



Giraffe Heroes Project

#StickYourNeckOut

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Dear John,

As Thanksgiving approaches in the US, we're thankful here for these stories we get to tell you of brave, caring people sticking their necks out to make the world around them better. Enjoy! We're grateful, for them, and for you there, about to read what they're up to.

As long as there are Giraffes, there's hope.

—Ann Medlock, Founder





Nyyab Ali is a champion for her fellow trans Pakistanis, advocating for their rights in public talks, and managing a program she's created to provide them with job training and a support system. Director of a Transgender Protection Unit of the Islamabad police, Ali has been threatened, sprayed with acid, and beaten up in a home invasion. She recently sued a colleague in the police department for pulling a gun on her saying, "if we cower down to these threats and these acts of violence, we will only allow people to oppress us even further." [You can see reports](#)

[about her work on Facebook.](#)

Eliza Conley-Lepene escaped a violent relationship, got a degree, started a business and, instead of putting the nightmares behind her, devoted herself to creating and managing a system to help others escape domestic and sexual violence more easily than she did. Her nonprofit SafeHouse app provides secure, simple links that thousands of people have used to get help, from the immediacy of 911, to their needs for shelter, for legal help, and for emotional support. [You can view Safe House services here.](#)





In her many decades of working to protect the environment, **Annie Leonard** has been threatened, arrested, and called every name in the book by people who think governments, corporations and individuals should do anything they want, no matter what damage that does to the planet. The more she's learned about the waste stream, the more she's been driven to communicate what she learns. Her videos, books, and articles have now been seen by millions. And she's still being called a traitor, a communist, and un-American, for just telling the truth about dangerous, wasteful "throw-aways." Leonard tells people what

they don't want to hear—"There is no 'away.'" [Click here for her Story of Stuff.](#)



Saúl Luciano Lliuya, a farmer on the banks of the Quilcay River in Huaras, Peru and a guide to the mountains above it, is suing a German corporation whose coal- and gas-fired power plants are threatening life in that valley. He's losing far too much time on his farm and as a guide, time he now spends in courtrooms, testifying about the melting of a glacier above his village, about the huge new lagoon that can break and wash away all the homes and farms below it. When he does get time at home, he's shunned by

neighbors who don't want to think about the dangers he's describing. His case has been accepted for trial, a legal breakthrough that can mean polluters can be held responsible for the damage they cause. [You can follow the legal case here.](#)

Tulio de Oliveira is a scientific truth teller, repeatedly sounding the alarm over health dangers in his nation, South Africa, despite the commercial interests who want him to sit down and shut up. Travelers bring significant money into the country and de Oliveira's outspokenness causes that income to drop. He directs a research group in Capetown that found the COVID-19 variant now known as Beta and then the Omicron variant, all in his mission to control epidemics. Proud that such important findings are coming out of Africa, de Oliveira will go right on working to stop deadly epidemics, and telling the world what he finds. [Keep up with his findings here.](#)



German climatologist **Friederike Otto** knows that the climate is changing faster than anticipated, that human actions have gotten us into this crisis, and that human actions have to slow it down. Fast. Given that urgency, she's breaking scientific research protocols to get information out about climate incidents—fast. Otto runs World Weather Attribution, a research group staffed by volunteers and funded by Otto and her supporters. Denounced by her professional peers for the speed of WWA's analyses and announcements, Otto was recently delighted to have a WWA report accepted by a UN panel on the climate emergency. Limiting her career options in science is a price Otto is willing to pay in this global crisis. [Follow her research and analyses here.](#)





Delta airlines pilot **Karlene Petitt** has been flying international passenger planes for 35 years. That experience (plus her doctorate in aviation safety) led her to file reports to management on procedures that endangered passengers' safety. Management responded by sending her to a company psychiatrist who looked at her doctorate, two master's, several books, three children, and stellar Delta work history, and diagnosed her as manic. All that was "well beyond what any woman I've ever met could do." Delta grounded her as a safety risk. Petitt was declared quite sane by Mayo Clinic physicians, filed a whistleblower complaint, and was reinstated. Captain Karlene Petitt is piloting Airbus A330 passenger planes out of Seatac to the world. And keeping her eye out for true threats to the flying public's safety. [Her website is a delight.](#)



Far north of the endangered valley in Peru where Luciano Lliuya farms, **James Rasmussen** has led the Duwamish River Community Coalition since the 1980s, fighting developers and public officials every day of his life to stop the polluting of the Duwamish River and its valley. He's led river patrols that catch and stop polluters, cleanup crews removing toxic wastes, and court battles stopping corporate plans for

further “development.” The goal—a river full of life, teeming with the fish and crabs that fed his Duwanish ancestors for thousands of years. [Get reports on Duwamish challenges and victories here.](#)

Junior Walk is a coal miner, the son and grandson of coal miners. He’s also a keen observer, seeing the ways that mine operations are endangering the lives of his fellow West Virginians and destroying the beauty of their



Appalachian Mountains. The companies are doing mountain-top removal, turning vast areas into a moonscape. In Walk’s area, they’re pouring billions of gallons of toxic wastes behind a dam made only of dirt and rubble. When he began speaking out against these actions, writing, organizing, and rallying others to stop the mining companies, his father kicked him out of the house. Relatives and neighbors have threatened him, afraid of losing their jobs. But Walk goes on, determined to save the one place he knows and loves. [His action group is here.](#)

**We leave you for now, asking—
what do you see that needs your attention, your skills, your
courage?
Do all you can for the world,
with whatever you've got, wherever you are.
BE THE LIGHT.**

To meet more real heroes, do LIKE [Giraffe Heroes on Facebook](#),
where we post Giraffe stories every day
from the vast storybank we've created over the decades.
That storybank is on [our website](#),
along with all the other freebies we've created over the years,
all yours for the taking.
You'll like it all. We promise.

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