

Don't Quit on Me **Spokespeople Bios**

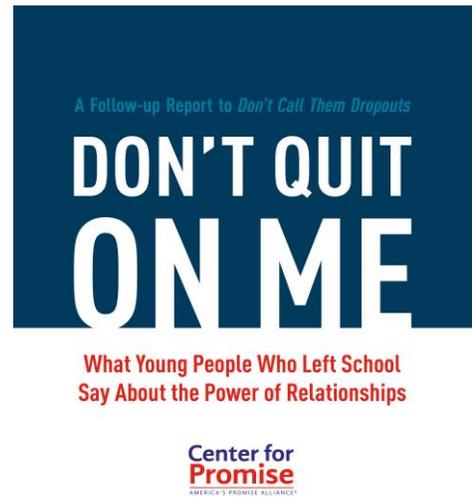
Key Spokespeople

- **John Gomperts**, president & CEO, America's Promise
- **Dr. Jonathan Zaff**, executive president, Center for Promise
- **Alma J. Powell**, chair, America's Promise
- **Craig McClay**, Youth Engagement Specialist, Center for Promise
- **Stefanie Cruz**, Senior Digital Director, America's Promise
(Available for Spanish language interviews only)

Youth Leadership Spokespeople

- **Ti-Andre Bellinger**, 20
- **Zartashia Javid**, 20
- **Ola Ojewumi**, 24
- **Stephanie Watkins-Cruz**, 21 (Available for English and Spanish language interviews)

Note: We also have youth voices and leaders of re-engagement centers available for comment in each of the following cities: Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, St. Paul/Minneapolis, Albuquerque and Portland (OR).



QUESTIONS?

To arrange interviews, please contact Daria Hall at dariah@americaspromise.org or 202-657-0621.

John Gomperts, president & CEO, America's Promise Alliance



John S. Gomperts became President and CEO of America's Promise Alliance in May 2012. Gomperts has a track record of success in both government and the nonprofit sectors where his accomplishments include design and implementation of strategic initiatives, developing innovative policies and programs, and forging partnerships and coalitions. Most recently, he served as Director of AmeriCorps, starting in June 2010, with a responsibility for implementing the bipartisan Kennedy Serve America Act. His work at AmeriCorps focused on demonstrating and increasing community impact and strengthening the AmeriCorps member experience.

From 2006-2010, Gomperts served as President of Civic Ventures, an organization devoted to promoting the engagement of millions of experienced baby boomers in encore careers. Gomperts was CEO of non-profit Experience Corps for five years beginning in 2003, leading a program that recruits people over 55 to be tutors and mentors in urban public schools. He led Experience Corps through dramatic growth and expansion, as well as a highly successful independent evaluation of Experience Corps' impact.

Prior to joining Civic Ventures and Experience Corps, Gomperts served in a variety of positions including COO at Public Education Network; Chief of Staff for the Corporation for National and Community Service; Legislative Director for Senator Harris Wofford of Pennsylvania; and Deputy Director of the Senate Democratic Leadership Committee, working for Senators Tom Daschle of South Dakota and John Kerry of Massachusetts. Before heading to Capitol Hill, Gomperts practiced law and clerked for a federal judge.

Gomperts has also served on numerous boards and advisory groups, including Points of Light Institute/Hands On Network, VolunteerMatch, The News Literacy Project and Politics & Prose Bookstore.

Gomperts earned his J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center and graduated magna cum laude from University of California, Berkeley with an A.B. in History. Gomperts is married to Katherine J. Klein, a Professor of Management at The Wharton School, and they have two daughters, Nora and Lily. Twitter: [**@JohnGomperts**](#)

Jonathan Zaff, Executive Director, Center for Promise



Jonathan F. Zaff, Ph.D. is executive director of the Center for Promise. He is also a research associate professor in the School of Education at Boston University. His research focuses primarily on understanding how to create the conditions within which all children and youth thrive academically, socially, vocationally, and civically. The results of his work have appeared in numerous peer-reviewed journals and books and presented at local, national, and international conferences. Prior to joining America's Promise, Dr. Zaff was a research associate at Child Trends and founder of the youth voice organization, 18to35 (merged with Mobilize.org). Dr. Zaff received his Ph.D. in lifespan developmental psychology from the University of Georgia. Twitter: [**@ZaffJonathan**](#)

Alma J. Powell, Chair, America's Promise Alliance



Alma J. Powell is one of the nation's most longstanding advocates for children and youth. A successful author and speaker, Mrs. Powell has helped advance the cause of young people in need for more than four decades. As chair of the Board of Directors for America's Promise Alliance, Mrs. Powell is helping lead the 350+ partner network's efforts to improve the lives of young people by connecting more of them with the resources essential for success. She also helps guide its GradNation Campaign, an initiative to raise the nation's high school graduation rate to 90 percent by 2020.

