



Geoffrey Canada
Author & Children's Advocate

In his 20-plus years with Harlem Children's Zone, Inc., Geoffrey Canada has become nationally recognized for his pioneering work helping children and families in Harlem and as a passionate advocate for education reform.

Canada founded the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ), which *The New York Times Magazine* called "one of the most ambitious social experiments of our time." In October 2005, Canada was named one of "America's Best Leaders" by *US News and World Report*. In 2014, he announced his retirement at the end of the school year, ensuring that he will continue to remain a passionate advocate for education and poverty issues.

In 1997, the agency launched the Harlem Children's Zone Project, which targets a specific geographic area in Central Harlem with a comprehensive range of services. The Zone Project today covers 100 blocks and aims to serve over 10,000 children by 2011.

The New York Times Magazine said the Zone Project "combines educational, social, and medical services. It starts at birth and follows children to college. It meshes those services into an interlocking web, and then it drops that web over an entire neighborhood... The objective is to create a safety net woven so tightly that children in the neighborhood just can't slip through."

The work of Canada and HCZ has become a national model and has been the subject of many profiles in the media. Their work has been featured on *60 Minutes*, *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, *The Today Show*, *Good Morning America*, *Nightline*, *CBS This Morning*, *The Charlie Rose Show*, and NPR's "On Point," as well in articles in *The New York Times*, *The New York Daily News*, *USA Today*, and *Newsday*. Canada was prominently featured in the Davis Guggenheim documentary *Waiting for "Superman."* Most recently, Geoffrey Canada was featured on the hit Netflix show *Luke Cage*, and appeared on HBO's *Insecure*.

Canada grew up in the South Bronx in a poor, sometimes violent neighborhood. Despite his troubled surroundings, he was able to succeed academically, receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree from Bowdoin College and a master's in education from the Harvard School of Education. After graduating from Harvard, Canada decided to work to help children who, like himself, were disadvantaged by their lives in poor, embattled neighborhoods.

Drawing upon his own childhood experiences and those at the Harlem Children's Zone, he wrote *Fist Stick Knife Gun: A Personal History of Violence in America* and *Reaching Up for*



Manhood: Transforming the Lives of Boys in America. In its review of *Fist Stick Knife Gun: A Personal History of Violence in America*, *Publishers Weekly* said, "a more powerful depiction of the tragic life of urban children and a more compelling plea to end 'America's war against itself' cannot be imagined."

For his years of work advocating for children and families in some of America's most devastated communities, Canada was a recipient of the first Heinz Award in 1994. In 2004, he was given the Harold W. McGraw Jr. Prize in Education and *Child Magazine's* Children's Champion Award.

Canada has also received the Heroes of the Year Award from the Robin Hood Foundation, The Jefferson Award for Public Service, the Spirit of the City Award from the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, the Brennan Legacy Award from New York University, and the Common Good Award from Bowdoin College. He has received honorary degrees from Harvard University, Bowdoin College, Williams College, John Jay College, Bank Street College, and Meadville Lombard Theological Seminary.

A third-degree black belt, Canada is also the founder (in 1983) of the Chang Moo Kwan Martial Arts School. Despite his busy schedule as head of HCZ, he continues to teach the principles of Tae Kwon Do to community youth along with anti-violence and conflict-resolution techniques.

In 2006, Canada was selected by New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg as co-chair of the Commission on Economic Opportunity, which was asked to formulate a plan to significantly reduce poverty. In 2007, he was appointed co-chair of New York State Governor's Children's Cabinet Advisory Board.

Canada is also the East Coast Regional Coordinator for the Black Community Crusade for Children. The Crusade is a nationwide effort to make saving black children the top priority in the black community. This initiative is coordinated by Marian Wright Edelman and the Children's Defense Fund.

Canada joined Harlem Children's Zone, Inc. (then called the Rheedlen Foundation) in 1983 as its Education Director. Prior to that, he worked as Director of the Robert White School, a private day school for troubled inner-city youth in Boston.

The National Book Award-winning author Jonathan Kozol has called Canada, "One of the few authentic heroes of New York and one of the best friends children have, or ever will have, in our nation."



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