



## Child Rights Advocate

**Craig Kielburger**



**JANET ATTWOOD:** I am so excited that you are with us tonight and it is indeed an honor. Why don't we just get started? Is that good for you?

**CRAIG KIELBURGER:** My thanks to everyone who has been so patiently waiting and listening.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** Well, everyone, do you hear that? I know that it is well taken. Thank you. We all know that things happen and it has been an opportunity for all of us just to be on the cell. So here we go.

Will you share with us how you gained a passion for the plight of children in other parts of the world and how Free the Children emerged from that.

**CRAIG KIELBURGER:** Absolutely. When I was 12 is when we first started this organization. It was 11 years ago, now, actually. I grew up in the suburbs, so not very different from young people who might be listening or the children of the people who are listening. One morning I was looking for the comics in the paper. I was just flipping through the pages and I saw this picture that made me stop, it just captured my attention.

It was this young boy and he had this bright red vest and his fist was clenched and his arm was high up in the air. I was looking at this picture and I saw the headline that read "Battled Child Labor, boy, 12, murdered." I was 12 years old at the time and so I looked at this headline and I started reading this article about a young boy in Pakistan whose name was Iqbal Masih.

When he was four years old, his parents were so desperately poor that they actually sold him into slavery. They took out a small loan and when they couldn't repay it, it was the equivalent of 12 U.S. dollars, he was taken away from the family and he was brought to a carpet factory and forced to tie thousands and thousands of tiny knots, weaving hand-knotted carpet until he was 10.

He escaped and started traveling literally around the world. He actually went to Europe. He came to the states, went to Boston, speaking out against child labor. Then, at the age of 12, he was returning home to Pakistan and just in front of his house, he was shot dead. He was assassinated at the age of 12. I looked at my life and I looked at his life and seeing those differences in our lives made me angry.

I can't remember what other emotions were running through my mind, disbelief,



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especially anger. I remember tearing out the newspaper article and shoving it in my backpack and bringing it to school that day. Just riding on the school bus and uncrumpling it and looking at this article and reading the story and wanting to do something, but not knowing what I could do because I was 12.

Standing in front of my grade seven classmates, and holding up this newspaper article and saying, “I need your help. Who will join?” Eleven hands went up and that is how we started. In fact, our first nickname, because if you count me with those 11 hands, they called us “The Group of 12 12-year olds.”

It was just a group of kids. We did car washes and bake sales and we tried to raise enough money to build one school in India and we have done a little bit more since that. We now have grown around the world, the world’s largest network now of children helping children through education.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** I love this story and it must have been so intense for you because you were also 12. Isn’t that correct?

**CRAIG KIELBURGER:** It was like looking at a mirror of our own age. I think all of us, at different times, are confronted with issues. We see it everyday around us, the poverty or the war in Afghanistan or Iraq or violence, or political issues for those who are listening in the states with the elections happening. But, for some reason, there are one or two issues that also just leap out at us. In this case, because this boy was my own age, it almost was like a mirror in some ways.

Our lives were incredibly different, but because of that one similarity, I was able to look at that picture and to feel something that I never really felt before, that anger and that frustration and that sense of injustice. I honestly believe everyone has an issue, something that they are passionate about and they want to change in this world. Maybe they have quieted it down, maybe they pushed it out of the way, maybe others have said that you are too young or you can’t change things or it is not the right time in your life.

For some reason, they have kind of shoved that emotion off to the side, but I believe that we have to listen to that. We all have some type of issue. You call it a passion. We call it an issue, whatever word you want to use, but something that we want to change in this world. We all have a gift that will help make that change.



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For me, it was being able to find the courage to speak in front of my grade seven class and speak to other young people. That is how we built the organization. For other people, it might be art, to express this injustice through paintings or for others maybe it is music or for others being a good listener for a friend who is going through a hard time. We all have some type of gift. The question of bringing that issue and that gift together, I believe, is the simple but powerful equation for a better world.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** Thank you for that and thank you for just knowing to stay open and move forward at such a young age. How incredible. I know that your brother Marc is now chief executive director of Free the Children and you both have written a wonderful book together. How did Marc get involved and how has it been to work on these projects with your brother?

**CRAIG KIELBURGER:** I couldn't imagine it any other way. My older brother was always also involved in social issues. For him, he got involved about the same age, actually. There is a six year difference between us. When he was 13, he did a science fair project, an alternative to home cleaners. Ways to help protect our environment using simple recipes with baking soda and vinegar, instead of the over-the-counter cleaners that are bad for the environment.

