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## EMILY BLUNT

### WOMEN'S EDUCATION

<https://youtu.be/ya7DNE1YZVs>

Thank you so much for this incredible honor. It's just moves me and matters to me greatly. So, I really appreciate it. You know I asked my four-year-old Hazel every day about what she learns in school. I ask her every day and sometimes I met with you know she's four. So, it's like, 'I played'. And I'm like, what else, you know tell me. You know it's probably because she's tired or perhaps because I ask her every day and she's tired of me asking about her day.

But the other night it was like she threw me a bone as I was putting her to bed. She said, 'Hey mummy, do you know how to get to Harlem?' And I just sort of stared at her dumbly and I said, 'How do you get to Harlem?' She goes, 'You take the A train, it's the quickest way.' And I was like, 'What?' You know and I said like, the Ella Fitzgerald song. She goes, 'Yeah, Ella Fitzgerald.' And I almost wept, because Ella is like my gem, you know and then I discovered that she was learning about the Harlem renaissance at four.

I've also been schooled on Lava caves, never heard of them before and the small bump on a baby owl's beak that it kind of uses to crack against the shell to birth itself. I mean and then it falls off. I'm like how, this is stuff I've never heard of before. So, it's sort of become apparent to me that I ask Hazel every day what she learned at school. Because well, I'm desperate to know cool stuff like that mainly. But to learn from her and I just sort of adore the look of delight in her eyes when she realizes she's teaching me something I knew nothing about. She's just being nourished and inspired at school in ways I clearly can't keep up with.

I see in her and now in our youngest daughter too that they yearn to learn, they crave it in. And in return the world sort of lights up for them and invites them to absorb the infinite possibilities that are available to them. They are lucky enough and as was I and as were most girls that I knew growing up, that your dreams were not ever going to fall on deaf ears and that your thoughts and your voice mattered and could make a difference. I said this to the incredible Malala Yousufzai, when we met for the first time. And I was in fact rather overwhelmed to sit with her.

My husband John and I discovered this very deep connection to Malala's cause for women's education spurred on by the arrival of our two daughters. She and her extraordinary father agreed to meet with us in London. It's a train ride away from where they now live in Birmingham in England. So, Malala is the name of a 19th century Afghan freedom fighter. It's a soft sounding name that certainly packs a punch

and how appropriate for the person who bears it. The most compassionate of hearts, but courage and will of steel.

Her name is sort of seared into our memories when news broke of the 15-year-old girl who was shot in the head by the Taliban on her school bus after hearing the demand, 'Which one is Malala?' And we wanted to know the same, who was she. This girl shot in the head for championing in girls' education. Who was she? She along with her friends on that bus was determined to continue her education no matter the threat. And as schools were bombed and houses were raided, and teachers were killed. She was unbowed and untethered by the intolerable limitations that were placed on her freedom to be in the one place that she wanted to be in school.

When the bullets rained down on these girls, the world stopped in their tracks and they listened to Malala. But most importantly so did millions of girls around the world put in the same position. This courageous eloquent and inspiring girl became their light. There are over 130 million girls missing out on an education. Because they have to work, or they are married by the age of 12 or they lack access to school facilities or have to care for younger siblings. Denying them their fundamental right to an education. And the Malala fund is working tirelessly to ensure 12 years of school until they are 18 for every girl worldwide.

So, from empowering local leaders to shift the old-fashioned mindsets of early marriage in Pakistan and many other countries, creating learning programs for out-of-school married girls in Kenya. They give access to quality education for Syrian refugees, building schools in remote and rural areas. They are girl by girl transforming communities. The potential for socio-economic growth when the other half of the population is given the opportunity to learn and then to work is limitless.

Malala knows this and they are seeing it firsthand in the communities they have touched. That if women are given a voice, they are using it. When they are handed the purse strings, the communities thrive. When they are given a job, they flourish. They organize better, they galvanize more passionately, and they are more likely to encourage peace where peace should be the priority. I remember Malala's father saying something to me that, I will never forget. He said, 'Too many women die as if they have never been born.' And I have never forgotten it.

John and I both feel we want to do as much as we can to help ensure that that statement doesn't hold true in the future. I know that I will never meet anyone more inspiring than Malala in my lifetime. I mean she's only the youngest ever Nobel peace prize laureate. I doubt anyone could top her really. She has set such a high bar, but her dream is that there will be others just like her. Because if one girl with an education can change the world, well we just have to imagine what 130 million can do. So, thank you so much. I'm so honored, thank you.

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