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# Global Women Leaders Celebrate And Reflect On The United Nations' International Day of the Girl Child

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On December 19, 2011, the United Nations General Assembly adopted [Resolution 66/170](#) to declare 11 October as the “[International](#) Day of the Girl Child”, to recognize girls’ rights and the unique challenges girls face around the world. The theme for 2014 is “empowering adolescent girls: ending the cycle of violence”, which is fitting for this year, as girls and women world-wide have had challenges and triumphs.

Earlier this year, the world woke up to news that more than 234 school girls had been abducted in Nigeria by the Islamist militant group, Boko Haram in Chibok, a town in the northeastern part of Nigeria. According to news reports, armed members of the Boko Haram overwhelmed security guards at an all-girls school in Borno state, on the night of April 14, pulled more than 234 school girls out of bed and forced them into trucks, inciting world-wide outrage and the globally trending hashtag #BringBackOurGirls. [To date, 57 girls have escaped and today marks 190 days in captivity for the remaining 219 missing girls.](#)

Yesterday the [Nobel Peace Prize](#) committee announced Pakistani child education activist Malala Yousafzai as recipient of the prize for 2014, which she won jointly with Indian child rights activist Kailash Satyarthi. The 17-year old, the youngest ever to win the Nobel Peace Prize, was shot in the head by Taliban gunmen two years ago in Pakistan after coming to prominence for campaigning for education for girls. She won for what the Nobel committee called her “heroic struggle” for girls’ right to an education.





Malala Yousafzai, 2014 Nobel Peace Prize laureate at the 2014 Forbes Philanthropy Summit in New York City

As the world celebrates and reflects on the day dedicated to girls and women, I collected views from our global women leaders on what the International Day of the Girl Child means for girls and women of African descent. I also reached out to some of Africa and the world's leading female voices for their thoughts on the conditions of girls and women in Africa and in the world. Here is what they shared:

*“My message to children all around the world is that they should stand up for their rights. I felt more powerful and more courageous because this award is not just a piece of metal or a medal you wear or an award you keep in your room. This is really an encouragement for me to go forward.”*  
– [Malala Yousafzai](#), 2014 Nobel Peace Prize laureate

*“As an African American woman, this conversation is deeply personal to me. The roots of my family tree are in Africa... [the blood of Africa runs through my veins, and I care deeply about Africa's future](#) . Now, the status of women in Africa is also personal to me as a woman...it saddens and confuses me to see that too often, women in some parts of Africa are still denied the rights and opportunities they deserve to realize their potential. Now, let's be very clear: In many countries in Africa, women have made tremendous strides. More girls are attending school. More women are starting businesses. Maternal mortality has plummeted. And more women are serving in parliaments than ever before. In fact, in some countries, more than 30*

*percent of legislators are women. In Rwanda, it's over 50 percent — which, by the way, is more than double the percentage of women in the U.S. Congress.” - First Lady [Michelle Obama](#) speaking at the the [Mandela Washington Fellowship](#) Summit for young African leaders.*

*“As we celebrate girls and young women today, I remind them, to be a dreamer, planner and a believer to be an achiever. *The sky is not your limit but your stepping stone to success.*” - [Folorunso Alakija](#) , named one of Forbes 2014 [World's 100 Most Powerful Women](#) and one of Forbes' [World's Most Powerful Female Entrepreneurs Of 2014](#)*

*“The International Day of the Girl Child is an opportunity to step up collective action to break the cycle of violence against girls and women. Girls themselves are part of the solution. They are a powerhouse of talent, creativity and potential.” - [United Nations Women](#), Executive Director, [Mrs. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka](#)*

*“For the record, feminism by definition is: “The belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. It is the theory of the political, economic and social equality of the sexes.” – [United Nations Women Goodwill Ambassador](#) & British actress, [Emma Watson](#)*

*“Our world needs ubuntu (humanness). If we educate and empower the girl child, we are assured a kinder and gentler world. Patriarchy has not worked. Let's try both patriarchy and matriachy by educating and empowering boys and girls equally, for a balanced world. *No society can thrive by utilizing half its resources— men* . We need to educate and empower the girl child to ensure all our resources are fully utilized. Educating and empowering girls results in a progressive nation that can compete at all levels.” – South African talk show host & entrepreneur, [Felicia Mabuza Suttle](#) who has a new book, *Live Your Dream*, an inspirational book on steps to success.*

*“Sadly and far too often, to be young, female and African means one is three times cursed. We should never rest until every such girl is three times nurtured, three times treasured, three times blessed.” - [Mimi Alemayehou](#), Managing Director, Black Rhino Group, Executive Advisor & Chair, Blackstone Africa Infrastructure*

*“All women must stand up for other women, in particular for the young women and girls especially in the manner we raise, not only our own daughters, but every daughter we see and meet. That is a sure way of ensuring that we are building a critical mass of empowered girls and young women who are able to deal with abuse. Often times, we choose not to stand up when our society imposes statements that dehumanize women which creates low esteem and inferiority complex on the girls who will grow up*

*disempowered. So, my plea to all women is, let's give all we can, let's teach all we know, and that could be a big game changer.” – Mrs. Divine Ndhulukula* , founder & [Managing Director, Securico Security Services](#)

*“Young women in Africa are in a delicate place with a complex need to have access to mentor-ship, education, business opportunities, and critical life skills to make them global citizens. Overall, these young women need to be safe. We, as a community, can rise to meet these needs. The United Nations has set an excellent example for the world by recognizing October 11th as International Girls day. Personally, I believe we all have a responsibility to encourage young women to believe in their personal power . We have to make this a priority all days of the year, not just one.” – Karen Civil, founder & Chief Executive Officer, [Always Civil Enterprises](#)*

*“Providing education to young African girls and women will help nurture them to understand their power and capabilities, while exposing them to a wealth of opportunities. This will change the trajectory of their lives , the well being of their families and communities, and brighten the future of Africa.” - Else Bollanga, Chief Operating Officer, [Afrotainment Family Of Channels](#)*

*“The African woman is the life-blood of the African continent . She is rising and rightfully taking her place to transform and positively impact generations to come.” - Eunice Nuekie Cofie, President, [Nuekie Inc.](#) and [World Economic Forum Young Global Leader](#)*

*“The prosperity of Africa lies in her decision to fully emancipate the girl child who is tomorrow’s leader. The community of Africa is held together by women who grow despite limited access to opportunities and education. The day Africa will decide to invest in equality, good quality education and protection of the girl child, is the day corruption and mismanagement will go away and the day Africa enjoys the gains of its hard-earned democracy and prosperity.” – Nyaradzo Mashayamombe, founder and Executive Director, [Tag a Life International Trust](#)*

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