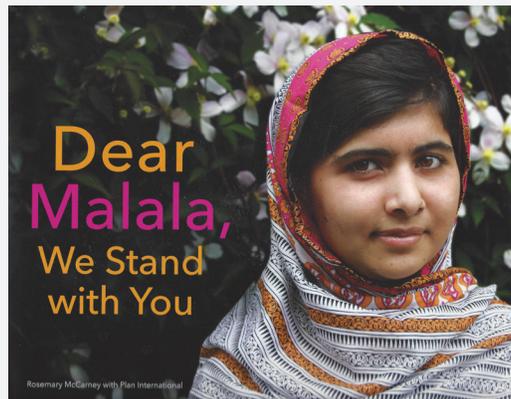


## First Opinion: Changing Our World, One Individual at a Time

McCarney, Rosemary. *Dear Malala, We Stand with You*.  
New York: Crown Books, 2014. Print.

Connie Harper



In today's world, people are looking for an icon, a role model, a leader who can reach the masses to undo the social injustices of poverty, discrimination, and illiteracy. Rosemary McCarney's book, *Dear Malala, We Stand with You*, admonishes the barriers that exist for all people, and in particular the struggles of young women. The words written on each page inspire hope for a better tomorrow, hope for change, and hope for a better life. As I read this book, which is an open letter in book format to Malala, I was reminded of the power that the great Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. personified as he sought for equality in our world. Malala Yousafzai is also poised and has the potential for greatness, and the potential to be a premier leader in this very defining moment in our world's movement to empower women.

Malala, a most unsuspecting heroine, has stepped into the limelight because of her courage and integrity to stand up for what she believes. In America, we uphold the First Amendment, which defends our freedom of speech, and think absolutely nothing of voicing our opinion, but this was not the case in Malala's home country of Pakistan. Her resiliency to overcome personal persecution, as well as her miraculous recovery from being shot in the head by the Taliban, legitimizes her right to speak on behalf of the masses and sets her apart from many present-day mentors. She is both articulate and humble in requesting that children have a right to be educated. The message that she conveys stretches well beyond that of education; it is a message resonating dignity in human rights, equality of opportunity, and the desire to

live a peaceful existence without civil unrest. She challenges others to dare to imagine a world where children can reap the benefits from a powerful global initiative.

The literary format of this book, along with the powerful pictures of young women and children throughout the world, captivates the reader's attention and focus from the very beginning. Readers of all ages will devour the letters and words written to Malala and allow their meaning to slowly digest. The words are simple and yet they convey a bond and connection for the reader with Malala, saying, "We are united in our cause." The photographs in this book were captured first in a video by Jen Albaugh, who did an incredible job bringing the realism of the words to life. The educational urgency for all people in the world is highlighted in the photographs. Not only do the children in the photographs feel as though they have met Malala, but readers will feel they have met each child on each page of this book.

Like an artist painting a large canvas, these letters to Malala must be given large brush strokes that stretch around the world and to the far corners of the canvas. Malala is inspiring others to advocate for the barriers of poverty, discrimination, and illiteracy to be torn down globally. *Dear Malala, We Stand with You* should ignite a passion inside all of us to refocus our human lens through which we look, and to feed a vision based upon the tangible possibilities for our world. The letters lead one to question our world's motivation for change. Those factions in today's world that have control have brought about compliance, whereas the human need for autonomy will lead all of us into engagement. The engagement in conversation will lead us to make positive changes that won't happen overnight, but will lay the groundwork for the kind of critical thinking that will be needed for a bright future.

Readers in search of a solid base for addressing the inequities in the world when it comes to children, women, discrimination, poverty, and illiteracy will find this book riveting for all ages. In particular, the empowerment of these young girls from various countries around the world to take a stand for their freedoms and rights now poses a threat to those who seek to persecute others. One can't help but reflect on the current practices of today along with taking the teachings of the past to help create a balance of social awareness and a call to action. Will you be united with Malala to make a better world?

### **About the Author**

**Connie Harper** is an award-winning educator, mentor, and investor in children. She has earned double degrees from Purdue University with a Bachelor of Arts in elementary education and interpersonal communications in 1980, along with a master's Degree in education in 1982. Harper resides in Lafayette, Indiana with her husband and three children. She has been a classroom teacher for 34 years in both the Frontier and Tippecanoe School Corporations. In addition to her responsibilities in the classroom, Harper has also coached the Southwestern Middle School Speech Team, tutors elementary school students after school, mentors student teachers, and has served on many textbook adoption committees. She has also been a guest

speaker at different schools within and outside of her school district on the topic of writing. She is proud to have been a Top 15 Candidate for the 2015 Golden Apple Award and to have won the Tippecanoe School Corporation's Teacher of the Year in 2015.