

MEDIA EDUCATION
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TRANSCRIPT



Challenging media

BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

CHILDREN, MEDIA & VIOLENT TIMES

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Children, Media & Violent Times

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[Music: Alan Jackson] *Where were you when the world stopped turning that September day? Were you in the yard with your wife and children or working on some stage in LA? Did you stand there in shock at the site of that lax move rising against that blue sky? Did you shout out in anger and fear for your neighbor or did you just sit down and cry?*

ROBERT JENSEN: There was a very popular country song after 9/11 called "Where Were You?"

[Music: Alan Jackson] *I am just a singer of simple songs, I'm not a real political man. I watch CNN and I'm not sure I can tell you the difference in Iraq and Iran.*

ROBERT JENSEN: What lyrics like that reveal is that the American people tend to think that the rest of the world is just too complicated for them to understand and that's very much in the interest of powerful people to continue that elite, because if the world is too complex than people are easily lead to accept a big story about good and evil, a simple story to take that complexity and make it understandable.

[Music: Alan Jackson] *I'm just a singer of simple songs, I'm not a real political man. I watch CNN but I'm not sure I can tell you the difference in Iraq and Iran.*

[ABC News] *The President has taken to referring that the enemy in this war as the Evil Doers. It captures the essence of how most of us feel about them, and nicely finesses the question of who they actually are. [George Bush] We're too great a nation, to allow the evil-doers to affect our soul and our spirit.*

[ABC News]

-- (Interviewer) *Is President Bush wrong to refer to these people as the evil ones?*

-- *I don't think he is because I think that by doing this it takes the use of the term evil out of the comic book and into reality.*

-- (Interviewer) *Do the events of September 11 make it easier for us as a society now to deal with the notion of evil?*

-- *I think it does and that this is a teachable moment, this is an opportunity to teach children about right and wrong and good and evil.*

BETTY BURKES: Since September 11, the rhetoric of good and evil has been used to pump up support for US policies and patriotic fervor and preparing the American people for the US government to invade Iraq and Afghanistan.

[Unidentified voice over] *There comes a defining moment in the life of a nation that cries out for support, with hope towards tomorrow it is our traditions and values that are the flames that will burn forever in this nations soul. American...*

[Classroom students] *I pledge allegiance to the flag of United States of America and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.*

BRIAN WRIGHT: Following the events of September 11, there was a great awakening in the way of patriotism, it was very powerful and rang true for even my students.

What do you think of American is, Claire, what do you think that means?

[Student] *Someone who's born in America, lives in America and is loyal to America.*

[Brian] *That's a very interesting word, what do you think being loyal, what does that mean?*

[Student] *Trusting America, if someone says something bad about it, say we don't like that and that's not very nice.*

[Student] *It means if somebody says something bad don't believe it because that's not true, America's very good.*

[Student] *America believes in itself.*

NANCY CARLSSON-PAIGE: The problem with patriotism is that it can get used to pressure people or to move people in a direction of feeling like you have to stand behind what your country does or what your government does no matter what. Its sort of like you're with us or your against us.

[TV Interview Colin Powell] *Nations around the world know that this is the time to choose, you're either for freedom or you're for terrorism.*

[TV World Wrestling Federation] *Just like our armed forces in the Middle East fighting took it Saddam Hussein. Hulk Hogan is gonna come down here in front of hundreds of people...*

[Bush speech] *The way you fight evil is with millions of acts of good.*

ROBIN ANDERSEN: Harold Laswell, writing about WWI propaganda, pointed out that if you really want to persuade a population that the enemy is evil, don't put any complicated international economic relations, don't put the failed diplomacy, you don't understand history, you don't emulate with other cultures.

ROBERT JENSEN: For instance we know that the CIA had a direct role in helping train, fund and support, the radical fundamentalist Islamic terrorist groups that were at work in Afghanistan in the 1980's when the goal was to undermine

the Soviet Union. Well that kind of history is again crucial if the American public is going to understand the forces at work in the Middle East and the Muslim world more generally.

[FOX News] *The new book revealed shocking details about the CIA secret operation to arm the Afghan Mujehadin against the Soviet invasion in the 1980's. But the aftermath of the largest secret war in US history, may have lead to the rise of Osama Bin Laden, and Al Qaeda.*

ROBERT JENSEN: In the run up to the Iraq war there was one fundamental question. What is really motivating the Bush administration's desire to go to war with Iraq. That was the fundamental question what's this war about?

