

## HEWITT STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN "MARCH ON MARCH 8" RALLY AT THE UN

*By Nancy Gallin, Chair of History Department  
The Hewitt School*

In an icy rain, we arrived at the entrance to the General Assembly and went through airport-like security—all belts and even watches off—and were soon in the immense and (even for New Yorkers) overwhelming atrium of the building where people from the whole world gather to do the work of making peace. Our contact, Catherine Petree, sent her colleague Hanifa down to meet us and give us our press passes. Sofia Payano represented Hewitt's Broadcast Journalism class and Paloma Stafford wrote for *The Hewitt Times*, our digital school newspaper. Sofia is a 10th grade student and Paloma is a 9th grader. We each received our pinneys with the MARCH ON MARCH 8 and UN Women for Peace logos on them (they had "Made in the USA" labels, so I hope and assume they were made by people working in observance of safe and just labor practices).

We took an escalator up to the Indonesia Lounge, where we were among very few people mingling and talking. There were professional photographers clicking away, but the mood was accessible and friendly. Sofia and Paloma spoke to Christy Turlington Burns, the founder of Every Mother Counts whose film, "No Woman, No Cry" addresses dangers and draws attention to work to protect women in pregnancy and birth and to reduce as much as possible maternal and perinatal deaths here in the US as well as around the world.

Sofia also met and spoke to Monique Coleman (who introduced the film, "Half the Sky" at Hewitt), Ms. USA, Nana Meriwether, Kelly Rutherford, Susan Sarandon, and Yoo Soon-taek (a feminist activist and wife of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon).

Sofia has an experienced newsperson's sense of ease with everyone and an immediately disarming friendliness that works instant wonders in breaking down barriers. Her eagerness to find out how her interlocutor feels and thinks opens people up—I don't know whether this is simply a gift, but it's also refined by her Hewitt Broadcast Journalism teacher, Amy Bowllan. Paloma took notes furiously fast and was also stunningly adept at weaving directly through to people she wanted to talk with—yet somehow she wasn't ever pushy. Her teacher, Hewitt's English Department Chair and *Hewitt Times* advisor Maureen Burgess, encouraged her to come prepared with questions, and her enthusiasm and delight were shining in her face—nothing blasé in her at all! Sofia films seamlessly with her flipcam as she talks, and Paloma has the spiral-bound notebook of the traditional newswoman always at hand, and she writes fast! Then we went back out into the blowing sleet and marched to Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, where we heard the people we had just been talking with speak out against violence against women. The phrase, "Abuse of women isn't cultural, it's CRIMINAL!" rang out often and was taken up as a chant by all. Both Paloma and Sofia climbed on benches to get a good view of the speakers: Susan Sarandon read a statement written for the International Day of the Woman by Malala Yousoufzai, and there was a huge photograph of Malala on the small stage.

There were all sorts of women and men there, feminists all, and proud, some in Euro-American clothing, some in traditional African dress, most women with their hair uncovered or wearing winter headgear, some covered in the Muslim tradition. All were working for justice and peace. What stood out were Sofia and Paloma—they were by far the youngest demonstrators and seemed like the ONLY student reporters. Feminism and human rights activism are alive in Paloma and Sofia. BRAVO girls' schools! BRAVISSIMO HEWITT!