In addition to her role with America's Promise, Mrs. Powell sits on the boards of several educational, cultural, charitable and civic organizations including Vice Chair of the Board of Directors' Committee of Community & Friends for the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and the YouthBuild USA Advisory Board. She is also honorary chair of the DC Promise Neighborhood Initiative (DCPNI). DCPNI is one of 57 Promise Neighborhoods across the United States selected by the Department of Education to develop a cradle to career pipeline for children to ensure that they obtain a quality education, graduate from college or a vocational school, and grow up to have successful careers and communities.

Mrs. Powell was a member of President Barack Obama's Board of Advisors on Historically Black Colleges and Universities from 2010 to 2012 and served as the chairman of the National Council of the Best Friends Foundation from 1989 to 2000. She has also chaired the advisory board for Civic Change, Inc.

Mrs. Powell is the recipient of an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Emerson College, an Honorary Doctor of Humanities from Shenandoah University and the Civic Change Award from the Pew Partnership for Civic Change. She has also been honored by *Washingtonian* magazine as Washingtonian of the Year and is the recipient of the Leadership Award from the Women's Center in Virginia, the Edward A. Bouchet Legacy Award from Howard University and a 2009 Inspire Award Honoree by *AARP The Magazine*. Mrs. Powell is the author of two children's books, *My Little Wagon* and *America's Promise*, which were published in 2003 with great success.

Mrs. Powell was born and raised in Birmingham, Alabama. She graduated from Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, and went on to study speech pathology and audiology at Emerson College in Boston. She worked as the staff audiologist for the Boston Guild for the Hard of Hearing.

Alma and Colin Powell were married in 1962. Mrs. Powell spent the next 33 years raising a family and accompanying her husband on his various military assignments in the United States and overseas. While her husband was stationed at the Pentagon, she served as the Army liaison to the National Red Cross as part of a team of volunteer consultants from the military services. During Gen. Powell's tenure as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, she was the Advisor to the Red Cross of the Military District of Washington. Most recently, during her husband's tenure as the 65th Secretary of State, Mrs. Powell served as the honorary president of the Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide. She also sat on the advisory board of the Hospitality and Information Service and was an honorary member of the Department of State Fine Arts Committee.

Craig McClay, Youth Engagement Specialist, Center for Promise



J. Craig McClay serves as the Youth Engagement Specialist at America's Promise. McClay, a native of Baton Rouge, LA moved to Boston, MA as a teenager in the late 1980's, a time when inner city neighborhoods were plagued with crime and violence. New to Boston, Craig began working with other young people on a range of social justice issues including, but not limited to job creation, fair housing, quality education, public health and safety. After experiencing and witnessing the power of full youth engagement, he was a believer.

For more than 25 years he has engaged, recruited, trained, hired, organized, mobilized, supervised, advised, mentored, and supported thousands of young people as they developed into dynamic leaders at home, school and beyond.

As a life-long student in the art and science of group facilitation, Craig's calling to work for social justice has fueled his drive to create environments that engage and connect passionate people around opportunities to share dreams and celebrate diversity, while aligning values with resources before acting together to problem solve and create mutually symbiotic alliances that foster pathways to happier and healthier life outcomes. Twitter: [@CraigMcClay](https://twitter.com/CraigMcClay)

Stefanie Cruz, Senior Digital Director, America's Promise



With more than 10 years' experience in digital media, **Stefanie Cruz** is our Director of Digital Strategy. As a member of our Communications & Knowledge Management team, she is responsible for all digital, social media and web properties for America's Promise Alliance.

A native New Yorker, Stefanie joins us from AARP, where she launched a national digital campaign on behalf of AARP and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation on the future of nursing. Prior to her work at AARP, she was Director of Digital Media for U.S. Rep. Sander Levin, wherein she built online communities to advance the Congressman's agenda, which resulted in exponential growth in email subscribers, and won Rep. Levin's office the 2011 and 2013 Congressional Management Foundation's Gold Mouse Award, which honors the best websites and social media profiles on Capitol Hill.

Previously, at Sister to Sister/Hermana a Hermana, Stefanie created and implemented youth development programs for girls and women ages 13 to 21 in the Columbia Heights area of Washington, DC. The program exposed participants to art and technology through visual arts and digital media, while promoting self-expression and peer education.

Stefanie is a graduate of Pepperdine University, where she earned her B.A. in Political Science and Sociology, and studied abroad in South Africa and Hong Kong. Most recently, she received her Project Management Certification from the Rutgers School of Business.

Youth Leadership

America's Promise Alliance promotes youth engagement as part of our GradNation campaign by encouraging and supporting our networks and partners to involve young people in community change, and sharing local stories of youth-led action with a national audience to build broader support. America's Promise models youth involvement by having two youth leaders on both our Board of Directors and Alliance Trustees. Each youth is a full voting member of the leadership body and plays a valuable role in the strategic direction of the organization.



