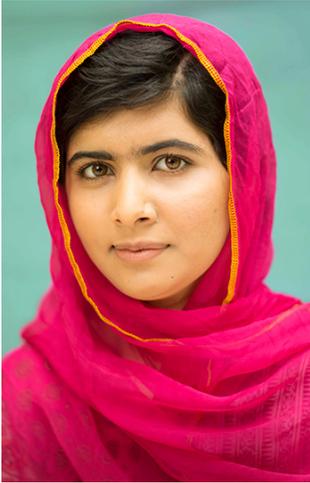


## AUTHOR PROFILE: MALALA YOUSAFZAI

by Heather Reid



Malala Yousafzai, the girl who would one day become one of the greatest youth advocates for girls' education and the youngest recipient of a Nobel Peace Prize, was born on July 12, 1997 to Ziauddin and Tor Pekai Yousafzai, in Mingora, Pakistan. She spent her

childhood living there with her parents and two brothers, and attended school at one of her father's Khushal Public Schools.

In 2008, Mingora was under heavy Taliban rule, and the terrorist group was already attempting to ban things like television, music, and girls' education. This was when Malala's career as an activist began, with a talk in Peshawar, Pakistan, entitled "How dare the Taliban take away my basic right to education?" Later that year, she began writing a blog for the BBC, detailing what life was like living under the Taliban. Malala came by this position after it was offered to several other girls in her father's school system. However, the other girls turned it down due to the danger of becoming a potential Taliban target. In order to protect herself, Malala wrote under the pseudonym Gul Makai.

The Taliban eventually decreed that girls would no longer be allowed to attend school in Mingora after January 15, 2009. By this time, over a hundred girls' schools had already been destroyed. Malala continued to write blog entries, noting that even with the ban, she was still planning to write her exams. By March 17, the ban was lifted and Malala returned to school, despite the Taliban still being quite active in the area. At this time,

she began speaking out against the group on television and radio shows, and continued blogging for the BBC until March 12, 2009. In May 2009, Malala and her father were approached to be part of a documentary by New York Times reporter Adam B. Ellick. Following this, Malala continued to make television appearances speaking out for girls' right to education. Around this time, she was identified as being the BBC blogger from 2008. This was also when Malala began to receive praise for her activism. She was nominated for the International Children's Peace Prize by Desmond Tutu, and was awarded the National Youth Peace Prize in December 2011.

Naturally, as Malala's name and cause became more familiar with the public, she was increasingly in danger of retribution from the Taliban. The terrorist group began to issue death threats against her and her father. Despite this, the Yousafzai family carried on as usual, feeling secure in the fact that the Taliban would not go so far as to harm a child.

On October 9, 2012, Malala was riding the bus home from school, like any other afternoon. A Taliban gunman entered the bus and asked which girl was Malala. He then fired three shots, one of which hit Malala in the left side of her head, and travelled into her neck and shoulder.

Malala was immediately airlifted to a hospital in Peshawar, where she was operated on as a means to reduce swelling in the left side of her brain. Following this, a part of her skull was removed. She was moved to another hospital in Pakistan on October 11, where she was given a 70% chance of survival. On October 15, Malala was moved to a hospital in Birmingham, England to receive further

treatment. On October 17, she came out of a medically induced coma and it was ruled that she would recover without any brain damage. Malala was finally discharged from the hospital on January 2, 2013, almost three months after the attack.

The world was aghast at the brutality of this attempt on a young girl's life. Political officials and celebrities alike spoke out against this violence and offered support to Malala and her cause. As early as July 2013, Malala was back on her feet and fighting for young girls' rights to an education. In 2013, Malala was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize, though she did not win. In October of that year, she released a book titled *I am Malala: The Girl Who Stood up For Education and Was Shot by the Taliban*. In March 2014, she was again nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, and this time she won. This made her, at 17, the youngest ever recipient of the award.

Malala Yousafzai is undoubtedly one of today's greatest role models for young people everywhere. She was faced with unthinkable adversity from the time she was 11 years old, and was forced to fight for what, in many parts of the world, is a basic right – education. She showed immeasurable bravery and dedication to her cause, despite being in constant and real danger. She lived a life that is quite unimaginable here in the Western

world, and then she survived a brutal and horrifying attempt on her young life – and still she did not give up. To this day, Malala continues to fight for the right to education. Despite the fact that the Taliban still maintain that she is an active target, she is tireless in her efforts to stand up for what she believes in.

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