It was just a science fair project. It was nothing big, but I remember watching him six years older, like a great inventor and thinking if he can do it, I'll bet I can do it. That same type of positive reinforcement that I think we need those heroes in our lives. In my brother's case, Free the Children was growing as an organization and he was also growing academically. He was involved and off doing his studies at the same time.

He went on to Harvard and then got a Rhodes Scholarship to study law at Oxford. He had all of these offers to go into investment banking or to consulting or going to Wall Street, with many zeros at the end of these offers for paychecks. Free the Children was growing as an organization at the same time as he was doing his studies.

We started as The Group of 12 12-year olds, but we have grown now to 450 primary schools that we have built and operate around the world. We have half a million women going through our clean water projects and 20,000 women going through alternative income cooperatives. We work with about a million kids around the world through our development projects.



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Marc finished his studies and he had a choice. Does he go to the investment banking world, the consulting world, that world where you certainly make a lot of money or does he decide to do this. He chose to join as executive director to serve in the non-profit world, and it is quite literally, non profit. In Marc's case and in my case, neither of us receives a salary. We are very fortunate to have fellowships that help cover our living expenses.

He literally turned down offers in Wall Street worth all of this money, but it is interesting because years later, a lot of his friends at the time were teasing with him and joking with him and saying you know, "How can you do this? You're going to give up all of this money. You're going to be a non-profit."

But years later, so many of the people look at their own lives, and this is not to say that the corporate world is necessarily unfulfilling because for a lot of people it is very fulfilling, but some of his friends look at their own lives and they reassess priorities and they realize that there is something more than just nine to five. There is something more than just going to work and at the end of the day, there is something more than just earning money.

I think that really the book *Me to We* was greatly influenced, also, by that personal choice that Marc had to make; do you go into the corporate world or do you go into the non-profit world? For him, wrestling with that decision of how do you define happiness; is happiness a new car, is it a BMW, is it the nice penthouse, is it the designer suit or is it in the non-profit world, the old beat up car, but having a chance to work with kids that you absolutely love to work with, the late hours, eating pizza out of a box as you are sitting around, helping to figure out projects or developing overseas working and digging trenches and building schools, working in developing countries.

That same choice that he faced, do you do the corporate or do you do the non-profit, I think in a small way, we all face those types of choices. In our daily lives, we all face those opportunities to make choices about what is good for me or what is good for we. That influenced a lot of our writing and a lot of our thinking is because I know he struggles with it and I struggle with it and everyone struggles with that. How do you make a living while also making a life? I think that answer is what we have at least found in our life was what influenced a lot of the books that we wrote.



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**JANET ATTWOOD:** It is such a beautiful story. I love what you said “What is good for me?” When you think about it, what is good for me is really good for we because really what is good for me is really living a life of purpose and dedication and passion as you are. You said it so wonderfully that it is not the BMW, it is not the Jaguar, or whatever you said.

It’s really how much did you give today and all of us, when we look back, would never remember the new dress, the new cars, the new this. What we do remember, and what really goes deep in our hearts, are those moments where you have those connections where you are really helping and you’re walking your talk and you’re out there really doing something that means something so deep in your heart to you. Is this what you are doing?

**CRAIG KIELBURGER:** Absolutely. You know when we sat down and started researching for the book, we started contacting experts and asked the question of what really makes people happy and all of the studies behind it. We hear lot of things, money doesn’t make you happy. We hear that. But truthfully I think a lot of us kind of shrug our shoulders or wink our eye or just say, “You know, in reality, sure it does.” Would people have been listening? Does \$500 in your pocket make you happier? Yes, absolutely. Would one thousand, one hundred thousand? Sure, at first.

What the studies show is that it is such a quick curve that it brings that momentary happiness, that new car smell, that quick moment of splurge, that new dress, that new car, that new computer, whatever that one moment. But it is not necessarily the fulfilling happiness. When you look at the research, it shows spikes up and down.

If you want to see people who have that long, really fulfilling happiness, what Aristotle called, “Eudemonic happiness”, what researchers call everything from “demeaning happiness” to the happiness that we get what we call the “we centered happiness.” That idea of a type of happiness that at the end of the day, when you are tired and you are exhausted and your eyes are heavy and you are going to sleep at night, you smile because you know you’ve left the world a little bit of a better place.

