



Sabriye Tenberken: Using Adversity to Unleash Innovation

At a school in India students learn how to foster social change in the developing world.



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Supporting diversity by supporting disability

Picture: © National Geographic

WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

I welcome you all to IWIn's second newsletter.

As 2014 comes to a close, I look back at IWIn's just completed first year and see quite a few reasons to feel proud of. I am keen to share these reasons with you all. But it's also the time to think about IWIn's plan of action in 2015, particularly when IWIn is increasingly receiving genuine demands for supports from a range of NGOs. We definitely want to be more pro-active in raising funds and in motivating our ACT community to know the issues and extend their support.

So, let me start with the first thing first - our achievements in 2014. Being the first year of operation, we had quite a few basic jobs to accomplish and I am happy to inform you all that we have done so. These are as follows:

- We have a website running now (www.iwinact.org). This website is designed to be IWIn's face for the community. Though a few changes are still on the card, I encourage you all to visit the new website and send us your feedbacks on this. We will be happy to take your suggestions on board - just let us know what you would like to see in the website.

You can also communicate directly with us through the website, if you have any concerns or suggestions or just want to get involved or simply wish to DONATE to help the needy women and children.

- We organised a Mothers' Day Lunch event in May this year to engage with the local ACT families. The event was so successful that we are thinking of making this a regular annual IWIn event. Hope more of you can join

us next year to celebrate the day with other families.

- This year IWIn also participated in many local community functions for networking purposes. So, we expect getting wider community support for our future IWIn activities.
- We are set to celebrate International Day For People With Disability (3rd December) as IWIn's 2014 End-Of-Year event.

When IWIn started its journey last year on the 15th August, we had one partner NGO in India, Ek Prayaas from Kolkata. Now, one more NGO has joined IWIn - *Pazhassi Raja Tribal School* in Wayanad (Kerala, India). You can read more about the school in this newsletter. We want to support one of their priority programs in 2015.

This brings us to our proposed plan of IWIn actions in 2015. We have quite a few activities in the pipeline.

To start with, IWIn International Women's Day event in March will be introduced. As mentioned before, Mothers' Day Lunch event will continue. The same will apply to celebrating the International Day For People With Disability. We also intend to organise an Annual IWIn Fundraiser event from 2015 onwards. In addition, we will try to conduct a few FREE educative Seminar/ Workshop/ Presentation sessions for the ACT community on identified current gender issues. We will keep you updated on the date, time and venue for each of these planned events.

However, I urge you to check your inbox regularly to attend these events. Without your support, we won't be able to support our partner NGOs overseas, who work under hard financial constraints to help socially disadvantaged women and children.

Finally, you will find quite a few new sections included this issue of Newsletter- such as, quick facts/stats, Editor's Choice (articles), Review Corner (book /film). Hope you will enjoy reading these new additions.

As we want this newsletter to be the voice of the ACT community, I welcome your articles, comments, photographs and other inputs to help keep the newsletter and website entertaining and informative. Please send your write up/information to: contact@iwinact.org

In case you have a project in progress, or a story to share, we would love to hear from you. Just



Aboriginal Museum, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

snap a photo and send it to us with some text (optional) for a quick publication.

Best wishes for the festive season and Happy New Year 2015.

Madhumita Iyengar



Children gathered in Ek Prayas



Ek Prayas continues to thrive serving the local community.

2014 ACTIVITIES

The Mother's Day celebration is an important day for families and each year IWIn uses this opportunity to celebrate the contributions of the mother.

Mother's Day celebrations in Canberra

In 2014, IWIn met together at the "East Bar & Grill" to celebrate the spirit of Mother's Day. Local families joined us to participate and this resulted in successful fund raising that went towards helping our cause.

The whole event was a fun activity in keeping with your belief that community work is a pleasure and an opportunity for us all to come together for causes for the betterment of the global community.



