

Where are the Heroes?

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"Often assumed to be the leaders of tomorrow, our generation must be the leaders of today!" Craig Kielburger

The morning paper was splashed with laments such as, "Game Over." "NHL Cancels Season." "No pro hockey a blow to kids." "If that's gone they can't see their heroes." What came to mind was the question, "What the heck is going on?" Some grown men who make millions chasing black discs across ice can't work out a deal, Hockey Night in Canada is not televised and the headlines cry the demise of heroes. What really are our family, community and country values? What is important? Sports and hockey have their place but surely the world of humanity is much more complex and in need.

The night before these whining headlines appeared, a group of us attended an inspiring presentation by Toronto-born human rights activists, Craig and Marc Kielburger. These two brothers, Craig at 22 years and Marc at 28 years, have performed more humanitarian acts than a team of many.

In Calgary, with a population of nearly one million, 70 people (no children) gathered at the Kielburger event. We asked, "Why weren't we filling the Saddledome arena with 20,100 seats?" The 70 of us heard the story of Craig, who at 12 years, read an article about another 12 year-old--a Pakistan boy who was sold to a carpet factory. After reading about the murder of this boy because he spoke out against child slavery, Craig rallied his brother and school friends, held a car wash and with about \$600 founded **Free the Children.**

Now 22 years old, this university student has traveled to over 40 countries, met Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela and many other world leaders, been featured by Oprah five times, been interviewed by a wide range of the media, written several books and been nominated for a Nobel Peace prize three times.

His brother Marc, six years older, is a Rhodes Scholar, co-founded *Free the Children* and *Leaders Today*, an international organization that provides programs with over 100,000 youth involved in 35 countries. Just a few of the accomplishments of the work of Craig and Marc and the children who have joined them include:

- Built and outfitted 400 schools in 21 developing countries in Latin America, Asia, and Africa.
- Serve over 35,000 children in their schools.

- Pressure, through letter writing and media awareness, influenced Canada and Italy to place strict criminal consequences on those who travel overseas to sexually exploit children.
- Advocated in Mexico and Brazil for child protection measures.
- Created “sweat-free campus” campaigns.
- Established a speakers bureau of children speaking out about child rights.
- *Leaders Today* has trained 300,000 youth throughout North America and operates summer and March-break trips for youth interested in volunteering in India, Nicaragua and Thailand, as well as leadership/ volunteer retreats to its own centers in Kenya and Arizona.

To get involved and learn more please go to <http://www.freethechildren.com>

If we and our children do not already make a positive difference, we can easily begin to make an improvement to this planet. Let’s start by pointing out the heroes that reflect our values. As the late Alberta Lieutenant Governor, Lois Hole said, “I have a dream. And the dream is that librarians, teachers and people in the fine arts will one day be making the same money as hockey players.” She was indicating that it is time to better financially support and value those who shape our children’s minds, principles and our community’s futures.

Indeed our librarians, teachers and all of us are heroes when we make a positive difference. Below are some randomly chosen and well-known people who have modeled or are modeling constructive change:

Canadian:

1. David Suzuki and daughter, Severn Cullis-Suzuki, environmentalists
2. Ernie Coombs, children’s entertainer, Mr. Dress-up
3. Emily Murphy, leader of the Famous 5 who won women’s right to be ‘perons’
4. General Romeo Dalliar, Commander of the UN Observer Mission in Rwanda
5. Jean Vanier, champion of those with disabilities and founder of L’Arche
6. Lucy Maud Montgomery Canadian children’s author
7. Rick Hansen, “man in motion” wheelchair athlete
8. Roberta Bondar, astronaut
9. Steven Lewis, special United Nations Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa
10. Terry Fox, runner for cure for cancer

See more at <http://www.cbc.ca/greatest/greatcanadians>.

Others:

1. Albert Einstein, scientist

2. Alfred Nobel, founder of the Nobel Prize
3. Andrew Carnegie, philanthropist and founder of libraries
4. Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma political hostage
5. Bill Cosby, entertainer and educator
6. Dian Fossey, gorilla protector
7. Dr. Seuss, children's author
8. Helen Caldicott, anti-nuclear activist
9. Helen Keller, deaf and blind educator
10. Jane Goodall, wild life conservationist
11. Jesus Christ, the inspiration for Christianity
12. *President* Jimmy Carter, peace activist
13. Judy Blume, children's author
14. Martin Luther King, civil rights activist
15. Mohandas Gandhi, non-violent protester
16. Mother Teresa, Calcutta healer
17. Nelson Mandela, civil rights activist and past president of South Africa
18. Rachel Carson, mother of the environment movement
19. Stevie Wonder, blind musician
20. Walt Disney, visionary

See more at <http://myhero.com/myhero/>

May you and your children be the heroes of your circle.

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