I think at the end of the day, in our lives, at least, and I think this is true for a lot of people who we have worked with, I think the moments of greatest happiness I think of the time with family and friends. I think of the volunteer work that we



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have done with Free the Children. When I think of the greatest happiness, I think of this summer we were in Kenya. We were building schools for kids.

I mentioned that we have about 450 schools that we have built and we operate, and we finished this construction of this school and we looked out at all of these kids who are all standing around in this tiny village, this Masai and Kipsigis community, this tribal community in South Kenya and we said to the kids, “The school is finished.”

We say these kids, literally, they were like jumping up and down, they ran to their school and they stood outside the door and they stopped. They started arguing with themselves. We didn’t know what they were saying. We leaned in and we heard in Swahili that they were arguing over who gets the honor of opening the door for the first time. When they had settled, they picked the head girl, she was in grade eight, she had the highest marks.

They threw open this door and raced inside and they sat down at their desks. These are kids who never had desks. They held their notebooks in their hands. It used to be six kids would share a notebook and three kids would share a pencil. These are kids who never really had the chance to have their own school. They sat at the desks, so excited, just looking up at us.

As volunteers, we didn’t know what to do because it was Sunday and there was no school. We literally picked up the chalk and we started teaching the first lesson. There was just that moment where I look back on that day and seeing those kids, we all know it to be true, but those are the moments that really do bring the greatest happiness.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** When you started, being just a bunch of kids and then today, you have this international organization, a number of very sophisticated websites, you’re touring with some of the most well known and respected people in the world. For many of our listeners, it seems totally impossible. I mean you’re 23.

Will you describe in more detail how you went from a 12-year old boy with a group of friends to the 23-year old global leader and what happened along the way? How did you make the transition from a bunch of kids doing something to help to a global well organized organization? How did you do that?





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**CRAIG KIELBURGER:** With a lot of help and a lot of good luck, and also a lot of faith. When I say faith, I don't mean in the religious sense of the word, I mean faith in people and faith in humanity. I don't think you can actually do this work without having that type of faith. When we started with those group of 12 12-year olds, we were doing car washes and bake sales and pop bottle drives and just helping out in our local community.

At the age of 12, I got this crazy idea in my head that in order to really understand child labor, as much as I could growing up where I grew up which is North America and the suburbs, that I would have to go see it with my own eyes. I remember I wanted to go backpacking through Asia, so I remember planning how I was going to tell my parents this and walking downstairs to the kitchen table and looking at my mom and dad with the most mature voice that I could manage.

I said, "Mom, Dad." I realized that it was a lost cause with my dad. So I said, "Mom," and saying, "I wanted to take two months off from school," which wasn't the best way to start, "and I want to go backpacking. I want to go through Pakistan, India, Thailand, Nepal, and Bangladesh. I want to meet these kids. I want to research child labor, like Iqbal, that young boy who was killed and I don't want you to go with me. Can I go?"

I remember that my mom looked at me and she actually laughed. She shook her head and she said, "Craig, we love you very much, but you're 12 and we don't let you take the subway by yourself. So, no, you can't go to Asia." I kept pleading and kept begging and kept asking and they actually banned the use of the word Asia. My mom wouldn't even let me bring it up in the house any more.

She got so frustrated one day, she actually said to me, "You can't even ask, you're not allowed to even bring it up unless you can prove that you'd be safe and you can raise half the money." She was trying to stop me, but I thought to myself, "Well at least I know what I am dealing with now." I come from Canada, so I started shoveling driveways and earning spare money.

I got a chaperone who was from Bangladesh who was 25 years old and recently graduated from University. Low and behold, the two of us, the chaperone and myself, and I was 12, almost 12 years ago, I left in December 1995 backpacking through India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Thailand and Nepal meeting these kids.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** Wait. Wait. Did you go by yourself?



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**CRAIG KIELBURGER:** Oh, no. Just with 25 year old chaperone.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** Okay. I got it. But still, they let you go.

**CRAIG KIELBURGER:** They let me. Well, I could prove that I was safe. I got a chaperone, got a whole set of countries that I was going to visit, a schedule, phone numbers to call along the way, and that trip changed my life. It's the reason why I still do what I do, after meeting those kids.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** What a great story. Oh, my God. You have really upped the ante for me in following my passion. Wouldn't you say that, also, a lot of the reason why you've been so completely successful is because, one of the things that Chris and I talk about in our book, is when you're clear on what you choose to have show up in your life, it will. But only to the extent that you're clear. You were really clear about what you wanted to know about and learn about and then, eventually, what you wanted to do about that. Isn't that true?

