

Ep. 1: Girls as Social Activists (Part 1)

[00:00:00] **Trudy Hall:** Hello. I am Trudy Hall, your host for the podcast on educating girls, creating a world of possibilities produced by the National Coalition of Girls Schools. Today, we'll be discussing girls as social activists, and while we are interested in what motivates these young women to take up their causes. We're also interested in coming to better understand the roles that parents, schools, teachers, and supportive adults play in inspiring girls to use their voices, to advocate for needed social change.

[00:00:33] Later on, we'll hear from Melissa Kilby, the executive director of girl up, and you'll hear the voices of girls themselves as they speak about using their passion and commitment to create change. In the world.[00:01:00]

[00:01:00] You have just heard what activism sounds like. But what is activism? Girl schools around the world are on a mission to prepare and energize girls to become ethical, globally minded, change makers. Young women who use their voices to advocate for others to address inequity where they find it. In girls' schools, we see a world in which all girls have the confidence and the commitment to lead social change.

[00:01:28] Today, we'll begin to talk about how to advance those skills in girls. And why are we talking about this today? The United Nations has designated October 11th as the International Day of the Girl Child a day established. The challenges girls face and do both promote girls empowerment and the fulfillment of their human rights.

[00:01:51] In more recent years, the day has also become an opportunity to celebrate the young female social activists around the globe who before the age of [00:02:00] 18 have inspired us as they take on the thorniest challenges of our time from climate change to human trafficking. Young women like Greta Thunberg from Sweden, who at 14 became the voice behind the fight to address global climate change.

[00:02:16] Samaira Mehta from the U S who had 11 launched initiatives to combat inequities for girls in stem education. Sofia Scarlat from Romania who at 17 tackled domestic violence and human trafficking. And of course, Malala from Pakistan with the age of 17, became the youngest to ever win the Nobel Peace Prize for her work as an advocate for girl's education.

[00:02:42] As I mentioned, my name is Trudy Hall. If you've been following the NCGS podcast, you are perhaps wondering why Pep Talks is now called on educating girls.

As the national coalition of girls schools is an international organization. The start of this new season seemed the right time [00:03:00] to broaden our audience, really focusing on what girls need by speaking with educators and champions who put girls at the center of their work, our new podcast title.

[00:03:11] On Educating Girls provides a more accurate description of what we're offering advice and wisdom to anyone who knows, works with and wants to better understand and support girls as they grow into young women. As an educator with over 40 years of experience in educating girls, I was thrilled to step into the role of host for these important discussions about the education and wellness of girls around the world.

[00:03:37] And I am delighted to welcome you to the first episode. Before I introduce my first guest, Melissa Kilby of Girl Up. I wanted to share excerpts of a recent conversation I had with Megan Murphy, the executive director of NCGS, as we plan the season of the podcast. For nearly a decade, Megan has traveled the globe as the leading advocate for the [00:04:00] transformative work that girls' schools do.

[00:04:02] As we launched this first season of On Educating Girls, I asked her to share her thoughts as the leader of an organization that has become known as the global go-to resource for girls' education.

[00:04:14] **Megan Murphy:** The purpose of our coalition is to be the leading advocate for girls schools. We pursue that work by connecting and collaborating globally with individuals and schools, as well as mission aligned organizations like Girl Up.

[00:04:29] The term coalition, I think is really central to our mission. A coalition after all is an alliance for combined action, with a common vision and for our global coalition of girls schools, this really means being united in elevating women's leadership worldwide. We seek to do this every single day in our girls schools by educating and empowering our students to be ethical globally minded change makers.

[00:04:59] **Trudy Hall:** There [00:05:00] will be moments throughout the season. When we hear from Megan or members of her team at NCGS for now, please know the NCGS website, ncgs.org is a valuable resource that educators, parents, and girls themselves will want to bookmark. Now, I am eager to introduce Melissa Kilby very much an activist in her own, right? As we dive into the real reason you have join me for a conversation. As to how we can foster social activism in young women.