Ti'Andre Bellinger, 18

Board of Directors (2014-2016)

Hometown: Miami, FL

Miami Jackson High School (2015)

Alliance Connection: After School All-Stars

Born and raised in Miami, Florida, Ti'Andre has been an example for years of how to serve the community. While fulfilling the roles of full-time student in Miami, FL at Miami Jackson Senior High School, Ti'Andre also serves on the Miami-Dade County Youth Commission as a Youth Commissioner. While interning at the Miami-Dade County Commissioner's Office of Com. Barbara Jordan, Ti'Andre flew to DC to represent After-School All-Stars at the National Summer Learning Day as a guest speaker and met Michelle Obama. He was involved in various high school programs, including serving as the Lieutenant for the City of Miami Police Explorers, Sergeant First Class in JROTC, and won Student of the Year for the City of Miami. Recently, Ti'Andre received the George Kilpatrick Community Service Award given out in Miami, FL. Ti'Andre is a recent high school graduate and aspires to become a police officer, a prosecutor, or President of the United States. Ti'Andre strongly believes that "Our Voices Matter."



Zartashia Javid, 20

Alliance Trustees (2015-2017)

Hometown: Little Rock, AR

Arkansas School of Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts (2012); University of Arkansas at Little Rock (anticipated 2016)

Alliance Connection: AVID

For many years, Zartashia has had a passion for education policy and reform. She is from Little Rock, Arkansas and works directly with students in the urban district where she lives as an AVID tutor. She has personally helped students graduate high school who were once far behind in their courses. Zartashia served as an AMERCORPS VISTA during summer 2014 working as a STEM programmer for homeless youth in Little Rock. Furthermore, she holds various leadership positions at her school, including student government. She has also received a research grant from NASA through the Arkansas Space Grant Consortium to study effective

STEM education methods. In addition, she likes to spend her time competing for her universities Model Arab League team. She has won several awards competing and writing legislation for social issues such as education. Zartashia is now a senior at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock and hopes to continue working in the education sector.

Ola Ojewumi, 24



Alliance Trustees (2014-2016)

Hometown: Washington, DC

High Point High School (2008); University of Maryland, College Park (2012)

Alliance Connection: Building a GradNation Summit

Ola Ojewumi is an activist, journalist, and a community organizer based in Washington, DC. She has founded two nonprofits: Sacred Hearts Children's Transplant Foundation and the Project ASCEND College Scholarship Program, projects which she initiated after receiving a heart and kidney transplant. Thus far, the White House, MTV, Glamour magazine, Intel, Clinton Global Initiative, Essence magazine and the Huffington Post have praised her initiatives. Additionally, Glamour Magazine has named Ola among the top 10 most influential college women in the United States. Ola holds a strong passion for writing and speaking. The White House, Marie Claire Magazine's online publication, and the American Association of University Women have published her writings. She has held internships in the White House, the office of Democratic Leader/Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic National Committee (DNC/Democratic Party) headquarters, and Congressman Albert R. Wynn's Congressional Office. Additionally, she has served as Public Policy and International Affairs Fellow at the University of California, Berkeley and a DNC Hope Fellow. She has also served on the White House African American Kitchen Cabinet on Disability and as an executive board member on President Barack Obama's Maryland chapter of Organizing for America.

Stephanie Watkins-Cruz, 21



Board of Directors (2015-2017)

Hometown: Charlotte, NC

Northwest School of the Arts (2011); University of North Carolina at Asheville (2015)

Alliance Connection: Asheville, NC GradNation Community Summit

A native of Charlotte, North Carolina, Stephanie Watkins-Cruz has spent the past few years dedicating her time and energy to community service. In college, she was an active member and leader in organizations such as the Black Student Association, an organization highly active and dedicated to service and social justice as well as She's the First, a non-profit organization dedicated to raising money for girls' education in low income countries. She also served as a tutor at the I Have a Dream/Urban Mentoring Academy of Asheville for youth in low-income areas. Academically, her interest in public service was cultivated through research projects such as the State of Black Asheville, Homelessness in the United States, and a course on social welfare. Her several leadership roles mixed with her passion that stems from personal experience with hardship is what inspires her path as a public servant. She recently graduated with distinction from UNC Asheville in May 2015, and was awarded the William & Ida Friday Public Service Award and the Gene Rainey Community Service award, among several others honors and commendations. She will begin her 1st year of graduate school in the Masters of Public Administration program at UNC Chapel Hill this fall.

You can find the full report, videos and graphics on www.gradnation.org/dontquit as of September 16, 2015. Please join the conversation by using the hashtag #NotDropouts.