**CRAIG KIELBURGER:** It is the clarity and if you can build on that, absolutely, I couldn't agree with you more. But even to build on that, that things happen I think for a reason. I know that you call it intention in the book and through the CD series. Other people can use whatever word they want, but I truly do believe that things are meant to happen for a reason. In our case, this trip to Asia was the first step. Whether it was reading the newspaper article, but it was clear for us what we wanted to do. The path itself was something we were never a 100% clear on. I remember the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, "You don't have to see the full stairway, but take the first step in faith."

Reading that article, to gather the friends, to start a small organization, to go overseas, after that what helped me to really continue to grow the organization, the Internet, website, people picked up on what we were doing, Oprah has done five shows on our work, which is a big help to say the least, in carrying our message to hundreds of thousands of young people now who are members across North America and it is all still children. Children who fundraise the money to support our projects, 55% of all of our money comes from kids.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** You have had the most amazing journey. One of the things that I always say when I'm out talking about passion, is that what you love and God's will for you is one in the same. When you totally align with what it is





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that you truly are passionate about, in this case, yours was to free the children, then all of the people, places, and things that you choose to have show up in your life will. Would you say that that is the correct assumption of what happened to you?

**CRAIG KIELBURGER:** Absolutely. I would say that we were extraordinarily blessed. We were extraordinarily fortunate.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** For all of you, let me just make sure that I give out the URL so people can go and buy *Me to We* because I am sure that after just even the first 20 minutes of listening to Craig, you're probably already searching on the Internet. The website is <http://www.healthywealthynwise.com/metowe>.

Eleven years after you were inspired to start doing something about child labor, Free the Children, and you've said this has become a global organization and attracted the attention of many of the world's top leaders and celebrities. Craig, how does Free the Children make a difference today and is it only for children or are adults involved, too, because I want to play with you.

**CRAIG KIELBURGER:** Do you believe that adults are just like really big kids.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** Am I too old?

**CRAIG KIELBURGER:** Never. Our message is that people are never too young or too old to change the world. It has grown from that small network of 12 year olds to today what we do is connecting people from literally all around the world. We do development projects, for example, for 150 primary schools, half a million people using our medical program, 20,000 women cooperative.

It's through a project we call Adopt A Village, and, literally, communities. Those communities might be a group of schools for example in New York or Salt Lake City or Atlanta or Helsinki, you name it. Adopting a sister community in Kenya or Sierra Leone or World China or another region of Sub Saharan Africa. Those villages, they literally connect those two communities.

Again, a community could be a school or a faith group or even a couple of friends coming together and they adopt that community overseas and they literally exchange letters and they link and they help fund raise support to building a



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school, set up a clean water system, to help empower those kids and help empower those women.

To even take it a step further, we invite and, whether you be an adult or a youth, we invite people to join us as volunteers on those projects. We bring more than a thousand people every year overseas to go volunteer in Kenya, in India, in China, in Ecuador, countless countries where we have our development programs to, literally, teach English or to work in the schools, work in the medical clinics, or help build the schools, to, literally, dig the ditches and lay the foundation bricks and put up the walls and finish the roof.

We have some programs that are just for kids. We do leadership camps and conferences across North America and resources for educators on raising socially conscious kids. Whether you be a parent or an educator, how we can bring these simple teachings into families or classroom, helping to nurture kids to have a global responsibility. Learning about the challenges in our world, but also learning how they can make that positive difference to help bring about that change.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** Can people go to [www.FreetheChildren.com](http://www.FreetheChildren.com) to get involved? For those of you who are getting totally inspired like I am and continue to be, as I hear about Craig and this incredible, incredible, wonderful, wonderful Free the Children organization. To be part of it, go to [www.FreetheChildren.com](http://www.FreetheChildren.com) and there is all of the information about the programs and how you can get involved. Craig, you've written a book called *Me to We*, and, by the way, I love the title, *Me to We: Finding Meaning in a Material World*. In our experience, passion and meaning go hand and hand. How do we find meaning in a material world?