[00:05:30] Melissa Kirby is the executive director of Girl Up. The global leadership development organization, transforming a generation of girls to be a force for gender equity and social change.

[00:05:42] Welcome Melissa. And I can't think of a better guest to join us as we celebrate the International Day of the Girl Child.

[00:05:49] **Melissa Kirby:** Thanks for having me today. It's great to be here.

[00:05:52] **Trudy Hall:** Well, and it's wonderful to finally meet you. Um, having heard so much about you and having seen the work that you've done over the years, that I've heard [00:06:00] of Girl Up, as you reflect upon the successes of the young activists in your world, can, can you speak to what must be true for a young woman to have the confidence, to put her voice out into what is sometimes an unfriendly universe in which she might be criticized for her passions or worse. What have you learned about this along the way?

[00:06:20] **Melissa Kirby:** You know, it's, it's been fascinating because teen girls have changed a lot in the last decade and Girl Up has grown a lot in the last decade, but I think the thing that has been consistent that I have seen through my work with Girl Up is that this generation's passion for justice and fairness, supersedes their fear.

[00:06:44] Right that call to create, change that call to try to create a more equal world for other girls. It's the it's that passion that pushes them through their. [00:07:00] Their, um, their confidence troubles, right? If they're, if they're not sure if, if they're afraid, if they're the only one, um, you know, if they feel a little insecure about being the voice or if they have never used their voice, the thing that pushes them through is their passion.

[00:07:17] And it's remarkable to see, you know, year after year. Girl after girl and, and frankly, girls that aren't even part of the Girl Up community. And we see this right. And we see that this innate desire to make a difference. They're able to, to set their fears aside and do it anyway. And I think that the beautiful thing about the girl up community is that there is a sense that they're not alone in this work and in this fear and in this activism and in this sort of pushing through, even if they don't know anyone else in the Girl Up community, they know that there is this global community, this, this global sisterhood that sort of has their virtual [00:08:00] back.

[00:08:00] And I think that gives them. Uh, boost, um, it gives them a little bit of that confidence to do the thing for the first time to speak up in their first, you know, forum to, to push back to question. Um, and, and that community aspect really helps to kind of build their courage to overcome that fear.

[00:08:22] **Trudy Hall:** I love this idea that it's their passion that allows them to push through any concerns they might have about their confidence. And sometimes when I hear those who are known internationally speak, I hear the sense that they want to pay it forward. I hear the sense that what they're wanting to do is across generations. Uh, where do you think they get that from that that notion of, um, it's it's about more than me. It's about the generation behind. You you mentioned it as well. This need to speak up on behalf of other girls. Uh, where does,

[00:08:56] **Melissa Kirby:** so I'm so glad that you pointed that out. It's something that [00:09:00] is, I think, very unique to this generation. You know, I hear from the leaders within the Girl Up community, that they're worried about the generations of girls that haven't even been born yet.

[00:09:10] And I think it's astounding and profound that at 16 and 17 years old, they are concerned about that. I think it's different. And I think that they have this perspective because they were born into a world full of crisis and they understood the weight and the gravity of those crisis from a very early age.

[00:09:34] You know, this is a generation that has had a lot of information at their fingertips. From a very early age. So they're aware of the stakes. They carry the weight of those stakes. Probably too much in my opinion, but the awareness, the access to data and to knowledge and to news. And even maybe [00:10:00] knowing someone on the other side of the world, maybe they're part of the grow up community and they've made a connection with a Girl Up leader experiencing something that they aren't personally experiencing.

[00:10:10] But now they're very aware of. And so I think having. The experience of being really surrounded by the knowledge and the reality, they're keenly aware of what the next generation will be born into. And I think it's, it's, again, it's profound because I will tell you, you know, Trudy I maybe a generation and a half behind the young women that we're talking about.

