STORIES OF GIRLS' RESISTANCE

Defining Resistance Pocket Book

Throughout history, the stories of girls and their power have been ignored, erased and pushed aside.

Introducing Stories of Girls' Resistance, a feminist storytelling project that voices the inspiring, complex and unfiltered stories of girls pushing back and imagining better worlds for themselves and us all.

When we listen, these stories show unequivocally that girls are leaders, culture creators, narrative-shapers, and movement-makers at the forefront of shifting mindsets, laws, hearts, and behaviours. Leading and embedded in the world's most powerful justice struggles, they are working across generations with young and old alike, to shape destinies for their households, communities and nations.

Girls are full of power. In quiet everyday ways and through bold and loud actions, they are changing the world.

These are their stories.

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Defining Resistance Pocket Book

This pocket book is an excerpt from the full book, providing a glimpse into the many ways girls define resistance and are resisting across the world.

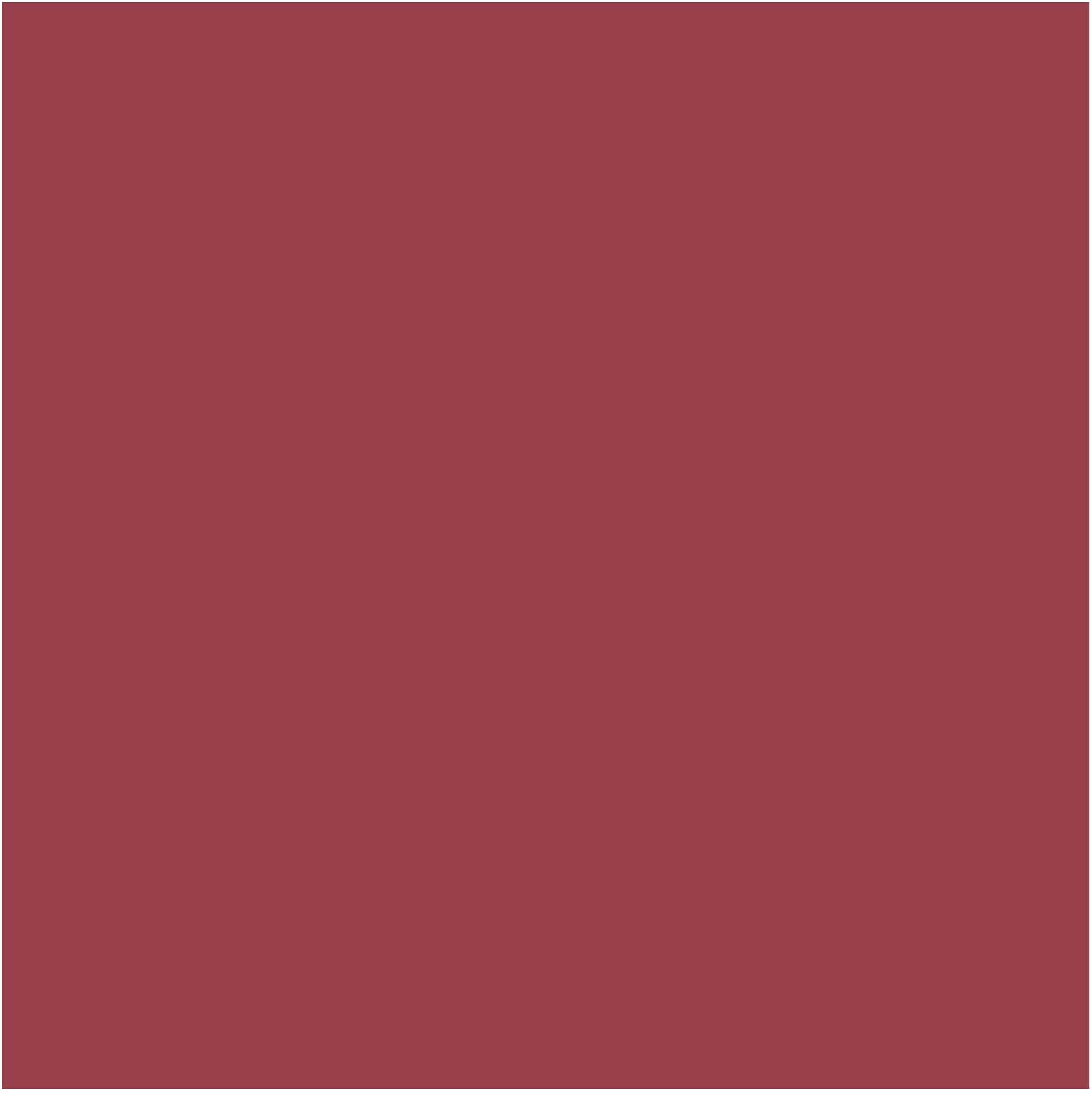
The Stories of Girls' Resistance is dedicated to every girl who has ever imagined a different kind of world.

