

Natalie Spangle

On June 6th, 1944, thousands of brave men heeded General Eisenhower's call to arms and fought and died on the beaches of Normandy to free the world from tyranny and help restore basic human rights for millions of oppressed people. As we are about to celebrate the 70th anniversary of this historic battle, it is important not only to look back and honor their sacrifices, but to look forward and think about what we can do to help ensure equal rights for all people.

On October 9th, 2012, a young girl answered to a different call to arms. Her name is Malala Yousafzai and since the age of eleven years old she had been speaking out demanding equality in education for the girls in her country. She understood that the only way girls had a chance at an equal future and a life free from oppression was through access to education. On this particular day, she was riding the bus on her way to school in the Swat province of Pakistan, when a man on the street forced the vehicle to stop. He boarded the bus and asked, "Who is Malala?" Fourteen-year-old Malala raised her hand. The man shot her in the head, gravely injuring her and harming two other innocent schoolgirls. Now we all ask the question, "Who is Malala?" In 1950's America, we asked, "Who is Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.?" and in South Africa of the 1960's, people asked, "Who is Nelson Mandela?" At one time, these men too were ordinary people with a single voice who decided to speak up against injustices in their society. Though these individuals were put through much tribulation in their lives, including threats of violence and imprisonment, they were never silenced. They continued to speak out for change and equality, and now their names are amongst those famed people who have almost single-handedly changed the course of history.

Malala was attacked by a member of the Taliban. The Taliban is famously against education for women, and they act against anyone who disobeys them with brutality and violence. In Pakistan, 5.1 million children do not attend primary school even though it is their constitutional right. In addition, about 50 million Pakistani adults are illiterate, two thirds of who are women. Other countries around the world face similar issues, such as Nigeria where hundreds of young women were just kidnapped from their school by the Boko Haram. This terrorist group share similar beliefs to the Taliban in terms of education for women. Malala has made it her duty to spread the message of equality in education, no matter what the cost or what she has to go through to do it. She has raised her voice through writing her book, speaking on international television, and making public speeches. In her book, *I Am Malala*, she says, "One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world."

Malala understands that getting through school is one step on the path towards making a difference and having a voice in the world. Children must sustain their education throughout their childhood to be able to contribute to the world later in life. If there is inequality in access to education, then there will be inequality for the rest of their lives. Knowledge is power, and as long as you try your best to take your education seriously, you can stand up to anything in your way. A single girl has made a world of a difference, even if these are just baby steps towards real change. Through the Malala Fund, Malala has raised money for funding education throughout impoverished parts of the world. She has revealed the injustices in her society and has highlighted the topic of girls' education. She speaks for the women of the world who do not have a voice of their own. The true heroes are the ones who fight for what they believe in no matter what the

cost. I am exceptionally grateful for all of the heroic men and women who bravely sacrificed their lives on June 6th, 1944. We, as a nation, will forever remain in their debt, along with all of those across the world who they fought for as well. Improving rights for education worldwide is a big part of what we must do now, to honor these heroes and their goal of human rights for all. We must not let anything or anyone get in our way of accomplishing this. As Malala told herself, “Don’t be afraid—if you are afraid, you can’t move forward.” When it comes to fighting tyranny, we must never be silent.