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Time magazine has named Barack Obama the 2012 Person of the Year. It is the second time the venerable news magazine chose America's first African American president, saying that Obama was selected "for finding and forging a new majority, for turning weakness into opportunity and for seeking, amid great adversity, to create a more perfect union."

The 2012 finalist included such well known newsmakers as Hillary Clinton, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, Olympic gold medalists Gabby Douglas and Michael Phelps, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, and Jon Stewart, the sometimes politically incorrect, acerbic host of The Daily Show.

However, the person occupying the runner-up spot on Time's list is Malala Yousafzai. While the Pakistani teenager's name may not be well recognized, her bravery and activism propelled Malala into the world spotlight and literally into the line of fire. Her efforts to secure equal educational opportunities for Muslim girls sparked a movement that could change the course of history in the Middle East. It nearly cost her life.

The retribution was atrocious, an unspeakable act of brutality. On October 9, 2012, Taliban gunmen boarded her school bus, sought her out and shot her in the head and neck. The bullets were not only meant to deliver a fatal blow to the 15-year-old student, the extremist sought to crush an entire educational movement. Malala, suffered life-threatening wounds and was airlifted to a hospital in Britain for months of intense rehabilitation.

Malala has said she wants to return to home to Pakistan. However, she remains a target for assassination as long as terrorism threatens the country. Immediately following the shooting a group of 50 Islamic clerics in Pakistan issued a fatwā (an Islamic juristic ruling) against those who tried to kill her, but the Taliban reiterated its intent to kill Yousafzai and her father, Ziauddin.

Malala's activism began quietly in early 2009, at the age of 11, when she "wrote a blog under a pseudonym for the BBC detailing her life under Taliban rule, their attempts to take control of the valley and her views on promoting education for girls. The following summer, the New York Times picked up her story and filmed a documentary about her life as the Pakistani military intervened in the region prior to a major territorial battle.

Soon, Malala began her rise to prominence, giving interviews in print and on television and taking a position as chairperson of the District Child Assembly Swat, a UNICEF foundation established to give young people "a unique opportunity to voice their concerns about children's right's issues, and to present solutions to address these concerns."

She has since been nominated for the International Children's Peace Prize by Bishop Desmond Tutu and has won Pakistan's first National Youth Peace Prize. A number of prominent individuals are supporting a petition to nominate Malala for the Nobel Peace Prize.

It is believed that Malala's high profile has put female students in her hometown at an increased risk of violence. Shortly after her brutal attack the school she attended was renamed in her honor. However, girls from her village fear that attending a school bearing her name may provoke more terrorist attacks. 120 pupils boycotted their classes last week and tore up pictures in protest of Malala's activism.

Malala, who wants to be a physician took her father's advice to use her voice to heal a nation torn by violence against girls, "has become an inspiration not only in her native Pakistan—where the culture wars over women's rights and religious diversity have taken many violent turns— but all around the globe" writes the editors of Time magazine.

While Malala Yousafzai may have placed second on Time's list, this brave teenager is

## Malala Yousafzai: Education Matters Person of the Year

Written by Editors

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Education Matters Person of the Year. My heartfelt prayers to the families who lost loved ones in Connecticut and a healing, joyous holiday to all.

*Jayne Matthews-Hopson is a writer and academic advocate. Education Matters because “only the educated are free.” Your thoughts, comments and suggestions are welcomed at <http://baltimeonline.com>*

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