

Malala Yousafzai



Photo Credit: DFID - UK Department for International Development (Malala Yousafzai: Education for girls), CC BY 2.0

Photograph of Malala Yousafzai

Malala Yousafzai was born on July 12, 1997, in Mingora, Pakistan. As a young child, Malala was exposed to the importance of education. Her father was in charge of running a local learning institution and instilled in Malala the value of attending school. Everything changed for Malala and her family when the Taliban began to have more authority in the Swat Valley region around 2007. The Taliban, a violent fundamental Islamist group, **prohibited** females from participating in many activities, including attending school. The Taliban were so committed to banning female access to education that they destroyed around 400 schools within two years of their control.

But Malala would not be **deterred** from her passion for learning. Not only did she continue to attend school, but she also spoke publicly about her dissent. On a Pakistani televised program, Malala was brave enough to express her disbelief; "How dare the Taliban take away my basic **right** to education?" Malala boldly proclaimed. Under the pseudonym 'Gul Makai,' she also began to blog about what it was like as a female under the Taliban's oppressive rule. Life became so dangerous for Malala and her family that they had to flee their home as a temporary safety measure. When they returned, Malala and her father started to become more vocal in opposition to the Taliban's sexist rules. Word started to spread about this father-daughter duo and Malala began to

win awards for her bravery. The Taliban was extremely unhappy with Malala, and on October 9, 2012, a member of the Taliban shot Malala in the head.

Malala received immediate medical attention, and after multiple surgeries, she woke up from a coma. Miraculously, the trauma did not cause any permanent brain damage! As the story of her survival and bravery spread, Malala became an international icon and an education advocate. Since recovering from her wound, Malala has written a best-selling book and started a foundation for female empowerment. In October 2014, Malala won a much-deserved Nobel Peace Prize.



Photograph of the Obama family meeting with Malala