



## Book Review: *I Am Malala* by Malala Yousafzai

**Robert Rader**  
Executive Director, CABE

Many Americans seem to take public education for granted. Public education, not only prepared us and is preparing our children for the global marketplace, but also for citizenship and developing a love of learning for a lifetime.

This critical institution is something most of us grew up with. But, how often do we think about its importance in our lives?

It is very much different in many other countries. Education is not a right and sometimes it is discouraged, particularly for girls, who are seen as unequal to men.

By now, most of you have undoubtedly heard of Malala Yousafzai, the teenage Pakistani girl who demanded that girls in her country be educated. She was shot by the Taliban for doing so, but, in December was a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize—the youngest to ever receive the honor.

Her passion and beliefs were nurtured in particular by her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai. He had a dream of opening schools in the SWAT area of Pakistan where they lived and where the Taliban and the Government have fought for control. Malala's father has tremendous dedication to learning and spoke publicly many times, both in SWAT and throughout Pakistan, demanding that all children receive an education. Her mother was always supportive, but prefers the traditional custom of remaining in the background.

Upon reading the book, it is easy to tell why Malala, this incredible young woman, became a passionate supporter of the right to an education. Their family was under threat at many times and yet, both father and daughter never backed off. The father built the school that Malala attended and was regularly threatened.

Malala writes of her love for the SWAT Valley, even as the Government and Taliban cause much destruction in this beautiful area. The book is somewhat of a diary of Malala's life and tells of the suffering she has seen.

*Malala* does not only tell of her passion for education. She describes how, even after being singled out and shot in the head on a school bus and taken to England for treatment, the one request she made of her parents is they bring her book bag and, if they couldn't get it, "buy new books for me, because in March it's my board examination."

It is still too dangerous for Malala and her family to go back to the SWAT Valley. They have worked hard to make the adjustment to living in Birmingham, England, but the culture is different from how they lived in SWAT.

Malala's final words in this book: "I am Malala. My world has changed but I have not."

This is an extraordinary book, written by an amazing person. It provides great insight into what is happening in this dangerous part of the world. Those who read about Malala's religion, Islam, and how that affects the lives of ordinary people, will better understand her desire for peace.

Those who read the *CABE Journal* and those who are involved in public education throughout Connecticut and the United States certainly have passion and dedication to public education. We may disagree on all types of things: funding, testing, standards and the list goes on and on.

But, every now and then it's good to step back and see how countries deal with education. And, when we do, we realize that education is not a "given" in many countries, especially to girls and others who are treated unequally.

*(continued on back)*

***"Let us remember:  
One book, one pen,  
one child, and  
one teacher  
can change  
the world."***

We are the caretakers for our system of public education. We have the responsibility of ensuring that our system is protected for all those children, who might not be as passionate about receiving their

education as Malala, but need a high-quality education if they are to have the lives that many children can only dream about.

The Nobel Peace Prize 2014 was awarded jointly to Kailash Satyarthi and Malala Yousafzai *“for their struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education”*. Below are some excerpts from Malala’s Noble Lecture:

“Dear brothers and sisters... 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 time to take action so it becomes the last time, the last time... 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...

[W]e 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...

[Then] 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 decided to speak up.

The terrorists tried to stop us and attacked me and my friends ... but neither their ideas nor their bullets could win.

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.

Today, I tell their stories too...

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.

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...

I will continue this fight until I see every child, every child in school...

Let’s solve this once and for all.

We have already taken many steps. Now it is time to take a leap...

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

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...

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, why is it that making tanks is so easy, but building schools is so hard?

[L]et 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 we see a child out of school.

Let this end with us.”