



Write the World and Malala Fund Announce Winners of Gender Equality Writing Contest

----Global organizations empower teenagers to advocate for gender equality----

For Immediate Release

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CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS—Write the World, Inc. and The Malala Fund announced Friday, October 7, 2022, that Maya Zankowski, a 9th grade student from the United States, has won the global Gender Equality op-ed competition for students ages 13 to 19. Her winning essay, “Liberated from Pajeon,” connects the suffocating atmosphere of Zankowski’s great-grandmother’s teenage marriage in Korea to today’s world, where forces of inequality still control women’s autonomy. The competition celebrates the United Nations’ International Day of the Girl, which takes place today, October 11.

The competition, the latest in a series of monthly writing competitions hosted by Write the World, gave teens a global platform to express their opinions about gender equality. During the two-week contest, teens from over 20 countries submitted entries of 600 to 1,000 words. The first 100 drafts received expert feedback from Write the World’s editorial team of educators and authors. Each month, Write the World’s competitions give thousands of students from around the globe opportunities to write on engaging topics in different genres. From food writing, to science fiction, to poetry, songwriting and more, students strengthen their writing skills, discover new genres, dig deep into topics, and share their work within a supportive community of peers.

David Weinstein, founder of Write the World, said, “The majority of important decisions in our society are made through writing—from legislation and judicial opinions to newspaper editorials and research papers. Writing as an advocate is an essential tool to make positive change in the world. We congratulate Maya Zankowski on her winning entry, demonstrating that progress requires courageous action by individuals to confront gender inequality, not simply the passive passage of time.”

Through the genre of opinion writing, this competition asked teens to identify a gender issue that impacted them or their community and advocate for changes that increase gender equality in their part of the world. Recent peer reviewed studies show that the

most gender-equal societies have the best quality of life, and the happiest, healthiest populations. Similarly, the United Nations has concluded that “gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous world.”

"Achieving gender equality starts by listening to the experiences and opinions of young people around the world. We're excited that this collaboration with Write the World provides teenagers with a platform to speak out about issues affecting them and share their ideas on how to create a more equal future," said Tess Thomas, Editorial Manager & Assembly Editor at the Malala Fund.

In addition to the winner, Muska Ehsan, a 12th grade student from Afghanistan, was recognized as runner-up for her piece “The Breeze In My Hair On A Motorcycle,” chronicling Ehsan's resistance to the pervasive gender discrimination in Afghanistan, and her efforts to bring education to girls trapped under Taliban rule.

The competition was judged by Vee Kativhu, a 24-year-old girls' education advocate and author of *Empowered: Live Your Life with Passion and Purpose*.

About The Malala Fund

Malala Fund is working for a world where all girls can learn and lead. Malala Fund advocates for resources and policy changes needed to give all girls a secondary education, invests in local education partners and amplifies the voices of girls fighting for change. Learn more at www.malala.org.

About Write the World

Write the World, Inc. is a charitable organization dedicated to improving the writing and critical thinking skills of students ages 13 - 19. We offer teachers, schools, and students the tools to empower young writers to develop their voices, refine their editing skills, and publish on an international platform. With a global online writing community of 60,000+ students and 5,000+ educators from over 120 countries, writing workshops and our college essay program, Write the World helps students develop the writing strategies essential for success in school, career, and life. Learn more at www.writetheworld.org.

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