[00:10:39] And I was barely worried about myself in my own generation in high school, let alone. Those who haven't been born yet. And I would say even as an adult, I do worry about my five-year-old daughter, but have I really started to worry about her children. They just have this long view. And [00:11:00] I think that that long view comes from having such a keen sense of what's at stake.

[00:11:06] **Trudy Hall:** Uh, you've also now mentioned something else about this that might be different in their world, which is the sense of the ability to connect globally. Uh, you mentioned that some of them may have already had the opportunity to touch or know some of these women who have. Been in the international space,

doing activism work, um, speak a little bit about social media and the power of that to enhance and maybe perhaps even, um, exponentially improve these efforts.

[00:11:37] **Melissa Kirby:** So that is my favorite thing about social media, you know, with all of the, all of the positives, all of the negatives, you know, all of the things that come with the word, social media. The ability to connect with a person you may never meet in person is transforming the way that this generation interacts with the world.

[00:11:58] So when we talk about [00:12:00] being a global citizen, When did you and I think of global citizens, right? We probably had to leave the U S to fully appreciate what that meant. This generation doesn't have to leave the U S they are creating connections on these social platforms. And I would say the last two years of this virtual world, that we were all sort of forced into.

[00:12:23] One of the silver linings was we created even more connections, um, across physical geographic borders at Girl Up, we promote that. That's sort of one of the point, you know, one of the purposes of having a global community is for you to be able to truly empathize, to really be able to understand what someone else's lived experiences, because you actually. know a person. Um, and, and it's so fascinating to me with this generation that I have talked to multiple young women who, some of their best friends, they have never met in person, [00:13:00] but they consider them to be some of their closest relationships. And that relationship is completely authentic to them. They might have video chats, they might be Instagram friends.

[00:13:11] They might be in a community like Girl Up and they met in a chat. box on the side and then connected after, but they had a connection and that connection was fostered and flourished and they are getting something from each other, including this global context. So a really good example of this is actually the, the crisis in Afghanistan and the recent, you know, removal of the U S. There are Girl Up clubs in, uh, in Afghanistan.

[00:13:41] We've had a few Girl Up leaders who have been. I've spoken on panels have been in chat rooms, have been at virtual events and there were many girls in the U S who actually knew a real person sitting in Kabul impacted by what they were also seeing on the news. It's a whole [00:14:00] different dynamic when you're not just watching the news or hearing a number or getting this like vague context.

[00:14:08] But when you actually know a human who's having a human lived experience. You are impacted so differently about what happens in the world. And I think. The fact that they are creating these connections in this virtual space is, is so eyeopening it's. So, um, expansive of their perspective and their point of view.

[00:14:31] So, you know, we don't get to live in bubbles anymore. You know, we actually. Can can break those bubbles and go find a person to meet, and you have something in common, but maybe their lived experience is totally different. And it's, it's beautiful. And what it gives us is this expanded empathy, this immense tolerance, this celebration, and this like true inclusivity and valuing of other people's [00:15:00] experience.

[00:15:00] And I think that's one of the seeds that actually has the potential. To change the global crisis. So we just keep sort of coming into and living through as a society. That to me is, is the potential for truly coming together as a global humanity, is that there's just. Real connection, real empathy and real understanding of others.

[00:15:23] **Trudy Hall:** So I love that you've mentioned empathy and the building of empathy. I think all of us would agree. That's an essential ingredient. Um, it seems though, as if I were a parent listening now, I might be thinking to myself, oh my goodness. My daughter could be creating a whole movement for world peace in her bedroom upstairs.

[00:15:42] And I have no idea what's going on. Um, can you, can you help assure them that an actual fact, um, before the family bank account is emptied and she travels to, uh, Kazakhstan, um, that a parent would engage with this passion somehow some way in a useful way.

[00:15:59] **Melissa Kirby:** So I love [00:16:00] that analogy. Probably legitimately possible because you know, the way that they're making these connections is it's so fascinating, but I think, you know, just how can the family unit, how can the parents be a part of it?

