

Malala Yousafzai: A Young Female Activist

Companion Notes

2014

Chai J, Gordon R, Johnson P. Malala Yousafzai: A Young Female Activist. Global Health Education and Learning Incubator at Harvard University, Connors Center for Women's Health at Brigham and Women's Hospital, and FXB Center for Health and Human Rights, Harvard University 2013.

Overview

“Malala Yousafzai: A Young Female Activist” traces the story of Malala Yousafzai, a young female activist, who has advocated passionately for girls’ right to education. Yousafzai’s actions literally put her life in danger. In October 2012, a militant group with ties to the Taliban, shot Yousafzai in the head as she was riding the school bus home after a day of classes. Yousafzai recovered from her injuries an even fiercer advocate for education. She eventually became the youngest recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014. This case explores the social factors that made such an attack possible and why there continue to be such barriers to educational opportunities for girls.

Learner Level

This case would also be of interest to those teaching courses in education, global health, leadership, religion, social change, and women’s studies. It could be used at the high-school, college, graduate or professional level.

Context

“Malala Yousafzai: A Young Female Activist” is a part of a violence against women series that illustrate the critical role for leadership through an examination of how factors within a society influence women’s health, in particular gender based violence. Students analyze the situations described by considering the circumstances that placed each protagonist in vulnerable positions. Participants examined the commonalities and differences of these situations in an effort to understand the circumstances that affect women’s well-being. Additionally, using the cases as a framework, students analyzed the connections between collective outrage, reactive action, and leadership. The other cases in this series are: “India’s Daughter: The Rape that Galvanized a Nation” and “Steubenville, Ohio: A Community’s Reckoning of Responsibility.”

Background

This series was initially developed for the Global Women’s Health Leadership Development Initiative at Harvard University (a collaboration between the Connors Center for Women’s Health and Gender Biology at Brigham and Women’s Hospital, the FXB Center for Health and Human Rights at HSPH, and the Global Health Education and Learning Incubator at Harvard University—previously the Harvard Global Health Institute), which focuses on developing emerging leaders in women’s health. Instead of viewing health as a series of disparate conditions and issues, the program re-conceptualizes women’s health as inextricably linked with the environment in which they exist. The program places women’s health within an interdisciplinary

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framework that specifically considers the role of global forces and risks, health conditions, social determinants of health, and societal responses.