[Bush speech] *If Saddam Hussein does not fully disarm for the safety of our people, and for the peace of the world we will lead a coalition to disarm him.*

[CNN News] *Earlier protests such as New York's showing of more than a hundred thousand people who oppose the war with Iraq, French protesters made clear that they support their government's opposition to an American invasion of Iraq and a half million British protesters targeted Prime Minister Tony Blair for his backing of President Bush.*

[TV: The Daily Show] *Traditional allies like France and Germany have balked at the prospect of war, much of the world remains unconvinced. Clearly, its time for President Bush to make his most charismatic, forceful case yet, sir? [President Bush] Ah Saddam Hussein is a... gassed his own people, Saddam Hussein has got weapons of mass destruction, Saddam Hussein has made uh... has defied the United Nations, Saddam Hussein has a providing links to terrorist, Saddam Hussein is a threat to America and we will deal with him. [John Stewart] Ok sold.*

ROBIN ANDERSEN: The problem with the good versus evil dichotomy is that it loses all of the historical background.

ROBERT JENSEN: Throughout the 1980's the government of Saddam Hussein was supported by the United States in Iraq's war against Iran. We know that some of the very weapons that we are now told we should fear came from the US and Europe.

[TV Azteca (Mexico)] *On December 20, 1983 Rumsfeld, who had been the Defense Secretary for President Ford, was now traveling to Baghdad as a personal envoy for Reagan.*

ROBIN ANDERSEN: They supply him with the weapons, they supplied him with dual fuel cells, which could lead to the use of nuclear weapons, they supply him

the Sarin and the other kinds of chemical components, of actually what he actually did use to, in the war between Iraq and Iran.

ROBERT JENSEN: The United States provided critical diplomatic support for Iraq at the time that it used chemical weapons against its own citizens and Halabja in 1988.

[TV Azteca (Mexico)] Neither the United States nor the United Nations reacted to Hussein's crime. On the contrary the US sold Iraq helicopters in exchange for intelligence about Iran

ROBIN ANDERSEN: If we're going to demonize somebody for those kinds of actions the United States would also have to be put within that category as well.

BETTY BURKES: The logic of good and evil is seductive because it makes what it complicated appear simple. We are comforted by the notion that we are good and then we relinquish our authority to those in power who promise to protect us from what is evil. The media plays a crucial role in both serving us misinformation and perpetuating this simplistic logic in its news reports, which are often indistinguishable from entertainment.

[TV ad]

The evil is rising...

-- There is no way I'm going down there...

The terror is spreading and now chance for survival is running out.

NANCY CARLSSON-PAIGE: It's a dichotomist way of viewing the world that is really a dominant perspective in the US that saturates all of the media for every age group and it gets people to think that there is an evil Other out there that you have to exterminate.

DIANE LEVIN: The dichotomy between good and evil is a very popular theme in entertainment media, since good guys are always fighting with evil; it gives filmmakers a great excuse to use violence. There are good guys who are all good, they can do whatever they want because they are all good, including really awful things.

[Movie: Death Before Dishonor] Stop it, I don't know where are your people, (shooting) Stop it!

-- Where's my men, Ahmed?

NANCY CARLSSON-PAIGE: From very early on in children's programming, children are encouraged to separate and be alienated from this Other. And in fact encouraged to hate the Other through a series of messages that polarize the world into good and bad and in order to solve your problems with the enemies you have to fight with them and the enemy is always depicted in some kind of

dehumanized way. Often the faces are covered, the voices are distorted or there are accents, foreign accents.

[Unlabeled movie clip] *How many freedom fighters you grieve now Marine!*

NANCY CARLSSON-PAIGE: Its very clear that there's an image of the Other that's not the white European and often male image of the good guy that children are socialized into identifying with in the United States. If you analyze Hollywood movies its always the American person who's the central character. The person in being a good guy goes into another country and does something violent, its described in terms of having to do it, or helping the people there are rescuing the people there, so that people can keep on feeling we're a good country and we're good people.

[Movie: The Transporter] *There are four hundred people dying in a container on a ship. My father, my sisters, the ship arrives today, they will make my father a slave. You were a soldier, your job was to save people.*

DIANE LEVIN: Children's political ideology and ideas begin at a very early age, their kind of, the foundations are being laid. We might no recognize it as being ideology or political but it is. For many children there is this seamless luring of them into violence, first from seeing it on the screen, playing with the toys, and then having the video games.

