



Evie Hantzopoulos
Executive Director, Global Kids

GET UPDATES FROM EVIE HANTZOPOULOS



Why We Rise: Turning Valentine's Day Upside Down

Posted: 02/13/2013 8:56 pm

In 2002, a childhood acquaintance of mine from Massachusetts, Dorothy Guinta Cotter, was shot to death by her husband after suffering 20 years of threats, abuse and attempts on her life. I was stunned to learn of her murder and that not long before it her husband had been arrested for threatening to shoot her and was released.

I was in disbelief that despite getting a restraining order, working with the courts and doing what she could to get out of her situation, it was not enough to save her life. Her case demonstrated the need for danger assessments, which can help advocates, law enforcement and the courts better protect those who are at most risk of being killed by their domestic partner.

Ten years later, [Malala Yousufzai](#), a 15-year-old Pakistani girl, was shot by the Taliban for promoting education for females. In the Swat Valley fear of Taliban reprisals has forced many families to keep their girls home from school, denying them their basic human right to an education. Fortunately, Malala [survived](#) and continues to [inspire](#) the world with her courage.

These are two, separate tragedies that have nothing directly to do with each other. Yet they have everything to do with how girls and women, even in the 21st century, are too often the victims of violence.

This Valentine's Day we are rising at [Global Kids](#) to be part of the [One Billion Rising](#) effort. This will occur on the 15th Anniversary of V-Day, the global activist movement to end violence against women and girls inspired by Eve Ensler's play *The Vagina Monologues*.

Throughout the year at Global Kids we engage underserved young people to understand the world around them and how to advocate for change. Violence is all too prevalent in the lives of our students and exploring this issue can be a powerful tool for learning, as well as civic engagement, for those who often lack a voice.

On Feb. 14, Global Kids youth will be leading workshops for peers in their New York City and Washington, D.C., schools around the theme of "One Billion Rising: Why We Rise." The workshops will address the local-global connections between violence against girls and women, discuss actions we can take to end this violence and will demonstrate how we stand for girls and women. While shining a spotlight on violence against girls and women this particular day, Global Kids youth will also stand to say all forms of violence are unacceptable.

Our female and male students will be wearing red and black to stand in solidarity with others who are rising as well. They will be asking strangers to join the cause by signing a petition and asking that they join them for a flash mob at Union Square in Manhattan at 6 PM. They will be documenting their work and using social media to spread the message.

They will rise to demand that the [Violence Against Women Act](#), recently passed by the Senate, be voted on and approved by the House. What should be a no-brainer faces a tough battle in House. Why? We are told it's mostly due to some Republicans who are concerned about the authority that would be given to tribal courts to prosecute the non-Native abusers of Native American women on Indian reservations. This excuse is ironic given that rates of domestic violence can be high on reservations, and currently women there find themselves powerless when local courts hold no authority over non-Native abusers.

Our students will rise to say that violence is violence and a victim is a victim, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, disability, age or economic status. Sexual violence, domestic violence, relationship abuse, as well as the conditions that make people more vulnerable to these threats, are unacceptable.

They will rise to question why the United States, which along with Iran, Somalia, Palau, Sudan, South Sudan and Tonga, has not ratified the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#), an international treaty adopted by the United Nations in 1979.

Perhaps Valentine's Day is one of those events just created by greeting card companies. Billions are spent to market to and appeal to women. Whatever the case, the whole day needs a re-boot and our youth, along with others who care, will rise to turn Valentine's Day upside down on its head through One Billing Rising. Yet in their activism, they are not turning their back on the spirit of love. When you love someone -- or some group of people, like women -- they are worth protecting and standing up for. This is why we are rising.