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Access full book



Defining Resistance

Resistance refers to the formal and informal, bounded and unbounded, spontaneous and organised, individual and collective ways in which girls push back and imagine better worlds for themselves and us all. From secretly learning to read, to questioning the gendered burden of domestic duties at home, to grabbing the microphone at a political rally, to leading revolutions; girls are resisting the many abuses of power they experience in different ways. Sometimes seemingly small acts of resistance work to transform her world, and often plant and nourish the seeds for decades of resistance to come.

Resisting is just an indicator, I think, that we are on the right path and no one can overcome or deny the power of people and their specifc principles and values like justice and equality.

- Anonymous, Sudan



I think resistance is just... some small acts, actually, I see them as resistance. Like at some point going out in the streets without a veil was a big act of resistance. Just continuing to have these mixed gatherings with male and female friends in public or in houses, that was resistance. Going out in public, that was resistance. But also just resisting the social norms and standing your ground and questioning. So that of course came gradually but at the beginning, for me resistance was to question whenever someone would say, but you should do this or you shouldn't do this. So just resisting the social norms and arguing that nothing is fixed and things could be different from one person to another.

- Anonymous, Sudan

I think it's simple things like when a woman is walking on the road and a man says something to her that she doesn't like or doesn't approve of, I think it's the small things like responding to him and responding in a very aggressive and abrasive way, and not be polite about communicating your disapproval. I think it's small things like that, that to me would scream resistance. Or it's even small things like - what we choose to wear - like all Black people need to be wearing an Afro. It does say something when you acknowledge that your community doesn't approve of your hair or your skin, but you still choose to present your hair and your skin in a very loud and present way.

- Brittney, Jamaica



My resistance was so subtle that I don't recollect. Because, if you've noticed, it's a bit hazy when it comes to girlhood because I've always been this way. It sounds crazy but I don't even remember a moment, because in subtle ways, I was always resisting. There's no particular moment. I'd say throughout, maybe by simple things, me saying, why do I have to do it, why can't he do it? Why can't he do that? That's my brother. Why can't he do it? So, I think subtle things like that. There's no one "aha!" moment. I think it was the subtleties, be it in the house, at school. Just little things like that.

- Ulemu, Malawi

At first, whatever form of resistance I exercised was spontaneous and was I think, imposed on me. In a good sense, not in a bad sense. Because as I tell you, it's not that I started doing things because I wanted to. It's because I found myself in front of a tank, it's because I found myself with three siblings and social norms that don't support women and girls. It is because I've been fighting since I was fifteen to earn my living and go to university, helping my sister do her homework and then waking up at 5am in the morning so I could make sandwiches for the kids to go to school. I was a mother, I was a father, I was everything
in between. And I think that transformed me. I cannot tell you that I remember how this transitioned, I can only tell you that it's continued to grow with me, it became both my characteristics as an individual and I started to define myself by the form of resistance that I could carry with me. It became part of who I am - an indispensable part - it's something that I cannot compromise now.

- Anonymous, Occupied Palestine

It [resistance] means ensuring that I empathise quietly. It means that I quietly placed myself in a position to be able to lift up someone that's like me.
- Anonymous, West Africa

I was born with a physical disability and all these stereotypes that just judged me, kept me from my own family... didn't let me fit in, let's say, with a normal life like the rest... And so even when I was very young, I wanted to break those stereotypes from family and from society. And to be angry, right? To say: "why is this society unfair?"