[TV ad: video game] *Ever wonder what it's like to be 007? Be Bond. Coming this fall to a game platform near you.*

[Student] *This is like a grenade launcher and it's in a video game that I have.*

[Teacher] *This grenade launcher is in your video game?*

[Student] *Uh huh.*

[Teacher] *And what's your video game about?*

[Student] *James Bond. Its about, like you try to kill people and they have movies about it too.*

[Teacher] *And why are you trying to kill people in video games.*

[Student] *Because they're bad.*

NANCY CARLSSON-PAIGE: Not only are they viewing violence often but they're in an isolated relationship to their computer and what are they not learning? They're not learning all of the skills and awareness, for problem solving, communication. Working things out with other kids, that would come naturally through play experiences where other children were present.

[TV ad: WWE video game] *As darkness envelopes the land, the night of reckoning is upon us. For to be a ruler, a worrier must be sworn into a battle without mercy. A life without remorse...Deliver us from evil.*

DIANE LEVIN: We have some ideas about how children learn the lessons from media violence. The degree of effect seems to increase the more they then can act out the actions that they've seen, so when we give children toys to act out what they've seen, that's going to increase the lessons that they're learning. When we give them video games where they're actually participating and it can seem very real it's going to even increase the affect more. When they kind of were pretending to hurt over and over and over again and scenes of blood over and over and over again and it looks like a real person, you hear real world sounds, what ends up happening is after a while you just get hardened to all the impact and you just focus on getting him the quickest you can, and trying to plug into the program someone else has developed.

By desensitizing us to how other people get hurt when we use our violence, by making it all seem it's fun and exciting and what we do to have a good time, and by precluding all the other things we can do that help us feel powerful when we don't use violence. Then we're ending up creating a world where violence is going to become more and more the way people solve their problems.

MERRIE NAJIMY: I think another way that media shapes children's thinking is that war often is a part of children's play experience.

BETTY BURKES: Many of the interactive war games are about past wars. These games also have a way of blurring reality so that the games are promoted as if they are telling the true story, when in fact they are made up stories promoted and presented as facts.

[Newscaster] Twelve years ago today American troops were in the Persian Gulf, a little more than halfway through Operation Desert Storm. Now another war with Iraq is looming and for the developers at one of the most popular video games on the market these days, the timing could not be much better.

[NBC News] It's one of the biggest selling computer games of the year. More than a million copies sold worldwide in just three months. The player becomes part of a Special Forces team behind enemy lines. The enemy is Iraq.

[Video Game] The fortress is protected from air attack by several sand dunes. Destroy them to allow the air-strike to proceed. Eliminating General Aziz would essentially all serious Iraqi resistance.

[NBC News] Developers are getting instructions from Gulf War Veterans to make their work as realistic as possible.

BETTY BURKES: In their game play, children utilize high-tech weapons, they instigate massive virtual killings, and at the same time they associate this behavior with patriotism.

[Unlabeled media] Now official word that Saddam will pull back. Repeat, Saddam Hussein has agreed to withdraw from Kuwait.

BETTY BURKES: These games have a way of blurring the truth. Games are promoted as if they are real.

[Video Game] *Headline news: Iraq has surrendered unconditionally within the last hour.*

BETTY BURKES: Killings are rewarded and appreciated.

[Video Game] *My country men and I are eternally grateful to the allied powers to chasing out these invaders and retaining our nation's freedom."*

ROBIN ANDERSEN: What we have is a very close, a close unity between the world of entertainment and politics. Most notably after September 11 there were meetings between the executive branch and the entertainment industry with Hollywood actually saying, how can we help promote the war on terrorism? What can we do for you?

[CNN News] *Both sides are saying Hollywood is not starting a propaganda war, so exactly what is it doing? Joining me is Los Angeles Times political reporter, Ron Brownstein. Ron, what is this that they did? [Brownstein] That actually, Greta was the second meeting they've held between administration officials and Hollywood, and this one was a much higher level gathering in both sides, both in the creative and the studio side and also Carl Rove representing the President. Basically what they're looking for ways to do is for Hollywood to plug into the war effort.*

[Movie preview: Black Hawk Down] Since 9/11 we've gone high-tech over the water, so the dope runners have gone low. The United States does not negotiate with hostage takers.