**CRAIG KIELBURGER:** That is interesting because I don't necessarily know if the book has the answer. It has a lot of questions. It has a road map and it has a lot of action, but I think that all of us find the answer in our own lives because we all have such different lives. What we tried to do in this was to bring together collections of stories.

Some of them are stories from our travel, from more than 50 countries, from sitting down and learning from great leaders from Nelson Mandela to the Pope to Mother Teresa to the Dalai Lama and sharing some of our time that we have done work with these individuals around social justice. But also asking people in their



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own lives to write about their passion, to write about how in their own lives they have made this transformation from me to we. People like Oprah Winfrey. She wrote a beautiful story about how as a child a person gave her a simple gift.

I need to tell this story because it is such a beautiful story. It was Christmas and her family, it was just her and her mom and her half-brother and half-sister, and they were really going through a rough time. Her mom didn't have anything to give for Christmas, they were on social assistance. It was the night before Christmas and there was a knock on the door and these two women brought a simple gift, a simple doll for Oprah.

This doll, she said, it was the happiest moment of her life because she knew that someone remembered her. She brought this to school and she showed this to all of her friends and she was so proud that she was remembered. Years later, when she goes on to get all of this great success, fame and fortune, we do a lot of work with Oprah, so we've had the honor to spend time with her.

She said that the moment she was truly happiest wasn't with all her fame or success, but, instead, it was that moment when she was that young girl and there was that knock on her door. How she could find happiness in her own life was to literally pay that woman forward was to give someone else that same happiness. So she went on to start the Christmas kindness shows that give 50,000 gifts to kids in South Africa, including dolls to girls.

I think that simple story that she wrote for the book in many ways encapsulates what *Me to We* because it is not the big things, not the 50,000 gifts, but it's the small things. Oprah never knew the name of those two women who knocked on her door and gave her that doll all those years ago. She was never able to tell those two women how that simple act of kindness had a ripple effect beyond which they never could have imagined, how it had touched her life so deeply, but how it inspired her then to pay it forward to give those 50,000 gifts.

That one act, those two women, that one simple doll, all those years ago, we never know the impact that we have on those around us, but we always do have an impact on those around us. The *Me to We* philosophy and it's both essence, it's the idea that we need to think a little less about me and a lot more about we, our communities, our faith groups, our nation, our world.

Even on that global sense of we thinking and we acting to stop and to ask



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ourselves what impact will this choice have? If you're living in the United States, for example, when we vote, are we voting just for the candidates that are just good for me or the candidate that is good for the community, that will literally give back, that will have a bolder vision for everyone, an inclusive vision? If you're shopping with a conscious and asking that the products that we buy, what type of impact this has for socially responsible products.

The book is a collection of stories, but more than stories. At the end of each chapter there is action. Things that we can do right now. Simple daily actions, ten minutes a day that we can do to make a contribution to help improve our world. The most beautiful part of it is, as you mentioned, when you follow your passions, it not only improves our world, but improves our lives with greater meaning, purpose, faith, healthier, broader communities, stronger families.

We see the extraordinary benefit it offers for us and I truly believe that if you want to find the secret of happiness, don't look inward, look outward, not in me, in that community of we.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** I just love listening to you and I am just sitting here shaking my head and going, "Yes, yes." This is exactly what really stimulates my heart and motivates me into action. Thank you so much for just reminding all of us what is important. What inspired you to write this book and how did it come about?

**CRAIG KIELBURGER:** It was, first, not a book. It was actually a question. I kept asking myself and both my brother and I would ask. We had this extraordinary childhood. We grew up in the suburbs, the children of teachers, but we had the opportunity to literally travel the world because of our human rights work. This is again with people from the Pope to the Dalai Lama, to sharing simple meals of rice and roots with street kids, to stepping into war zones in Africa, to refugee camps, to people who are born and died in slavery.

To see all of these extremes in this world and to struggle with the question that why is it that when we stepped overseas into these developing countries, traditional tribal groups of these regions of great poverty, even though there was enormous suffering, despite this poverty, people often, we found, were still happy. An extraordinary happiness.

We'd come back to our homes in North America and we'd find people with all of



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this material wealth, but were still not happy. To really answer this question about what makes us happy, what brings this happiness to our lives, I think that the moment that was the tipping point for us, why we decided to write this book more than anything else, was when we were in Ecuador and we were working with the Puruha Indians at the base of Mount Chimborazo, a very rural, isolated community. We were building a school and we were running behind schedule.