- Indira, Amazonian Quichua

Why I was just starting out in activism work, the party that guides Poland right now was gaining and the power dynamics in the country changed a lot. This resulted in a series of abortion rights protests for example- the black protests became quite famous- and this was the biggest thing that I remember. And it happened, I'm trying to remember the date, but it was influenced by the changes that were being pushed by the government to totally ban abortion, even in cases that were threatening the life of the woman, which was really scary. So I think in 2016, people came to the streets, and I was 17 at the time, and it was really terrifying but I think it was also the first time that I experienced a sense of community with all of the other women in Poland because it was such a big movement. It kind of transformed my views of many things, because I had never experienced it before.

- Anonymous, Poland

Resistance means pushing back. It means standing firm for what you believe in and it doesn't always have to be loud, but it's always there. It's a force to be reckoned with.

- Jahnelle, Antigua and Barbuda



Whenever I hear the words 'Grace Banu' my gender and caste come back to me. It's very difficult as a trans author - especially as a Dalit trans author - it's completely difficult. I know a lot of publishers in Tamil Nadu - I approached a lot of famous publishers, but they refused me, and they didn't support my book release, so that is why I startedmy own publishing house. It is completely about our trans community - that's why I used the name Trans Publications. So, people who want to release a book or poem, this is the platform and you can use it.

- Grace, Indi



The situation in my country makes us find ourselves in a situation of censorship on many occasions, we have been limited in our basic right to the free manifestation of our needs, demands, and there is always a type of repression, which puts our lives and our freedom at risk. That is why I have been in full fight on the street, like other colleagues who have given their lives. For my resistance I have suffered violence, mostly verbal, threats like "Do not continue working on this, it is an absurd fight". People want to scare me, to make me feel afraid, of what could happen to me for continuing in this.

- Katherine, Honduras

From 2003 until 2004, when the civil war started, religion started to interfere with politics and started to interfere with everyday life. My dad out of fear asked us to wear hijab so that we could be safe, that's how he saw it. At the time, I refused to wear it. I stayed home from school for a week until they understood that I was not willing to wear it. Even my aunts and relatives after seeing I took a stance and refused to go to school for a week said, let her be until she is convinced. My family accepted my refusal. I felt that I had the strength to resist someone or something, it wasn't against my dad specifically I just felt it was wrong to do something simply because it was seen as 'the right thing' by others. My stance was, that I didn't want what I wore to be determined by society and didn't think it was right to force it on anyone. Yes, this experience and the war was when I began questioning things and being stubborn or refusing to accept. My dad's acceptance of my decision not to wear hijab, it really gave me the confidence that I had a voice.
- Tara, Iraq

The resistance did not start at home. I think it started in the school space and it was not given to me, it was a space that I created. And I just kept going down the road.

- Marsha, Barbado



I had it even since childhood, when they told me, "you are a girl, you should be like this ..." Already back then I had this "why?" Already back then I wondered and did not understand it, and I was angry. Just because I am a girl I am not allowed to do something?! Sometimes I thought, "Being a boy would be so much better, they would not tell me all this. When you are a girl, you owe everyone." Only in 2015 when I came to "New Rhythm" I began to gradually reflect and understand what was happening- why such restrictions exist; why we get these labels.

- Salt Boro, Kyrgyzstan

I think sometimes a lot of people resist because of fear. Some people resist because they wanted to progress, so they resist against the system as it is. And they want the system to change, some people want to change, but I think a lot of people don't like change and they have a fear of the unknown, so you might resist change. Some people resist for change and some people resist change. I think also when you don't know what's coming or you feel threatened by what's coming you will definitely resist, even if you're not fully aware of what it is. Before knowledge I think comes resistance.

