

Zoya Kalinsky, a seventh-grader at iLEAD Hybrid, a TK-12th grade tuition-free charter school, addressed the United Nations ECOSOC Chamber for the UNiTE Campaign to End Violence Against Women and Girls on Nov. 22. Speaking on behalf of UN Women and the UNiTE campaign and the 16 days of Activism in conjunction with the PVBLIC Foundation, the 12-year-old moved leaders from around the world as she called for an end to a form of violence many women experience from an early age — namely, bullying.

Kalinsky shared her personal experiences of being subjected to violence in her previous school due to bullying. She recounted having been locked in closets, stabbed with pencils, and dragged from a classroom. Kalinsky explained that she has Tourette Syndrome, a condition that causes involuntary tics and movements. Her teacher was unsympathetic and would often bring attention to Kalinsky's differences by complaining that she would not sit still, something that seven-year-old Kalinsky was unable to do.

Kalinsky spoke to how fortunate she was to have the loving support of her parents, who ultimately unenrolled Kalinsky from her previous school and enrolled her in iLEAD Hybrid's independent study program iLEAD Exploration when she was in 2nd grade. The move allowed the precocious student to excel both academically and socially.

Kalinsky, who speaks English, Russian, and French, is an accomplished writer, storyteller, musician and artist. The 7th grader chose to share her experience to bring awareness to bullying and violence against women and girls. In her address, she shared relevant statistics, including one in three women experience violence from an intimate partner or family member, and that 97 percent of abusers and bullies have been abused and bullied themselves. As Kalinsky pointed out, "This means that bullies are not born; they are made."

"While she is only 12 years old, Zoya is already becoming a world leader," said Julia Kim, Codirector of iLEAD Hybrid's Exploration Program. "I love that our school provides not just the academic preparation but also the flexibility for our students to be able to step into their full potential even at a young age."

Kalinsky said, "I am passionate about women's rights and safety but, more importantly, about helping young girls develop the confidence they need to stand up for themselves, particularly when there is no one else to stand up for them."

Kalinsky's address may be viewed on YouTube ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y\\_zbZH4fZaU&t=1s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y_zbZH4fZaU&t=1s)).

To learn about UN Women, an organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women, visit <https://www.unwomen.org>.

To learn about PVBLIC Foundation, a nonprofit with a mission to engage global changemakers, visit <https://www.pvblc.org>.

### **About iLEAD Hybrid**

To learn more, visit [iLEADhybrid.org](https://www.iLEADhybrid.org).

*iLEAD Hybrid serves grades TK-12 in Los Angeles, Orange, San Bernardino, Kern and Ventura Counties. The school promotes individualized, project-based, social-emotional, self-directed, STEAM-focused and real-world learning for families who choose an independent study or hybrid learning model. iLEAD Hybrid strives to provide a learning environment just right for each uniquely gifted learner.*