

AGING AND THE ELDER AS A PROPHET*

By Robertson Work



“Nelson Mandela launched ‘The Elders’ on July 18, 2007, his 89th birthday. Convening a group of independent global leaders, he mandated them to speak truth to power, raise the voices of the voiceless, and offer hope where there is despair.” <https://theelders.org/elders-10>

My Dad used to say, son, don't get old, it isn't any fun. And I would say, “But, Dad, what's the alternative—to die young?” If we are given the gift of old age, what can we do with it? I believe that the elder can be a prophet calling people to prepare for what is coming.

Whether or not we had a career or a family, as we move into our elder years, we can be a voice of truth bringing a sense of urgency into the present. We don't have to worry about what others think of us. We can live utterly on behalf of the coming generations of life on Earth.

We can call people to pay attention to the juggernauts of history rolling down on us. Prepare ye the way for climate chaos! It's coming for sure. Stop using fossil fuels now. Move away from bodies of water. Get a storm shelter. Grow your own food. Live near your extended family and friends for mutual support.

The elder as prophet can take risks a person with family and work responsibilities cannot so easily take. The elder can participate in nonviolent demonstrations. The elder can write frank Op Eds to the local paper and sign every relevant petition. The elder can speak out at community meetings. The elder can donate to important causes. The elder can speak at schools to awaken the young. The elder can help get out the vote and volunteer at the voting site.

The elder can maintain a healthy body and mind so that they can continue to serve others. The elder can volunteer at the local food bank or soup kitchen. The elder can give courage to younger people. The elder can show others how to be a human being who is aging self-consciously in gratitude for life itself. The elder can learn and do something new every day.

The elder can be “fierce with age” without apology. The elder can be gracious and yet firm, patient as well as impatient. The elder can invite people to wake up and live life with

authenticity and passion. The elder can be active on social media bringing critical news to the attention of others. The elder can honor death and celebrate the passing of friends, foes, and the homeless.

The elder can show others how to die with dignity and trust. The elder can show others how to live with love and laughter. The elder can show others how to be honest and inquisitive about sickness and old age. The elder can be a wonderful grandparent and great grandparent. The elder can be a sacred sign of living life fully to the last breath. The elder can call people to dream about the coming civilization of compassion and to work for its realization.

Yes!

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