- Darcel, Trinidad and Tobago



There was a big demonstration. I'd never seen so many people all together. They started shouting about freedom, their right to vote and the name of the leader. I was thinking I would never do this. I thought I was too shy, but then I started to shout and I was shocked! I realised I liked it and made a lot of friends. Together we became a young oppositional group. They called it special regiment. All of us were super young. Half were minors. I joined when I was 17. This is how my street activism started. I also started to organise my own protests. More than 150 became political prisoners. One was a man from our group. In order to free him we organised protests every Friday. During one, they made me speaker. In Armenia at that time no female would take a megaphone, but I did! It was so amazing! I was shouting "Free political prisoners!" I don't think smartphones existed so I don't have any pictures. It was so powerful for me.

- Anna, Armenia

I feel like resistance is also just surviving. So, you don't even know that you're doing it but you're resisting every single day and so it's hard to try to put into words that I like... This is literally what I do every day, and I'm sure you've talked to so many amazing women... And I've been able to recognise what they do daily has resistance because you're running - especially as Black women- you're just running and you don't know what you're doing and you're putting so many things aside and you're not even thinking about certain things and the impact. You're just running and surviving and pushing forward and that's resistance in the smallest ways.

- Glodie, DRC and United States



The fact that I care about myself is resistance. The fact that I care about how I look is resistance. My spirituality is resistance. I am a follower, I do Voodoo. Not that like, 'woo-dee-woo' devil shit; I connect with my ancestors. The fact that my rhetoric is not Christianity is the resistance, you know? The fact that I am okay being Black is resistance. I feel like resistance is just so many things. And it doesn't matter how small. The fact that I exist. I didn't deny myself to conform to your standards; that's resistance to me. And I'm going to be me, unapologetically me. What is it called Unapologetically Black. Because I'm Black, Black and mo' Black. That's it. I'm Blackity-Black. I'm nigga mixed with mo' nigga.

- Mason-Sera, United States



For me it was saying no to arranged marriage. Every single time I agreed for a guy to come see me, it was only because I did not want my parents to look bad in front of my extended family. I did not want my extended family to give my mum and dad crap or say bad things to them. If people say bad things to me, I'm like "yeah fuck off", but if anyone says bad things to my mum and dad, I can't take it. So, it was just because of them I did it. But my mum and dad never pressured me into anything. Then it came to a point in time that I was like "this is not right...it's just so fucked up", and I started saying no. Family members would still call, and I would say no: "I don't want it. Stop this. No more." So, my mum started saying no to the family members wanting to bring guys to see me for proposals. My mum would go back and tell them "no". So, that's I think one of the biggest no's I have ever said. I put my foot down. I think that was one of the biggest acts of pushback or resistance I ever did in my life. Stop marrying me off!

- Mamta, Fiji

I went to Freedom Corner when I was 17. The bank was closing a deal, a contract with one of the ministries there so I had gone to negotiate, and as I'm coming back to town, to the office, I see this group of old women stripping naked at Uhuru Park. I'm like, what the hell is happening here? So I alighted and went back to Uhuru Park instead of going down to Post Bank. And when I went there I saw that to these women, they were being beaten by police, they were crying, they were saying how they had children, how they would fight to the bitter end, how they would fight even if they would be killed...and I listened to what they were saying, and they kept talking about this political prisoner. They went on and on and on and on and I'm like, who is this political prisoner? I had never encountered a political prisoner because in the slum we have so many prisoners, but they are all criminals. This was a new concept, I had never come across it. But after listening to what people were saying and why their children are in prison and the reason why their loved one was in exile, then I realised this is an economic prisoner and we are economic prisoners in the slum in Korogocho. And I realised I'm also a political prisoner. For that reason I think I belong here more than the bank. So I never went back to the bank. I never sent my report back, I never went back to resign. I just sat in that whole evening, afternoon, evening, the following day, I continued and continued and continued until the strike ended.

- Naomi, Kenya



I think a part of our resistance, at least my resistance, does have to do with what I put on my body and how I present my body. We are in a natural hair movement and African prints are cute right now but I will say that for me walking into a boardroom or a meeting with my hair out and my African print - and a loud-coloured nail polish - to me that is resistance because it's saying that I don't have to wear a suit and have a slicked-back hair-do or whatever the case may appear in order to be educated, professional, know what I'm talking about, all of that stuff. I do think that for me since I was 17, before natural hair was cute, a part of my resistance was wearing my Afro and having locs and being like - I'm not here for the white beauty standards. I'm not doing it. I'm not aspiring to it, none of that.

