

Interview with Jimmy Carter, the 39th President of the United States (1977-81)

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Q. Do young people have a role to play in the struggle for human rights?

A. I think so. I remember the leaders of our country didn't want to get out of Vietnam, but the young people said we've got to get out and they changed the policy of our country. In the South where I lived, we had official racial segregation. It was the young people who said the law needs to be changed, and it was changed. Young people saw our environment being destroyed. So young people got together and organized Earth Day. And out of that came laws that have made our nation a much cleaner and better place to live. That was all young people. It wasn't adults, it wasn't the President in the White House or members of Congress; it was young people.

Q. What can young people do to effect change?

A. They should look around their own neighborhoods and see what rights of people are being violated. Human rights abuse isn't just something that happens in foreign countries. Are there any hungry people they know? Are there any homeless people?

The more that young people can apply the idea of human rights in their own life, in their own home, in their own classroom, the more they can grow into an understanding of human rights on a global scale.

