



Literacy Volunteers of America

Essex & Passaic Counties

www.lvaep.org

90 Broad Street, Bloomfield, NJ 07003 | (973) 566-6200 -- 195 Gregory Avenue, Passaic, NJ 07055 | (973) 470-0039

New Jersey Association for Lifelong Learning Adult Learner Writing Contest 2017

First Place – Non-Fiction

Biography:

Gurpreet Manocha, an emergency room and ICU nurse in Ludhiana, a major city in India, came to the United States in 2016 with her husband who was offered a position as a finance manager in New York City. Last year she visited the Bloomfield Library and noticed a flyer for Literacy Volunteers of America. Gurpreet said, “After enrolling in this program, I have learned many aspects of English, which has immensely helped me in communicating with confidence and has motivated me to volunteer with an organization which takes care of elderly people.”

Title: Malala Yousafzai – A YOUNG LIVING LEGEND
Student Author: Gurpreet Bhatia
Tutor: Charles Bateman

“Please God, please save Malala,” my mother was praying, as we were watching breaking news on the news channel, “Malala Yousafzai has been shot in an assassination attempt by the Taliban”. Malala is a 15years old Pakistani girl who had written an anonymous BBC blog titled “Life Under The Taliban” in 2009, when she was 11 years old.

“Hmmm.....How beautiful she is, especially her brown eyes.”, My mother whispered, “What would they achieve by killing such an innocent girl?”

The whole world condemned this terrorist attack in 2012, as this innocent girl was fighting for her life.....as millions of people prayed for her. She was in a very precarious condition after she was shot. Her first surgery was performed in Pakistan, but her condition was still critical. So the governments of Pakistan and United Kingdom mutually decided to shift her to Queen Elizabeth Hospital of Birmingham, England for advanced treatment.

After they moved her, my mother and I often discussed and sympathized with the experiences which she had written about in her diary. In her diary, she shared how terrorists took control over Swat, the river valley district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. Taliban terrorists had started ruling this area and putting severe restrictions on educating girls, owning TV, and playing music, which led to many public



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executions. This led to considerable fear in the minds of the local people and caused them to flee from their homes and relocated to other parts of the country.

After reading her diary, The New York Times also featured a short documentary titled, "The Death of Female Education." This documentary showed, the initial struggle of her family, how Malala had changed her location in four cities in a month with her mother and siblings. Her father was still in Peshawar as a protester, and pressured government to take action against terrorists and bring Swat back to its normal life. This documentary revealed, how US allied forces fought against the Taliban and eliminated the terrorists from Swat Valley. After the Taliban's elimination, all the families including Malala's family, returned to the Swat Valley. According to them, Swat was not looking as beautiful as before, everything was demolished, normal life was disrupted and more than 200 schools were destroyed.

There in Swat, Malala started campaigning for girls' right to education openly through local and international media. In 2011, she won Pakistan's National Youth Peace Prize, which was introduced for the first time. One year after receiving the honor, Malala was shot in the head by Taliban gunmen.

"What's wrong if girls want to be educated, watch TV and listen to music?" I asked my mother.

My Mother answered, "This is the basic right that every child should have...but due to filthy thinking of some wicked and radicalized people, gender equality and girl education are not important, but they are only concerned about their own selfish motives. Women have already proven their abilities all over the world by becoming presidents, governors, scientists, doctors and engineers and are standing shoulder to shoulder with men in every aspect of life. Malala at such a young age understands that women's education will lead to women empowerment that will enable them to reach new heights of their careers in various facets of life. We should commend the efforts that Malala already has bravely communicated to the whole world."

I was really convinced with each and every word that my mother expressed and felt some calmness in my heart.

After this incident, people from all avenues of life started supporting Malala. There were huge peace rallies undertaken in support of Malala and they disowned the evil deeds of terrorists with such statements as "Malala our prayers are with you" and "Shame on you Taliban."

The United Nations had also launched a worldwide campaign for girls' education named, "I am Malala." Various renowned people across the world also supported her



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such as The US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton appreciated her blog. Singer Madonna shouted Malala's name and dedicated a song to her during one of her live stage performances.

In July 2013, nine months after being shot, Malala was again in the breaking news. It was her 16th birthday and she was standing in the United Nations giving an inspirational speech. I immediately paused the TV and called my mom excitedly. We both listened to her speech wherein she reminded everyone about her experiences under the Taliban and reiterated that the world needs to come together against these terrorists and provide an environment of peace, love, and the right to education every child. She ended her speech with the very inspirational words that "One child, one teacher, one book, and one pen can change the whole world."

Listening to her speech my mom and I were both brimming with tears.

In 2014, for all her contributions, she was awarded The Nobel Peace Prize and became the youngest person to receive such a prestigious award.

Malala's inspirational journey from a simple school-going girl to The Nobel Peace Prize winner shows that if you have the grit and determination, you can change the perspective of life and leave an unprecedented mark for the upcoming generations.

In the end, while concluding my story, I would like to urge people of the world to rise above the vile thinking of cast, color, creed, religion, or language and work collectively to uplift mankind. So that, we can leave our legacy for the upcoming generation and live forever on this beautiful planet Earth.