[00:16:17] Right. That's what I would encourage. I think that. If you're, if your daughter, you know, if your, your child is expressing this interest in what's happening around the world, you're going to pick up on it. They're going to ask questions. They're going to sit and watch the news with you. It's going to come up in conversation, lean into that, you know, find out what is it that is causing them, you know, pause.

[00:16:43] What, what about what they're seeing. Is it impacting them? How has that making them feel, you know, where are they getting their perspectives from? And I think you'll get a real, really good sense of have they made some of these contacts and connections? Is there a [00:17:00] way that you as a family. Can elevate your family activism to be part of it with your daughter, right?

[00:17:07] So that it isn't happening separate from you, but that you can be a support to it. I think, you know, it's, it's so beautiful to see young women step into their

own, but when we're teenagers, we, we still want to have the support. You know, we have these young women still want to know that their family. Care to, and that they don't have to step outside of their school or their family or the adult figures tip to move their passions forward.

[00:17:40] If they know that they have that support, I think they're more inclined to want to include. Their parents in their, in their journey, um, versus sort of doing it in secret in their bedroom.

[00:17:53] **Trudy Hall:** Oh, well, I, I, I really am enjoying the picture that you're painting about this [00:18:00] particular generation, because I have been curious that so many of these young women are under the age of 18. Uh, you know, I reading about activists who are 11, 12, 13, uh, doing fundraising campaigns. Um, as you look at that, do you find those examples to be useful to girls who are on the front end of learning to be social activists? Or is it just so daunting that they pull back and say, oh, I'll I'll know when I ready to do something as grand as that?

[00:18:32] How, how have you in your work use those examples?

[00:18:36] **Melissa Kirby:** Well, I would say unequivocally, I think the examples are motivating. I think that whether you are looking at a, a global icon like Malala or Greta and thinking, maybe I can do a fraction of that, or you're seeing the 11 year old in your neighborhood raised \$10,000 from a lemonade stand.

[00:18:57] You know, you, you, any [00:19:00] example of someone. It's like you making change, I have found is a motivator. Um, I think that doing something by yourself that you've never seen anyone successfully do. Is very daunting, especially at a young age. It is, it is hard to be a trailblazer in general. If you are still in your own formative years, trying to be a trailblazer it's, it's especially daunting.

[00:19:29] But when you know that there's a path, even if you may not have. Soar to the top of that mountain of activism. You know, there's a path that, that people have walked down before and that other young women have walked down before. And I think that it's motivating it's, uh, it's uh, it's like courage building, you know, it sort of gives you the.

[00:19:52] No, no. Okay. If that 11 year old can do it me as a 16 year old, I can certainly do something or I want to [00:20:00] aspire to make impact like Malala, maybe not in the exact ways that on the exact stages doing the exact things, but she is motivating to me. So I have found really across the board that it, it, it really is a positive motivator.

[00:20:15] And I, I think with Girl Up, what we really try to do is of course we all. Uh, you know, hold up are the global icons in these ways, but we really try to highlight what's the club in central Pennsylvania doing what's the club in the village in Zambia doing like w what are the accessible examples? And regardless of like how many dollars or which legislation, or sort of what mountain was moved or pebble was pushed forward.

[00:20:48] The fact is that you are doing something. And so we really try to bring examples that are both aspirational and accessible. Um, and that really [00:21:00] gives a nice balance because you can see yourself in the accessible example, but then you can push yourself towards the aspiration on example. And I think that the combination of those two work works really well.

[00:21:12] And I think has been one of our central strategies and our storytelling of Girl Up leaders, activism really from day one.

[00:21:20] **Trudy Hall:** So you've been now, uh, uh, with a Girl Up and involved in this for over a decade, which is long enough to actually see the success of what you've done, but also maybe to track what some of your earlier young women have been doing.