We didn't have the supplies. It was harvest season and the farmers were in the middle of the town and they were loading their supplies of maize, beets, on the back of mules and sending them down this tiny mountain path to the market. We were loading our building supplies, like our wood and cement, and sending them on mules up the tiny mountain path. There was actually a traffic jam of mules.

We let their mules pass, ours went down. We didn't have our supplies. We were running late. We went to the village elder. How it works with the Puruha Indians is that the oldest person is automatically considered the wisest person. They have lived the most number of years and therefore gathered the greatest amount of wisdom. We entered into this hut of this tiny old frail woman and we explained our problem. We said that we wouldn't be finished the school in time. She looked at us and she said, "No problem." We responded by saying, "Well, actually, it's a big problem. We have plane tickets going back home and we aren't finished with the school, it doesn't have a roof."

She just waved her hand and said, "No problem. I'll call a minga." We had no idea what this meant. She took three steps out of her home, this tiny hut. She was a tiny woman, but she shouted at the top of her lungs. She said, "Tomorrow, there will be a minga." It just echoed. The next day, the most magical thing happened. You had hundreds of people that just poured into this village square.

They came from all of the neighboring villages, men left their fields in peak harvest season, and there were women who had babies strapped to their backs in the traditional way they do in Ecuador. There were kids who walked four or five hours each way. They would never benefit from this school being built; it was too far for them to walk.

They poured out into the village square and they worked together. They finished the school. They put up the roof. They even brought food to share. They had this massive celebration and then they returned home, asking for nothing in return. We were amazed and we asked what was this minga. She explained that this was a





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word in Quechuan, their language, this rallying cry when they say this word, people stop what they're doing for individual gain and they come together for the collective good.

The moment that really hit us was that as she was explaining to us this word, this rallying cry, this minga, this coming together of people to work for the collective good, this young Puruha Indian who was translating for us, who had been to the cities and spoke Quechuan, Spanish and English, asked us what is the word in English. We racked our brains and we thought about it and this coming together, this spontaneous community building around service, this word that if you were to shout, people would immediately stop what they are doing and come together for the collective good.

There is not really a word in English. It is not mission work or volunteerism or maybe barn raising, but we don't really have them any more. We don't have a word for that and we have to ask what that means about our own culture. In fact, when he asked us about the word, the closest thing we could come up with at the time, we said that it is kind of like a riot, but for good. Linguists work with us because we work with indigenous groups around the world and they tell us language reflects culture.

The fact that we don't have a word for minga, we have to ask what that means about our own culture. I remember being there with the Puruha Indian, being there in Ecuador and saying we need a minga. We need a coming together of people to work for the collective good. We need a societal shift. For us, *Me to We* isn't a book, it's a manifesto, it's a map, it's a movement, it's what we hope to see change in this world. It's our minga. It's this coming together of people to work for the collective good.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** I am going to make up a new word then because we have got to have a minga in English. That is the most beautiful word, meaning that people stop individual gain and come together for the collective good. Incredible. How are you able to get famous people, like Desmond Tutu and Richard Gere and Jane Goodall to contribute to this wonderful book of yours?

**CRAIG KIELBURGER:** Many of those individuals are great supporters of our work. They help us building schools and our projects around the world. Also many of those individuals live their own life and they maybe use a different word, but they live the "me to we philosophy". They've seen the benefits in their own





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lives.

In the case of Richard Gere, he writes this story of how he found his passion, how he found his purpose by reaching out to Tibet to help empower the villages and help bring schools and health centers and clinics to the Tibetan people and along the way, and this ties into the “me to we philosophy”, that by reaching out to help others, he found something. He helped himself in his case. He came under the tutelage of his holiness, the Dalai Lama, and in the case of Richard Gere, he found his faith.

For Desmond Tutu, he writes about how he lived this philosophy. Of course, he won the Nobel Peace Prize for fighting against apartheid in South Africa, one of the greatest living heroes of our time, him and Nelson Mandela. He writes about how he lives this message through simple ways. He shared a beautiful story, a simple act that anyone can do who is listening.

He sees the newspaper every day through a different set of eyes. He doesn't see it as the collection of all of the violence and poverty and suffering in our world, but, instead, he literally sees it as God's prayer list delivered to his front door. He sees it as a menu that he lays out flat on the kitchen table with his family and they look at it together as a menu to choose actions where they can make a difference in the world.

