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Inspiration Information — Bilaal Rajan

Published

by

[aaron](#)

on November 5, 2010

in [celebrity](#) and [zeitgeist](#)

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“You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you.” — John Bunyan

When it comes to making a positive difference in the world, there are so many champions of change from individuals to large-scale organizations all working tirelessly to shed a little light in the vast darkness of need. Many such inspiring leaders have been featured here, from [ageless saints](#) to [reformed sinners](#). But none seem to create as big an upswelling of inspiration as those incredibly young crusaders like [Jordan Romero](#), [Jessica Watson](#) and [Zach Bonner](#): barely teenage kids who in the span of their short lives have accomplished unbelievable feats.

Today I’d like to introduce you to another phenomenal young man, the scale and breadth of whose achievements simply blow me away. Meet Bilaal Rajan — age 13.



The desire to help others all started for Bilaal in 2001 after a devastating earthquake racked his family’s homeland of Gujarat, India. Born and raised in Toronto, Canada, Bilaal looked at his parents and

told them he wanted to help. “He was eating a clementine at the time”, his father remembers, “and he said, ‘okay I’m gonna go sell these.’ We had a box of oranges in the fridge and he took them out, made a poster and was off.” Bilaal went door to door to his neighbors houses selling oranges for the victims. He raised \$350. He was only 4 years old.

In 2004, 7 year old Bilaal decided he needed to help the homeless in Haiti after a hurricane ravaged the island nation. He wanted to do something bigger than just donating his \$10 allowance, or selling oranges. So he devised a brilliant strategy. He made a special request to his father’s company to donate boxes of cookies for sale at school recess, all to raise funds and awareness for the starving children in Haiti, many who at the time were so impoverished they had resorted to baking cinnamon and mud together and then eating these “earth cookies”. Bilaal formed a team of 12 other classmates to help increase the distribution and sale of the cookies.

When Bilaal presented UNICEF (The United Nations Children’s Fund) with a \$6,387 check, the astounded representatives couldn’t believe that such young kids had raised such a tremendous donation. UNICEF was so impressed that they made Bilaal their official child spokesperson. As UNICEF’s youngest ambassador, Bilaal took advantage of his public post and the press to contact over 50 of Canada’s major business companies, asking them to contribute to his charitable cause. Boxes of supplies, baby food, free medicine and gift certificates started flowing in from pharmaceutical companies, Heinz, national drugstores. Bilaal realized he could leverage his age and his passion to reach further, do more.

On a small scale, he continued to raise personal donations, handpainting and selling decorative acrylic plates for the Holidays. On a large scale, he started encouraging his peers to raise awareness through a series web challenges posted on his website: handsforhelp.org In 2005 he urged Canadian children to each raise a minimum of \$100 with an ideal goal of reaching \$1 million. In the meantime he pledged to personally raise \$10,000. Within two weeks, Bilaal ended up raising over \$50,000 himself while the Toronto District School Board presented the president of UNICEF a check for 1.3 million from all the money their kids had pledged. Local communities got inspired to contribute to the cause. And the Government of Canada ended up matching the school board’s donation dollar for dollar. Ultimately Bilaal presented UNICEF with nearly \$4 million from his campaign! He was still only 8 years old.

Since then Bilaal as traveled to over 20 countries as a humanitarian ambassador, helping children who have suffered from Tsunamis, AIDs, famine and war. He wants to spread the value of volunteering, not just to kids his own age, but to everyone. In his own words: *“I’ve always had a positive attitude and that’s simply because we can’t go forward with negativity because we’ll never get anywhere. And the sentence*

that entered my mind was: Why shouldn't other children in other parts of the world not have what we have and taken for granted?"

Impossibly mature, poised beyond his years, Bilaal, now 13, has authored two books. "8 Principles To Maximize Kids True Potential: A Roadmap To Success", based on his simple strategies for manifesting your dreams — big or small. And more recently, "Making a Difference: Tips from an Underage Overachiever." He keeps an online blog, where you can follow his current philanthropic ventures, and he gives frequent inspirational speeches at local schools, conferences and Leadership conventions. When it comes to encouraging others to action, Bilaal is not camera shy.



"It doesn't matter how old you are. It doesn't matter how busy you are. It doesn't matter how much you have on your plate, and we're all really busy. But you can make a difference in your community and world." -Akela Peoples, Youth in Motion

This past year, in honor of International Children's Day (June 1st), Bilaal encouraged all Canadians to join him in the Barefoot Challenge: for an entire week Bilaal walked around without shoes to raise awareness for the thousands of children around the world who live without ever owning shoes. He also shaved his head to further raise donations.

"As one person, I know I can make a difference." Bilaal says with complete confidence. "But as a group of people, we can definitely change the world!"

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Amazing human! Reach out to him, A! See how we can team up...

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What an awesome person! Very inspiring, and I love the quote from Akela Peoples.:) Thanks for sharing!

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