[00:21:36] And as you think about this sort of creative energy that you're churning out into the world, uh, I've sort of two questions. One, what do you do with that next piece? The young women who are now in this. Late twenties or so how have you utilized their energy in getting this virtuous circle going? Um, and would you have, uh, ideas about how to [00:22:00] include them in, um, actions in schools or communities, uh, where they might be, uh, beyond, a Girl Up?

[00:22:06] **Melissa Kirby:** Yeah, absolutely. Um, so last year we kind of, to that very point, we realized, okay, we're we're 10 years in. We started small. So we, we generally have a sense of where some of our earliest leaders are in the world, but we, um, we actually piloted a small group of, of hopefully what will become a very robust alumni network this year.

[00:22:28] And we're hoping to really build that out into a full fledged network, um, in, in 2022. And what's been amazing is we had the steering committee of about 20 of our older. Girl Up leaders, you know, who are in their twenties, in their careers and the mentorship and the tuning in to hear from these leaders about getting their jobs, you know, foraging their, their career paths, how they took their activism and their passion and determined [00:23:00] what they wanted to study and where they wanted to take their adult journey forward still having that, that passion in the center. And what has been amazing is the younger Girl Up leaders that are in high

school right now are getting to hear from their predecessors directly of where are they, how has this thread through, how does it impact them in the workplace?

[00:23:25] What different expectations do they have around equality and justice and fairness? Um, so we're at the beginning stages of actually really trying to capture that and make it a robust opportunity for, um, the older girls that were here at the, in the first few years to really be in relationship and community with the younger, the younger women who are in the community now, because they will say they're also different, you know, that activism has changed a lot in the last 10 years.

[00:23:59] [00:24:00] Um, you know, our early days of Girl Up was a lot of it was about fundraising. Um, then we started to do more advocacy and now it's just full-blown activism. And in every way that you can define that. But that also matches, I think what's been happening outside of girl, up with the generation. So, um, I think that our older Girl Up leaders are so incredibly inspired by the, the, the members that are active right now because they see them being bolder, pushing harder, pushing, pushing more deliberately and, and really speaking, even stronger.

[00:24:36] Um, And I think that our, our sort of our, our world and our community and the crisis that these young people are living through and facing has really just pushed their activism forward. Um, but it's such a beautiful mutual relationship. Um, and there's, there's so much to be done there. And I think, again, I think that applies too to the girls school environment, either [00:25:00] through girl up or through your own alumni, you know, we know that the young women that I've interacted with over the last 10 years have a lot to teach each other, let alone teach us as adults. Right. And so being able to create those connections by being at a girls school, you learned a lot of things that helped you go out into the world. How can you pay it back? How can you pay it forward?

[00:25:27] And also how can you learn and be inspired by the girls that are coming up behind you? And if you can set something like that up, it just, it really becomes this. Self-powered inspiration learning mechanism that can just really continue decade after decade after decade. Um, and like, you know, we're just starting to see the spark of that because we were a little late to the, to the alumni concept.

[00:25:51] Really excited to see what comes from that. Um, it's kind of my, one of my, my passion projects right now is making sure that [00:26:00] we can keep the community connected so that the community can keep us powered, you know, going forward.

[00:26:07] **Trudy Hall:** Well, if what you've done to date is any evidence, I'm sure that you will power up this alumni network. So we'll be hearing more about that. You you've done a really lovely job of articulating the importance of role modeling either

as a parent watching the news together, or putting your daughters in contact with others who are doing this work, or perhaps even leaning into those who have are just three or four years ahead of you.

[00:26:32] Can you provide, I know, uh, of our listeners might want to know additional tips that you've got, uh, beyond those that we've already mentioned.

[00:26:41] **Melissa Kirby:** Look for the seeds, look for the sparks. You know, if, if you know that your daughter is paying attention, you know, is, is, is noticing, is feeling something and maybe they have not [00:27:00] yet found that outlet, or they don't think of themselves as an activist yet, or they haven't realized.

