educational rights for boys and girls alike. Soon afterward, the Malala Fund was established to help empower girls around the globe through education. Then, in 2014, Malala won the Nobel Peace Prize. At the age of seventeen, she was the youngest person ever to receive this great honor.

During a speech Malala once gave at the UN, she shared these wise and powerful words with the world: “Let us pick up our books and pens. They are our most powerful weapons. One child, one teacher, one book, and one pen can change the world!”