- Wakumi, United States




i resist in the way that I dress. People don't consider my way of dress age-appropriate and professional. I mean Wakumi has never had a problem with the way that I dress. So, I don't know man, but you know people are like, why do you dress like you're still 12? And I was like, I look cute and you have a problem.
- Mason-Sera, United States
Resistance to me means fighting against conformity or fighting against people or policies or things that want to put you in a box.
- Marilyn, United States


Those children marched the streets of Freetown. They went to parliament; they went to the president and said, this is what we want, this is what is going to make the children of this nation safer. They set the stepping stone for this new generation of people who are resisting the system.
- Josephine, Sierra Leone
I helped my mother at a stage of my life, I helped her understand that being quiet is not being happy, and to be happy you need to talk, you need to share what you're feeling and you need to fight for it.
- Mila, Mozambique



It gives you the satisfaction of the fact that whatever you were doing had been able to bring some change in the lives of women and girls of the present generation. That inspires me to do more things. It doesn't allow me to sit in comfort and that is the only reason why I keep on resisting.

- Shahzadi, Pakistan

For me, resistance goes hand in hand with transformation and resilience, because you can resist your whole life a problem and endure it, but if you do not use this problem as a way to transform
your reality, to make this problem a springboard to transform, resist and do something that changes your life and that of other people, that for me is not resistance. We are surrounded by problems and it is not possible that our only way out is to just hold them or put them in the backpack and carry them around for a lifetime, you have to use those stones to make a wall, to do something.

- Nayeli, Mexico


As a girl, men made me angry. Men made me afraid. And school was what filled me with hope. Because I saw that my mum and my grandma didn't have the opportunity to really go to school, stay in school and graduate from school. And I was doing that. I had hope not just for myself, but also for my family. I saw myself as the light of the family.
- Josephine, Sierra Leone
Because this world is supposed to be considered free, we are supposed to be able to grow to our greatest potential. Just seeing the fact that- oh, you are a girl so this field of work is not for you. Who is to say that I am not going to create some ground-breaking experience or law or something that is going to push the territory or the world to a whole new level?
- Ashellica, British Virgins Island


I think I've been able to liberate voices. To allow my peers, people like me, to share their experiences without being afraid to say the wrong thing. I can say I contributed to that.
- Anonymous, West Africa
I think when you see the same kind of injustices all your life in different forms, you are automatically geared to do something about it.
- Haitelenisia, Tonga

I used to shiver when I stood on stage, I felt scared. But today I don't get scared. I have started telling and talking everywhere. The situation in my home has changed a lot. Earlier my father was very strict. Now my father doesn't tell me what to wear. That is better for me. So the mind-set has changed. The mindset of my parents have changed. And many things have happened after my work like in my friends circle. There were many saw what I had done, and also wanted to do the same thing. So like this many changes have come.

- Saleha, India



I believe that I am doing what I do because women before me did their part and it's my responsibility to do my part for the generation to come.