[00:27:07] That they are capable of contributing to the thing that might be sparking in them. Um, I I've heard from a lot of Girl Up leaders of, you know, when they found Girl Up, it's like, they finally, it all clicked, you know, they, they found the website and they're like, yeah, This is the stuff that I've been, that I've been thinking about that I've been feeling and processing and I, nobody else was talking about it.

[00:27:34] So I didn't talk about it. And I don't know that my friends care about this, so I just kinda kept it inside. But then I stumbled upon. Uh, a tweet or a social media post or the website, or met someone in passing that mentioned the word Girl Up. And, and it was like, yes, that's it. Right. So I think what I would recommend as another thing for, for parents and teachers and [00:28:00] educators to think about is how can you help help eliminate that, that spark, that click, right. If you're seeing it, but you haven't actually seen the step take, you know, move forward. Maybe they don't know how to, or where to, or even that there is a thing to do. Um, I think even today, when we're surrounded by social activists. And it's very much a part of mainstream community.

[00:28:32] Sometimes you still don't relate, but what you're feeling is the same thing as what you're seeing someone else do. So I think being able to make those connections, seeing the seed, fan the spark, you know, those, those things that we can do as adults to tap in to something that could then lead them to say, oh, Okay, I can do this.

[00:28:55] I can do something about this. Here's some different places that I can go.
[00:29:00] And there's a ton of great organizations, great resources. I'm sure. Even within the programs at the schools, obviously girl up is one of them. Um, but there's lots of places to do that. So, you know, help point them towards those places, if you have helped to point out to them that they have this, this may be the seed of interest.

[00:29:18] So I think watching for that, um, is really helpful. The other thing I would say too, is make sure that you are vocal in that the school that they're in the community, that they're in, that there are options, right? That there are organizations to volunteer with that maybe. I'm going to go volunteer over here and you didn't even have to invite them, but then it, it clicks that, oh, I could do that too.

[00:29:45] And is there a social impact club or organization at the school? Is there a focus on that in your community? Um, because I think again, sometimes just. awareness is the first piece. If you've [00:30:00] got that inkling inside, you need to know where your options are to take it forward. Um, not everybody wants to start their own thing, but if they know what's available to them, they may step into something, um, and really be able to grow from there.

[00:30:15] And I think, you know, the last piece that I would say is this generation. I spoke about this before, you know, they were born with the weight of the world on their shoulders. They are so aware of the crisis that comes with fires, hurricanes school shootings. Suicide rates, social media, the negative side, right?

[00:30:41] And then you have the global crisis going on around the world. And then especially if you now, you know, someone there and you have, you've now internalized something happening on the other side of the world, it is a lot. And so, you know, one way to feel like [00:31:00] that is not overwhelming is to do something towards improving it. That is one way to actually feel better is to say, okay, what of all of this can I do something to help? Right? Where can I be proactive? Where can I contribute to the solution? Where can I move the needle, push the pebble, right. Just take a step towards a way that I can make this better.

[00:31:29] It can make all of that just a little bit less overwhelming because you feel like you are a part of the solution. The only thing I will caution is too much can be too much. Activism burnout is real. Burnout in young people is real. There's just so much going on all the time. So just really finding the balance of what's enough to feel productive and to feel like a sense of ease.

[00:31:56] And what's too much where now you're actually [00:32:00] kind of going to the other side of the extreme and taking on too much for your own, your own wellbeing.

[00:32:05] **Trudy Hall:** Listen, that is such a high note and a brilliant note on which to end our conversation. As we think about putting a wrap on the first episode of a two-part series on girls as activists, I cannot thank you enough for putting your busy life and all your wonderful, uh, girl activists aside to join us on this conversation.

[00:32:24] Uh, you take care and we'll stay in touch and we look forward to hearing more about the successes of the social activists in your world. We felt it was important in this conversation to ask girls themselves about this topic. And here is what they had to say.

