



Giraffe Heroes Project

#StickYourNeckOut

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Dear john,

Here in the northern hemisphere, Spring is busting out all over, as are people who have been vaccinated, emerging from the long hibernation, figuring out how it all works now, in this time of reawakening.

We're welcoming this upturn and a great cohort of new Giraffe Heroes, so many that we urge you to hang in here and get all the way down the list. The descriptions are short—keep going!



As long as there are Giraffes, there's hope—
Ann Medlock Founder

*These are "teasers," quick looks at new Giraffe Heroes,
people who are sticking their necks out for the common good.
For their full stories, click on their names, in blue.*

[Phyoe Phyoe Aung](#) is standing up for human rights in Myanmar, despite being imprisoned repeatedly.

She's leading resistance groups, organizing demonstrations, and training other young leaders to work for reform in education, in government and in Myanmar society.



Navajo Attorney [Ethel Branch](#) turned away from a career in private practice to help the Navajo Nation deal with the oncoming pandemic.

The already impoverished Nation has indeed been hard hit and Branch has led an all-out effort to provide food and water for more than 30,000 households, raising the money to get it all done, and managing dozens of volunteers.

Ana Rosario Contreras, president of the Caracas Nurses' Association and a fierce proponent of the health and safety of Venezuelans, has spoken out against her government's gross mishandling of the pandemic, despite that government's propensity to silence critics, sometimes violently. Contreras is letting the world know that officials got vaccines when health care workers did not, when these frontline defenders of the people didn't even have masks and gloves.



When musician [Daryl Davis](#) was complimented on one of his performances by a white Ku Klux Klan member, Davis built on that contact to become friends with other KKK members, and write a book about them. He went to their meetings and rallies and convinced many of them to leave the hate group. His impact on one "Grand Wizard"

was so deep the man not only quit the KKK, he gave Davis his white hood, and asked him to be his child's godfather.

[Ranjitsinh Disale](#) moved to a poor Indian village to teach in a primary school for girls, a school so unimportant to the village, it was a leaky shed and had 2% attendance.

Disale translated teaching materials into the village's language, convinced the community to value educating girls, and created modern high tech materials for them that are now used in schools across India. Attendance went to 100%. When Disale won a \$1,000,000 teaching award, he split it with the other nominated teachers so they could upgrade their teaching materials. During the pandemic, he's been doing free online classes that are attended by thousands of kids around the world.



For decades [Judith Heumann](#) has championed the rights of people with disabilities, from her wheelchair and her understanding of the problems she's faced herself. She's organized protests and sit-ins, lobbied legislators and administrators, and brought court cases, successfully getting institutions and governments to listen, learn and make changes.

Historians of the movement have said that the Americans with Disabilities Act might not have been passed without her pushing and cajoling, never stopping the pressure for change.





[Hilton Kelley](#) gave up an enjoyable life in California to help his home town, Port Arthur, Texas, fight against companies emitting toxins that foul the air, water, and ground there. He's battled the corporate polluters despite warnings from them and from the police that he shouldn't make trouble. After winning some lowering of emissions and settlements for damages, he's helping other endangered communities fight back too.



Decades ago [Pamela and Anil Malhotra](#) bought up 55 acres of barren land in southern India and over the years created a 300-acre sanctuary, the Save Animals Initiative Sanctuary. It's a haven for hundreds of endangered animal and plant species, and India's only private wildlife preserve. They've spent all their savings and all their time and energy in maintaining the sanctuary—and Pamela has described wielding logs to protect the animals from poachers.

We've been unable to find a photo of Mark McConnell.

Prosecutor [Mark McConnell](#)'s long, respected career with the US Department of Justice went awry when he was pursuing cases against US drug dealers and discovered that the DOJ was laundering evidence used at trials, not revealing its source in illegal CIA surveillance operations. When he reported the illegality to his superiors, he was told to keep quiet. Instead he went to the press, and saw his career go down in flames.



University of Zimbabwe student activist [Allan Moyo](#) says that a 74-day imprisonment sharpened his resolve to fight for a better Zimbabwe.

The 23-year-old was arrested in December last year and charged with "inciting public violence" against President Mnangagwa's government. Released on bail in March, he's continuing his *peaceful* advocacy for justice—and for better prison conditions.

[Francina Nkosi](#) is a frontline human rights defender and a champion of gender justice and environmental rights in Lephalale, a mining community in South Africa's Limpopo province. Challenging powerful mining firms, some of them linked to top politicians, Nkosi puts her life in danger. But she soldiers on, believing that she is on earth for a purpose—to save humanity.



[Roegchanda Pascoe](#) fights crime and gangsterism in Manenburg, a community near Capetown that's rocked by poverty and violence.

As a founder of the Manenberg Safety Forum, she combats gender-based violence and gangsterism, without funding and despite being the target of gang violence.



[Lara Taylor Pearce](#), Auditor General of Sierra Leone, knows numbers and speaks the truth about them, no matter how often her fellow government officials attack her for her honest government audits. With more than 27 years of experience in financial and administrative management, and a commitment to informing the public, Pearce keeps right on telling the truth.



[Aubrey Robinson](#) promotes leadership, active citizenship, and physical fitness among young people in Cafda Village, a community near Cape Town, South Africa that's rocked by poverty. To fight gangsterism, youth unemployment, early pregnancy, and violence, Robinson formed the Cape Town Youth Cadets. He also runs a free counseling service to members of the community—in his backyard.

[Amit Sapra](#) MD teaches at a medical school in Illinois, when he's not a frontline pandemic fighter, providing free care and coaching people on anti-Covid safety measures. His life of giving began when he was 13, in India, assisting the elderly poor. He went on to deliver polio vaccine to remote villages there, and to provide free medical care after a terrible earthquake.





Attorney [Nasrin Sotoudeh](#) has worked for years to defend the rights of women and children in Iran. That government arrested her again and again, yet she persisted. Her most recent sentence was 38 years and “148 lashes.” Now in a crowded prison where Covid is raging, she has tested positive. Human rights organizations around the world have demanded her release.

There.

*We've taken you around the world, giving you heroes far and wide.
We hope you're as heartened as we are by their courage and their compassion.*

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