

# THE HUFFINGTON POST

## **Let's Raise Our Grand Voices in Support of Children and Families**

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Nelson Mandela left his mark on his country and the world, dedicating his life to justice and equality.

We want to talk about a cause that Mandela championed: The Elders, an independent group of global leaders, chaired by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and whose members include, among others, former Presidents Jimmy Carter, Mary Robinson (Ireland) and Ernesto Zedillo (Mexico).

Six years after Mandela launched this group, with help from other leaders from South Africa and around the world, The Elders continue to promote the shared interests of humanity by working on issues ranging from climate justice to promoting equality between men and women to ending conflict in the Middle East to political reform and peace-building processes in Myanmar.

The Elders set up a strategic 2014-17 framework with the hope of establishing a just and inclusive global community for future generations, one free from fear and want.

“Despite all of the ghastliness in the world, human beings are made for goodness,” Archbishop Desmond Tutu, former chair and honorary member, once said. “The ones that are held in high regard are not militarily powerful, nor even economically prosperous. They have a commitment to try and make the world a better place.”

So, in committing to making the world better, we call on our community elders to be change makers -- advocating for better schools, improved childcare, and parenting supports at the federal, state and local levels. We also call for environmental protection and global peacemaking for a just and sustainable future. We urge you to insist that programs such as Head Start that represent critical investments in the future should not be sacrificed for short-term deficit reduction.

Here are some other ways you can be a change maker:

- As honorary co-chairs of Generations United Seniors4Kids, we invite you to join Senior4Kids and raise your Grand Voice for addressing the growing poverty and inequality facing children and families, promoting better support for children in foster care, standing up for improved access for all children to early childhood development and for paid leave for all families.
- Be a peace builder through active engagement. Spend time with a grandchild or other young person, whether in-person, by phone or on Facebook. Get ideas at [grandparentsday.org](http://grandparentsday.org). And visit the Generations United website to learn more about their new report, *Out of Many, One: Uniting the Changing Faces of America*.
- Mentor or tutor a young person. Learn about volunteer opportunities, such as Senior Corp's Foster Grandparents or AARP's Experience Corps. Or, find an intergenerational center near you.
- Invest your time. Share your companionship, wisdom and values with a young person you know. If you don't have a child in your life, find one!

- Be a role model. Talk about civic responsibility with young people and why they need to get involved -- and stay involved -- throughout their lives.
- Express opinions: call on politicians to make decisions with the long-term future in view, not just the next election.

Kofi Annan, chair of The Elders, offered this perspective on responsibility: "I am often asked what can people do to become a good global citizen? I reply that it begins in your own community."

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