[00:32:40] **Faye Chang:** Hi, my name is Faye I'm from Sydney, Australia, and I attend to Pymble Ladies College.

[00:32:46] Social activism is really important because I think the only way forward towards meaningful and collective human progress is through recognizing the wrongs of the past and being able to engage with and deconstruct the kind of [00:33:00] systematic injustices and underlying beliefs of our, the institutions of our society and us in society as individuals.

[00:33:07] Personally, a lot of my activism is driven, I guess, to some extent by a personal stake in these issues. But I think to a greater extent, it's driven by a sense of empathy and a strong belief that things really should be better in our society than what they currently are. And I believe that, um, in order for things to change, it really requires a kind of collective cooperation and engagement with these issues.

[00:33:29] I think being educated in a girls school for most of my life has imbued with me within me, kind of a sense of individual responsibility and ability. Um, and I think one of the main ways in which this environment has kind of helped is by creating a space where empathy and, um, meaningful activism is encouraged within the student community.

[00:33:49] And there are heaps of other peers inside the student body who are passionate about similar issues, who I can connect with various. [00:34:00]

[00:34:00] **Oly Dyedi:** Greetings to everyone that is chilling in my name is Olythemba Dyedi. And I attend Eunice Girls High School in Bloemfontein , which is located in the Free State province of South Africa. I strongly believe in helping or being a social activist as I'm, as I'm called simply because I believe very strongly and other schools seem for the, uh, which is, um, Empowered to Uplift.

[00:34:26] I'm simply empowering the next person to speak out and something that affects them, but I'm also empowering myself to speak out on things that affect me. So I'm a social activist simply because I know what is wrong and it is not acceptable to sit in silence when other people are struggling. Also, it is not acceptable for me to sit down and pretend and yeah, and pretend as if I don't have a voice [00:35:00] and I'm unaffected about things that are wrong.

[00:35:07] **Faye Chang:** So I think in order to promote activism, at, not just girls schools, but any schools, because I think it's really crucial that as many people get involved in these kinds of collective movements, I think there are kind of three main steps that schools can take.

[00:35:20] The first of all, is creating a safe. Because I think it is really important that students do have that kind of support to their mental and physical wellbeing while they're engaging in activism. So I think one thing that is really crucial to developing these safe environments is making sure that schools are inclusive of as possible, um, particularly of students of color and also of students belonging to the LGBTQ community.

[00:35:44] And, um, particularly in schools that have been traditionally same-sex, uh, making sure that they do develop an environment that is safe and inclusive of gender queer students is really crucial I believe.

[00:35:55] **Oly Dyedi:** Being in a girls school has definitely given me the chance to grow in terms of speaking [00:36:00] out and standing out for myself and other people.

[00:36:03] However, being around girls who have this unfounded beliefs that we should arch outshine each other has somehow fueled me to become more assertive and more strong in what I believe in. But as much as girls tend to be competitive, I have to say they have, they're my biggest support base. They have become my allies whenever I in school, whenever I talk about issues or matters that we seen got a little bit unjust. I've always known that they have my back. And for that I'm grateful. Also being in a gold school has forced me to grow holistically as a person. And it has, it has been uncomfortable. Yes. But I've realized my potential, my strengths, my weaknesses. And I think, [00:37:00] That itself has helped me realize the importance when speaking out and the importance of listening to other people when they speak.

[00:37:12] **Trudy Hall:** This has been the first episode of On Educating Girls. In our second episode, we'll be hearing from two experienced heads of school who will share insights on the programs that have been developed with girls in mind. In each episode, we'll make every effort to leave you with news you can use on the discussion topic.

[00:37:33] You can find us on all major podcast platforms, such as Spotify and Apple podcasts. Please join us again. And of course, bookmark the site www.ncgs.org for further resources. As you educate and nourish girls in whatever role you play in their lives.[00:38:00]