- Judicaelle, Burundi

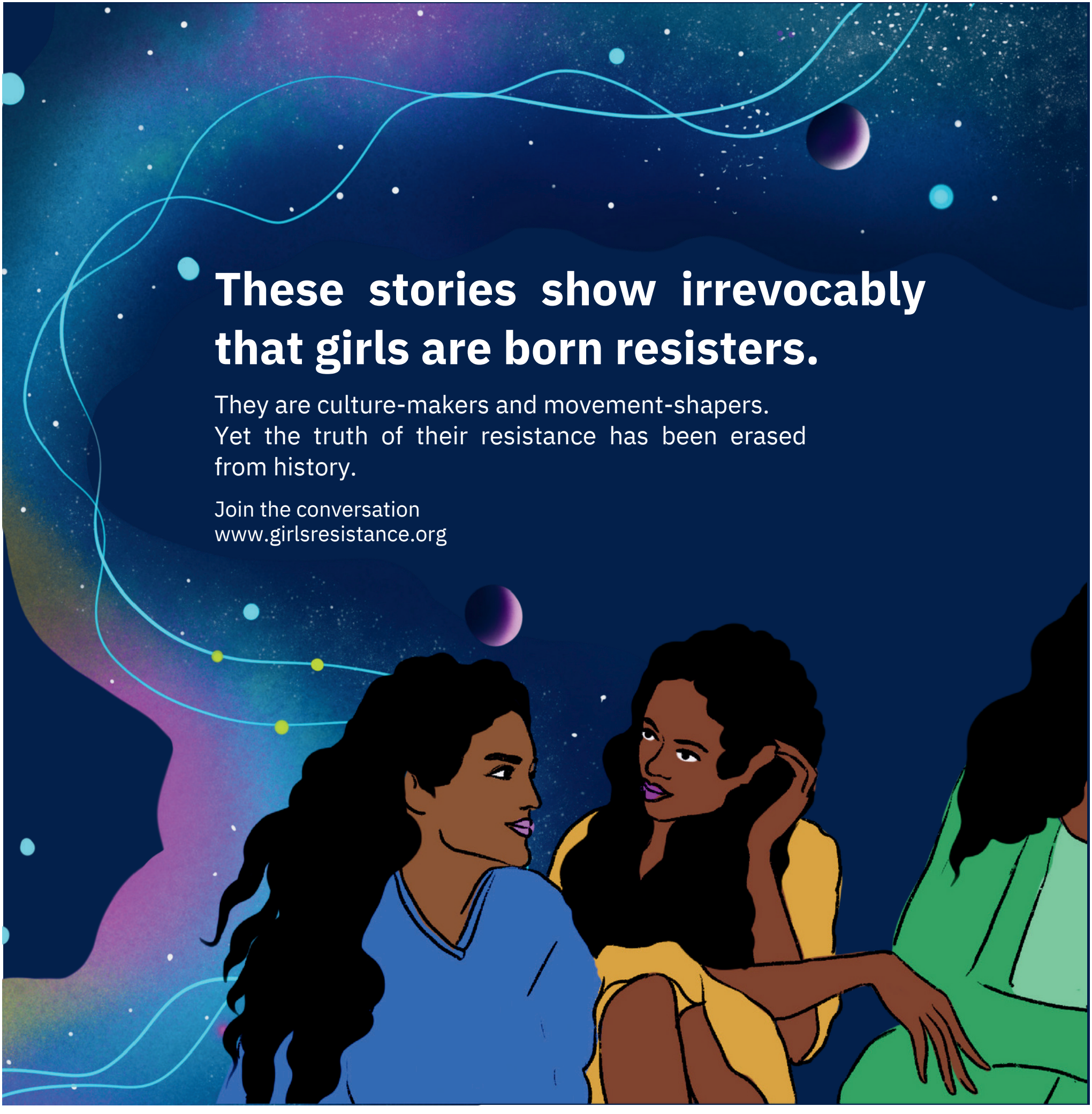
I'm very grateful that I know so many women who are supportive of me and my advocacy. There are so many women who have paved the way, especially women in Parliament, and in other spaces. Women who are much older than me but also those who are not that much older. They empower me by being themselves, and creating spaces for younger women like me.

- AnneMary, Fij

These stories show irrevocably that girls are born resisters.

They are culture-makers and movement-shapers.
Yet the truth of their resistance has been erased from history.

Join the conversation
www.girlsresistance.org





Stories of Girls' Resistance is the largest global collection of oral narrative history of adolescent girls' activism. An extraordinary documentation initiative of 150 stories about adolescent girls and their power to shape and remake the world around them. Spanning more than 70 countries, starting in the 1960s and taking us right up to today, the stories offer a deeply intimate window into girls' resistance in all its messiness, pain and power. From the smallest most invisible act of defiance in the home, to the role of girls in shaping some of the most powerful revolutions and social justice movements of the last century, these are the stories for the ages. The stories the world did not want you to hear. Dive in and experience their power.

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