OUR NGO RELATIONSHIPS



EK Prayas, Kolkata, India

Ek Prayas school continues to be one of our the IWIn partner in India, houses about 200 children from slums, aged 4-14yrs. The School provides both academic and vocational training in English medium through a systematic curriculum, appropriate to students' specific needs. Breakfast and lunch are provided to the children in school daily, in addition to their school uniforms, textbooks and stationaries - mostly sponsored by generous donors. IWIn is supporting this school in setting up of a Computer Training Centre for the students, starting in the 2014-15 academic year.

Sponsors can choose an option as below:

- ✚ Educate a child for one year (@ approx. Aus\$ 135 per child) (Inclusive of utility pack)
- ✚ Gift utility pack to children for one year (@ approx. Aus\$ 30 per child)
- ✚ Sponsor a meal for all 200 children (@ approx. Aus\$ 50 (Breakfast+ Lunch))
- ✚ Sponsor a breakfast for all 200 children (@ approx. Aus\$ 15)
- ✚ Sponsor a lunch for all 200 children (@ approx. Aus\$ 25)



Pazhassi Raja Tribal School, Kerala, India

Pazhassi Raja Tribal School is located at Wayanad in the southern Indian state of Kerala. It is a residential school –providing food, accommodation, and medical needs as well as a full education, completely free of cost to the students. Wayanad has the highest population of tribal people in Kerala. The tribal people have had no access to education any time in their lives. Today tribal people are exploited as the work force for cash crop estate works like coffee and vanilla, and other illegal activities. Dr. Appanu Nambiar, a retired professor of education, founded this school in 1997 with an objective of providing a safe environment to educate the tribal children to adapt to modern day challenges and still retain their age-old cultural customs. The school that started with 41 students has more than 250 students now.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

http://voiceofachild.org/projects/tribal_school/

The school is following the 'Gurukula' system of education where teachers and students live together as in a family. Agriculture, stitching and tailoring, carpentry work, basket making, book binding, yoga and music are part of the school syllabus. Paddy, pulses, bananas and vegetables are cultivated by students and teachers.

Significant change has come in the attitudes of the tribal community towards education and health care. Senior students participate in rural development activities of the area.

Both boys and girls are also taught traditional martial arts for self-defense and psychological self-development. As a practical idealist, Dr. Nambiar knows the day-to-day side of life these children will face in the real world and feels teaching self-defense skills as important as the standard curriculum. The school started with 40 boys and just one girl. Today, out of 250 students, 129 of them are girls, while boys number at 121.

Another significant change that happened is about the caste system mindset which exists among the tribal people. During the initial days of the school, the divisions based on the caste were very evident among students. Students of the 'so called' upper caste did not interact or eat with the rest of the students, reflecting their family customs. Significant progress has been made in this aspect.

Sponsorship packages include:

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2015 PLANS



Keep your calendars free

Our events are designed to be fun, educative and yet an opportunity for us to come together as a community to make a difference.

If you have any other ideas for events, or would like to host one yourself, contact us at the earliest.

- ✚ IWIn International Women's Day event in March 2015
- ✚ Mothers' Day Event
- ✚ An Annual IWIn Fundraiser event
- ✚ FREE educative seminar/ Workshop/ Presentation sessions for the ACT community on identified current gender issues.



✚ Together we can make a difference.

COVER PAGE STAR

Sabriye Tenberken, blind from the age of 13 years, studied Central Asian Studies at Bonn University, and developed Tibetan Braille, later the official reading and writing system for the blind in Tibet. In 1998, she founded the

Centre for the Blind in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, to educate blind people, now called Braille Without Borders, BWB and a vocational training centre for blind adults with a farm and cheese factory near Shigatse. In 2009, she began **kanthari international** an International School for Development and Project Planning near Trivandrum, Kerala, India. The school focuses on discovering and developing the hidden talents of persons socially neglected, especially because of disabilities, empowering them to be innovators and leaders.

Their social innovation project has spawned many other projects around the world. Read more about her work here.

<http://www.oprah.com/spirit/Phenomenal-Woman-Sabriye-Tenberken> and <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/innovators/2014/06/040609-tenberken-blindness-kerala-india-school-tibet-braille/>

SOME QUICK FACTS ON DISABILITY

1 billion

15% of the world's population has some form of disability

2.1 million

Australians of working age (15 – 64 years) have disability.