He sees the problem, but he sees a solution. He joked and said that it was even conveniently divided as a menu because it's divided into the local issues you could help or the national issues you could help or the international issues as a section. He writes in how reaching out to others and how doing this type of work, and sitting with his family around the table, reading this newspaper as a menu, brings his family together. How that builds the family bond.

Of course, Oprah Winfrey, the story that I shared with you, we've had the great honor to work with Oprah to build schools through her foundation from Haiti to India to Sri Lanka to Kenya to Sierra Leone to China. In fact, if anyone is an Oprah watcher, she broadcasts those updates on the work that we do with her, quite regularly. In her case, how she found, again, that meaning, that purpose through serving others, that happiness.

The root of the “me to we philosophy” is that idea that when we reach out, we gain so much back. In fact, I really believe that it is some of the most selfish work



## Child Rights Advocate

**Craig Kielburger**



that we could ever do because for people who are struggling and going through a difficult time, I think that this helps put people on a path. It helps give people a new direction. It helps renew our faith in humanity.

For people who are looking or starting a business, there is no greater way to make contact with these amazing people than to get involved in local charities, serving on boards, helping out with local volunteer association. For people who are worried about their faith, this is something that helps strengthen our faith in humanity. For people who are worried about their health, there is an amazing group of research that we have found that people live longer, healthier lives volunteering because of that social network.

In fact, in that amazing study that we mentioned, just watching a video on Mother Teresa helps boost our immune system. There is something going on that we don't fully understand, but in helping others and serving others, it gives so much back into our own lives. I really believe that this is the simple truth that we all know, it's in every faith, every tradition, in every culture that we need each other. We need a community. We need a minga. We need that "we" thinking and it makes us all stronger, individually and collectively.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** What is your advice to people who are, and I am sure you have met them, in the habit of reaching out to others so much that they end up not taking care of their own need?

**CRAIG KIELBURGER:** There is a great activist, a woman by the name of June Callwich [ph] who started more than 27 charities. She wrote a dozen and a half books about service. An amazing women and I met her when, and she still is, she's struggling with cancer. In her case, terminal cancer. After we spoke and I interviewed her for this book, she walked out to the car. I was a little surprised to see this older lady sit in this car because she was riding in this red sports car.

She just looked at me with this giant smile and said, "You know, helping others is not a sprint. It's a marathon. We have to take care of ourselves, too. For her case, she always wanted a sports car and there is nothing bad about that. There is no reason we have to all take vows of poverty and she worked hard her entire life and this was her splurge.

We all have those moments. We all need to treat ourselves, we all need to rest, we all need to take care of ourselves because it's not a sprint, it's a marathon. We



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need to be healthy in mind, body and soul. Some people say that when they're going through a difficult time, they have to take care of themselves first. Only when they are taking care of themselves enough, can they help others.

I don't think that there is first or a second or a one or a before or an after, I really believe that we can do both. When you're going through a tough time, I think going to a homeless shelter maybe helps put our own problems into prospective. When you see someone who is struggling in that way, suddenly your own stress in life becomes a little bit lighter.

When you are helping someone else, it helps remind you how important you are. It gives you that boost of self esteem. It helps fulfill our souls and lift us out of a difficult time in our lives. One of the people who contributed for the book is Dr. Dorothea Gaither. She wrote an extraordinary statement that, back then I was just thinking about it because she spends her life with the people who are going through the hardest time in their life.

She counsels people suffering from severe depression who are struggling even with suicide. She said that she has never met a suicidal volunteer who will kill themselves on Tuesday because they were needed at the volunteer place on Thursday. Those were her exact lines. I read this and I literally stopped when I read her story and her contribution.

Just thinking about what a powerful statement that she wrote because I think a lot of people, especially in the deepest, darkest moments, are looking for that meaning, are looking to know that they are needed, are looking to know that they are part of something larger, a community. Whether you are in that difficult stage in your life or whether you are reaching for something higher, trying to live your passion to the fullest, I think it is something that transcends all of those levels. When we reach out to others, it truly does help us in ways that we are only beginning and science is only beginning to understand.

**JANET ATTWOOD:** What is next for the Kielburger brothers?

**CRAIG KIELBURGER:** We still have this mission ahead of us. Fundamentally what we do for the children is to share a gift of education. For kids overseas, that means building primary schools. We have 450 schools but we still have a lot more to do.