

RAISING

global

CITIZENS

A treasure trove of ideas for opening your child's eyes to the world.

BY JOELLEN RADERSTORF

Ask a class of fourth graders to check the labels in each other's t-shirts, and you'll find at least 15 different countries listed after "Made in..." Our world's children are inextricably linked: They breathe the same air, listen to the same music, sleep under the same stars, and wear t-shirts from each other's countries.

I was not raised in a family of world travellers, so my global experience as a child was limited to a trip with my high school a capella choir to the UK. My three cherished sons have had the opposite experience; they've traveled literally around the world, meeting people of all faiths, cultures, and economic circumstances. I am a mother committed to raising global citizens.

"Let children choose their causes for themselves."

Over the years, I have accumulated a raising-global-citizens treasure trove: books to read, games to play, and school activities to bring to the classroom. I've also discovered some golden rules to raising a global citizen:

1

Teach by example:

If you are engaged in making the world a better place, your child will be too.

2

Learn from your children:

They understand acceptance and diversity better than we ever will.

3

Expose children to many forms of action,

but let them choose their causes for themselves.

A Few Items from My Trove:

Start with reading. Children's books hold life's most precious secrets. Find books with the most beautiful messages, ones that highlight different cultures, faiths, and lives. Expose your children to stories with powerful environmental messages and characters who undergo transformation from greedy antagonist to compassionate protagonist. As a brand new mama, I spent most of a



JOELLEN'S SON, QUIN, roughhouses with the children of the the Pastoral Centre Preschool in Kliptown, Johannesburg, South Africa.

2,500-mile road trip in the back seat reading *Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain* by Verna Aardema. I can still recite the rhythmic verses and see Ki-pat standing on one leg, like a big stork. It made me yearn to visit Africa, and I imagined the same hunger instilled in my sweet, gurgling son.

Bring lessons into everyday activities.

Integrating global awareness into everyday events makes it a natural part of life from the get-go. Watch movies that depict life in faraway lands. Host a lemonade stand to buy mosquito nets for children in malaria-prone countries. Start a giving-circle tradition, allowing each member

of the family to gift money to nonprofits. Help your child identify what they are passionate about by really listening. I recognized my middle son's passion for animal rights when he said, "Mom, we are all animals—humans are no better than any other animal."

Role play. When we put ourselves in the shoes of others, our eyes begin to open. At my son's school I organized an event called "The World Sits Down to Lunch." Each child was randomly given a ticket determining how much lunch they would receive. The number of tickets in each group reflected food availability throughout the world. That meant that the majority of children were sent to the "Not Enough Area," with no table, used yogurt containers for bowls, a pot of rice, and a large pan for collecting water. The "Just Enough" group were shown to a crowded table with rice, beans, one very small cookie per person and a Dixie cup of juice. And the "More Than Enough" children—only 8 of the 54 students—were served by high school students gesturing to a beautifully set table, urging, "Help yourself to all the burrito fixings and dessert you would like."

The classroom transformed into a microcosm of our world: scarcity, war, stereotyping, begging, and plenty of emotion. But the children got it. In the following weeks, they shared this experience over and over again. I witnessed the beginnings of an authentic sense of global family.

Experience the world first hand.

Step one: Place a large map on a prominent wall in your house. Now ponder adventures your family might have and track where you've already been. Start a travel fund and

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check out travel books from the library. The options are vast—from a one-week service trip to a round-the-world adventure. With our sons aged 12, 10, and 7—each carrying his own backpack—we embarked on the learning experience of a lifetime, visiting 14 different countries over 6 months (and sleeping in 64 different beds). Six weeks into our trip, we found ourselves running from a tsunami. Travel as close to the ground as your appetite allows. My children preferred the temples of Angkor in Cambodia to the museums in Italy. Our time spent in orphanages in South Africa and befriending working children in Cambodia left a lasting global imprint.

Whatever you do, acting as members of one global family will transform your children's lives—and yours. ●



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Connect with Joellen on PulseWire at worldpulse.com.

RESOURCECENTER Tools for Parents



BOOKS:
The Giving Tree
by Shel Silverstein



A Life Like Mine
by UNICEF



Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain
by Verna Aardema



The Milestones Project: Celebrating Childhood Around the World
by Richard and Michele Steckel

▶ **GAMES:**
Games for Change highlights digital games for social change.
gamesforchange.org

▶ **CURRICULUM:**
Oxfam's curriculum for Global Citizenship and more.
oxfam.org.uk/education/gc

▶ **PHILANTHROPY:**
YouthGive is building a community of giving, created and guided by young people.
youthgive.org

▶ **TRAVEL:**
Globe Aware offers volunteer vacations for families.
globeaware.org

▶ **A GREAT GIFT:**
A calendar guide for advocating on behalf of the world's children

The Moment is an engagement calendar with weekly actions and portraits of those who inspire—from the mom next door to Isabel Allende, Mukhtar Mai, Paul Hawken and Julie Chavez Rodriguez.

Visit Mothers Acting Up at mothersactingup.org to find out how to purchase your own copy.

