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### Girls Helping Girls



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**"There's a radical—and wonderful—new idea here... that all children could and should be inventors of their own theories, critics of other people's ideas, analyzers of evidence, and makers of their own personal marks on the world."**

– Deborah Meier, educator

At age 15, Sejal Hathi of Fremont, California founded an international nonprofit called **Girls Helping Girls**. Hathi, now 16 and a junior at **Notre Dame High School** in San Jose, talked to WKCD about the organization's work, and about what drives her to work for change:



"I had always been really interested in social change initiatives, in service, and in helping other people. It was my work with another nonprofit organization, **Girls for a Change**, that really catapulted me to this level of social action. Girls for Change taught me that any girl, however disadvantaged, could leverage her inner power to make a difference.

"With Girls for a Change, I organized, among other projects, a mentoring program, a self-esteem summit, and a Darfur awareness benefit to help raise funds for the women and children victims of the Darfur genocide. This last project showed me the vast chasm in opportunity that separates girls like me and girls like those I encountered from Darfur who lack the confidence and support network to achieve their dreams. I really want to help those girls.

"The more I campaigned and led projects, the more I began to realize that the most fundamental problem affecting our society today is something simpler than poverty or health disorders or political corruption, but then also insidious, and I thought that that was ignorance. So I decided to found Girls Helping Girls in order to really train girls, to give them the self-confidence to assert their voice in the world.

"Through Girls Helping Girls, we take action around four themes: eradicating poverty, increasing access to education, improving health, and promoting peace. The Empower-a-Girl program partners girls in United States with girls in developing countries to work together towards the achievement of the United Nations' **Millennium Development Goals**. We have developed four curriculum guides on each of our four major global issues. Each curriculum guide features a section on cross-cultural collaboration.

"During the second half of the year, we give the girls the Transform Your World Toolkit to create their own social change projects directly challenging their studied global issue. Often, the girls in the U.S. choose to raise awareness or advocate for the cause of their partner. Girls here in the U.S. may create a documentary about lack of access to education in developing countries, for example. Through the Empower-a-Girl program, we try to teach girls to become global citizens by first giving them the knowledge about global issues and then teaching them to transmute that passion to action so they can transform their world."

#### Sisters 4 Peace

"At the end of June, we will launch the Sisters 4 Peace Network. The Sisters 4 Peace Network is a social change movement that gives girls the toolkits, the mentorship and the resources to launch their own social justice ventures. It is guided by a network of



girls helping girls



Peace Ambassadors from all over the world who provide additional expertise and fundraising assistance.

"We hope to foster a sisterhood of change-makers-- a global community of children helping children to make the world a better place. The website for the network will also include discussion forums for girls to talk about issues of interest to them

"I really want to see Girls Helping Girls grow. My mission is to expand it to as many colleges, high schools and middle schools as I can. As for my own career plans, I'm not positive yet, but I'm looking into the medical field. But no matter which profession I select, I think that I'll always be helping people. It's more of an attitude—helping people, service, and solidarity. It really becomes a passion."

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