



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Constituent Spotlight: Crystal Granderson-Reid and Janai Nelson

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Crystal Granderson-Reid and Janai Nelson founded BE FREE GLOBAL in early 2008 due to their longstanding belief that providing a small seed of financial support to community-based efforts is one of the most effective means of creating positive social change for children. In keeping with their global outlook, Crystal and Janai wanted to ensure that children around the world would benefit from BE FREE GLOBAL's work, and sought to generate a global conversation to bring people together around service and solutions.

Janai and Crystal met serendipitously on a brownstone block in the historic district of Prospect Lefferts Gardens, where they both live with their families. Janai, a mother of two, is a legal scholar and educator committed to social justice issues. Crystal, a mother of three girls, is a freelance commercial model and aspiring writer. In 2008 they formalized BE FREE GLOBAL, a not-for-profit corporation that provides micro-grants to creative and innovative children's projects worldwide.

This was not their first venture as partners. In 2003 Crystal and Janai started a company named Brownstone Babies LLC (BBLLC) to design children's products. Their lead product is Brownstone Buddies, a multi-cultural doll collection inspired by the diversity of their Brooklyn neighborhood. A percentage of the proceeds from the sales of Brownstone Buddies helps fund BE FREE GLOBAL's initiatives. Janai and Crystal's bond as friends, neighbors, business partners, and philanthropists stems from their deep passion for children, education, and world culture.