

2014

Editorial

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EDITORIAL

Graeme Perry

When I heard Catherine Hamlin had been nominated for the 2014 Nobel Peace Prize by the Ethiopian government, for me, her nomination was the only requirement for winning the award. In her 90th year, still living in the grounds of the hospital she established in 1974, to specifically treat obstetric fistula—an outcome of obstructive labour in childbirth—she dedicatedly continues to supervise in operations and fundraising. Over half a century of humanitarian service, alleviating physical and emotional suffering, in my mind were tantamount to ‘winning’.

The announcement that “The Norwegian Nobel Committee has decided that the Peace Prize for 2014 is to be awarded to Kailash Satyarthi and Malala Yousafzay for their struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education”, was a surprise. Presentation of a joint award indicated the difficulty of a committee challenged by multiple highly credentialed nominees.

A significant shared attribute of the winners is courage. Kailash Satyarthi, an Indian Hindu, now 60 years old, was originally a teacher, but in 1980 became secretary general for the Bonded Labor Liberation Front and founded the Bachpan Bachao Andolan (lit. Save the Childhood Movement). He has subsequently prominently led peaceful demonstrations (Global March Against Child Labour) protesting the financial exploitation of children, some in slave-like conditions, and has also participated in the formation of significant international conventions on the rights of children, including their access to education.

In comparison, Malala Yousafzay, now 17 years old, a Pakistani Muslim schoolgirl was shot while on her school bus (9 October 2012)— the bullet entering her left forehead, passing down her face entering her shoulder—because she persisted in publically condemning the Taliban restriction of the opportunity of young females to access education. Blogging, documentaries and international interviews attracted family and personal death threats but undeterred she still continues to maintain her ‘voice’ perhaps most obviously in her advocacy at the UN Assembly on the 12 July 2013, dubbed ‘Malala Day’.

The terrorists thought they would change my aims and stop my ambitions, but nothing changed in my life except this: weakness, fear and hopelessness died. Strength, power and courage was born ... I am not against anyone ... I’m here to speak up for the right of education for every child. I want

education for the sons and daughters of the Taliban and all terrorists and extremists (Wikipedia, 2014a, para.47)

Both prize winners have affirmed the assertion in the press release of the Nobel Prize Committee (2014):

It is a prerequisite for peaceful global development that the rights of children and young people be respected. In conflict-ridden areas in particular, the violation of children leads to the continuation of violence from generation to generation. (para. 1)

Selflessness has been demonstrated to the extremity of giving their life either in a moment, or over a lifetime, in all of these Nobel Peace Prize nominees. Their goal is to protect foundational values that perpetuate peace.

How do we support equal access to education for children? Help maintain the peace in our country?

We acknowledge the importance of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and ensure schools continue to fully respond to its revelations on all abuse. Educators vision beyond the assertions of the Review of the Australian Curriculum, then question (and change) their own school’s performance in ‘deal[ing] with the moral, spiritual and aesthetic education of students’ (Petersen, 2014, para. 4).

We determine to gain the ‘noble prize’ by giving our ‘professional life’ (and more) to children—selflessly. **TEACH**

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[Photography: Glenys Perry]