International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)

A disability is any condition that restricts a person's mental, sensory or mobility functions. It could be caused by accident, trauma, genetics or disease. A disability may be temporary or permanent, total or partial, lifelong or acquired, visible or invisible. People with disabilities are among the most marginalized groups in the world. People with

disabilities have poorer health outcomes, lower education achievements, less economic participation and higher rates of poverty than people without disabilities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

http://www.who.int/entity/disabilities/world_report/en/index.html

While some health conditions associated with disability result in poor health and extensive health care needs, others do not. Article 25 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) reinforces the right of persons with disabilities to attain the highest standard of health care, without discrimination. People with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to deficiencies in health care services. Depending on the group and setting, persons with disabilities may experience greater vulnerability to secondary conditions, co-morbid conditions, age-related conditions, engaging in health risk behaviors and higher rates of premature death.



Governments can improve health outcomes for people with disabilities by improving access to quality, affordable health care services, which make the best use of available resources. As several factors interact to inhibit access to health care, reforms in all the interacting components of the health care system (such as Policy and Legislation, Financing, Service Delivery, Training and Human Resource Development, are required.

On a lighter note

Movie review by Manaswini
Iyengar

Title: Legally Blonde

Release Year: 2001

Director: Robert Luketic

Starring: Reese Witherspoon (Elle Woods - let's be honest, none of the others matter), Luke Wilson (Emmett), Selma Blair (Vivian Kensington)

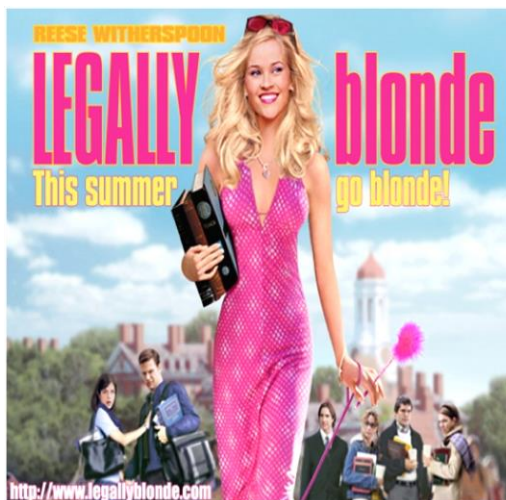
Genre: Romantic Comedy

Rating: 4.5 / 5

Legally Blonde is an American comedy film, based on a novel by Amanda Brown. On the surface, the movie looks silly and shallow. But as we know, looks are deceiving and that is exactly what this movie deals with. It challenges our assumptions about blondes and proves they're smart, fun AND beautiful. I honestly don't know where the stereotype comes from in the first place though.....

Either way – Elle Woods is dumped by her boyfriend and decides to go to Harvard Law to get him back. She studies hard and impresses the judges with her creative application. While the students laugh at her for being such an airhead, she quickly sets to the task of proving them

wrong. *"I'll show you how valuable Elle Woods can be"* – when she has just been humiliated but instead of sulking, she becomes determined and it cuts to a montage of her working hard to be a better student.



"You got into Harvard Law? What, like it's hard?" – It is hard to get into Harvard, let alone Harvard Law. But as Elle proves, where there's a will there's a way. And it's another montage (there are a lot of montages in this movie...). Elle Woods turns out to be my hero, as she says, *"I'd pick the dangerous one. Because I'm not afraid of a challenge"*.

This movie has one of the most endearing main characters I've had the privilege to watch. She's smart, dedicated and charismatic. She evolves from

someone whose goals involved getting married to her long term boyfriend to becoming an independent and amazing lawyer based on her skills. *"You must always have faith in yourself"* – Elle says this at the end of the movie, at her graduation. And it's an important message for everyone. Elle basically sums up her character in this line – a dedicated young woman who overcomes stereotypes due to her belief in herself.

