

The Counselor's Corner

"The Price of Education"

Call Me Malala is the book our club selected to read and discuss this month. Malala Yousafzai, the author, is a Pakistani teenager who tells her story in the most genuine way. The book is so popular that a documentary based on the book was released in theaters last week. Both made an impact on me.

Malala is a regular teen in many ways, teasing her brothers, and sometimes not achieving the grades in her current British school. Her mom chides her for being sloppy and disheveled at times. She has a shy side when it comes to boys, but she loves sports and seems to have a crush on some of the finer looking soccer players. Now, this is where the similarities end in comparison with most teens around the world.

Malala's passion for education is amazing. Her home country has an extremely high rate of illiteracy. In fact, her own mother had no education. When the Taliban took over Pakistan, things got worse. The stereotyping increased, and women suffocated under its grip. Women could not leave their homes to shop without a male, and even five year old males counted as chaperones. Women were told they could not go to school, and schools were closed that allowed females to attend. Music was forbidden, as well as televisions. TV sets, movies, and CDs were burned. Those who did not comply with the rules were slaughtered in the public square. Few dared to go against these people, because of the terror they imposed. Worse yet, they claimed religion warranted these actions. They took a peaceful religion and distorted its tenets all for power.

Malala continued as an activist and defied the Taliban by continuing in school, and by writing the anti-Taliban blog she started at age 11. On October 9, 2012, members of the Taliban forcibly opened the back door of Malala's school van and attempted to shut up this 15 year old with bullets. Two nearby school girls were hit, but not as severely as Malala, who was rushed to a local hospital and then air-lifted to another in England. She underwent intensive therapy, but her left side will never be the same. However, the Taliban failed in their attempt to eradicate this young woman with conviction. As soon as she was able, she continued to promote education to young women all over the world, especially in Africa and Pakistan. She started her own organization and is doing fundraising by way of it, as well as from the book's proceeds. She has been acknowledged by many organizations for her great work. She has met with world leaders, was on *Time Magazine's* list of most influential people for three years, and at age seventeen, she was the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. Her quote sums up her philosophy, "One child, one teacher, one book, and one pen can change the world."

Now, what is our excuse? Children freely go to school in America, but we still face dropout rates that are far too high. Students within our schools often choose to occupy themselves with video games rather than complete homework. For many, the value of the book has diminished. The work ethic is not always visible. Education makes a difference in our thinking, our social status (which does not focus only on money), and our ability to provide for our families. For those who are not putting their best effort into their studies, what is the reasoning? Don't take education for granted. In other parts of the world, people are sacrificing life and limb to gain it.

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