Legally Blonde is an iconic movie and if you haven't watched it you're missing out. It also has important messages for people of all ages such as:

- You can do anything you set your mind to
- Don't let other people determine how competent you are
- Be your own person
- Use what you know to succeed – don't try to be someone you're not

I recommend the movie for anyone who wants to watch an empowered female character that overcomes stereotypes and prejudice to fulfil her potential. Also if you're in the mood for silly shenanigans (the bend and snap scene comes to mind).

Book review by Manaswini Iyengar

Title: Cinder

Author: Marissa Meyer (not related to Stephanie Meyer!)

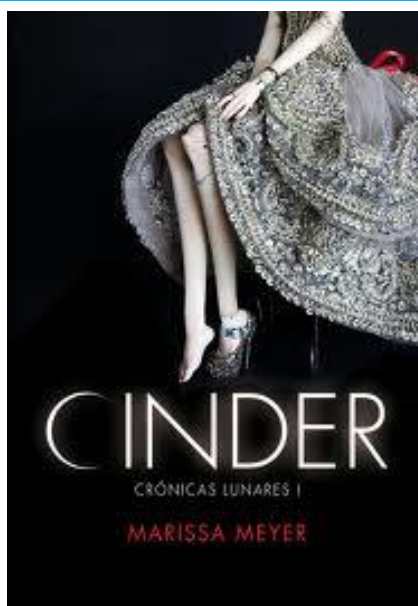
Genre: Fairytale Retelling, Sci-Fi

Rating: 5 / 5

"Even in the Future the Story Begins with Once Upon a Time." is an interesting observation in Cinder by Marissa Meyer. The first instalment in the Lunar Chronicles, Cinder is a masterpiece. Expertly crafted with wonderful characters and an intriguing storyline, Cinder is a retelling of Cinderella.

Cinder is the titular protagonist – an intelligent, sassy and resourceful one, with bonus points for being an Asian, female, cyborg mechanic (yeah diversity!) Her background also causes her to experience prejudice and illustrates how people discriminate against those who are different. But she is an incredibly strong and powerful character and that's what I really love about this series – it's all about the females.

Meyer also changes the dynamics between Cinderella and her step-family – it is much more complex and interesting. Adri (the stepmother) dislikes Cinder because she can't do anything around the house – her enhancements get in the way. It doesn't mean that Adri is any less unlikeable, simply that her



motives are much easier to understand. The most tragic aspect of this book is Cinder's relationship with her younger stepsister Peony. Peony loves Cinder and vice versa. But Peony dies due to a condition ravaging the country known as letumosis.

Letumosis is similar to the black plague and highlights the crippling effects that diseases can have on individuals, families and society. *"Imagine there was a cure, but finding it would cost you everything. It would completely ruin your life. What would you do?"*

The quote above raises an important question about just how far we'd be willing to go to find a cure for a worldwide disease like cancer or AIDS. That's the beauty of this book – even though it's a fictional world, the issues and questions raised are still relevant to us as a society.

The world-building in this book is so thorough – from explaining the Lunar race to the depiction of the

future world – it's almost as if you become a part of that world. For all those lovers of politics, Cinder's love interest Kaito has to deal with the responsibilities of being a world leader. And that means dealing with the political machinations of Queen Levana.

The characters are strong and believable. But they still have their faults that just make them more relatable. *"We all have our weaknesses."* *"I know," said Iko. "Mine is shoes."* (Iko is Cinder's robot companion and has some of the best lines!)

And if you're looking for a good romance – look no further than Cinder and Kai. There are also some really intense action scenes. Really, this book has it all.

For fans of fairytale retellings, the book is loaded with references to the original story and for fans of sci-fi; the book is futuristic with their references to cyborgs, net screens and more. However the technology is still plausible and the science is valid (unlike most books I've read). Cinder is a great book because it has a great romance, clever references while still being its own story, wonderful world-building and intelligent, complex characters with their own storylines and desires that eventually converge.

I highly recommend the book for anyone who enjoys any of the above or is just looking for a new book series to read.



**WISHING ALL PATRONS AND FRIENDS
A WONDERFUL FESTIVE SEASON
AND
A HAPPY NEW YEAR
2015**