ROBIN ANDERSEN: And really Jerry Bruckheimer was also instrumental there. They put the movie *Black Hawk Down* further in production, or accelerated its production so that it could be released sooner. And it's interesting that Bush and the White House had a showing of *Black Hawk Down* before the movie was released.

[Movie: Black Hawk Down] *In Somalia, killing is negotiation. Do you really think if you get General Adid, we will simply put down our weapons and adopt American democracy? There will always be killing, you see? This is how things are in our world.*

[Video Game: Black Hawk Down] *Somalia is reeling from years of famine and constant fighting between clans. 300,000 are reported dead. There is no central*

government. The US army's 10th mountain division deploys to the region as part of a multinational peacekeeping force.

BETTY BURKES: Some video games have gone to great extremes to rewrite and retell history by packaging news footage and history lessons. In these cases, children are taught explicitly that the US military uses violence as part of their role as a benevolent peacekeeper. Killing innocent civilians has then become normalized and is part of the entertainment.

[Video Game] *This force is comprised of US army rangers and operators from the first special forces operational detachment, Delta.*

BETTY BURKES: I am very concerned about the close ties between the war game industry and the US military, and the implications of the collusion.

[FOX News] *Training our soldiers for combat using virtual video to simulate the reality of war. An exhibit of simulated training technology is attracting military types from around the world, and one of those types is...*

LT. COLONEL DAVE GROSSMAN: You only need three things to kill: you need the weapon, the skill, and the will to kill. The videogames arguably can provide two out of three: the will (the desire, the reflex), and the skill. There is a reason why every law enforcement agency and every military organization practices on man-shaped silhouettes and realistic depictions of human beings, because we had to create a killing simulator. Now we've provided that same mechanism to the kids.

[ABC News] *At issue is a free videogame designed by the army for teenagers and available to all on the Internet. Almost a million people have it already. The game is a recruiting tool that teaches young people how to be snipers. [Video Game] Soldier, here's your ammunition. [Reporter] So far, the army stands behind the game. [Unidentified Voice] The game's task is to qualify with the M16 A-2 rifle. [Reporter] Each player must learn to fire army-issued machine guns and rifles before the serious play begins. The real action comes in the second half of the game--looking down the barrel of the gun. It is so realistic, the screen moves if the digital sniper breathes. There are other concerns. The game is free. Anyone can download it from the Internet. And the game is cool because it's real training from real soldiers. Family advocates say that in the hands of young teens, the game is dangerous. The army admits it's targeting teens.*

ROBIN ANDERSEN: And to some of the most, impressionable eyes of children who are invited to watch the programs and buy the products and buy the videogames. And of course this creates sort of an underlying atmosphere that it learns to accept militarism as a way of life, as fun entertainment, and as a graphic style. The problem is there are no consequences to a Nintendo war.

There aren't people on the other side of the video screen who are getting killed as a consequence of this kind of fun and games. So when you turn war into a game, you lose what the basic essence of war is, and that really is death.

ELI NEWBERGER: When my grandson picks up a magazine and says, "Here's a terrorist!" and the person that he's pointing to on the cover of the magazine, as the title makes clear, is a refugee. He's four years old. He's only been exposed to what he's seen on television, what he's heard on the radio, what he hears in the chat with other kids.

[Grandson] Terrorism means where the guns are.

DIANE LEVIN: The media plays a big role in how children end up understanding the world and how it works. As children are seeing that it's all good and all bad, then they hear about the war and the terrorism, and what they're hearing is a world that sounds very much like the world that they've heard on entertainment media, that there are good guys, *us*, the Americans, and there's bad guys, *them*, Bin Laden and his people, and the Taliban and the Afghans.

NANCY CARLSSON-PAIGE: When children are socialized into thinking of themselves as good and someone else they're in conflict with as evil and somewhat dehumanized, it's much easier than to align with a political perspective where you're dropping bombs on that evil enemy.

[ABC News] Judging from conversations across the country today, many people are angry and unwilling to wait long for an American retaliation. [Interview] Revenge. I wanna get even. [Interview] They can't push us around like this. We're the number one nation and let's do something about it. [Interview] The enemy has got to be eradicated. You cannot talk with the enemy. [Interview] I think we should bomb them back. I really do.

[Internet flash animation] Come Mr. Taliban, turn over Bin Laden. Colin Powell's gonna bomb his home. Come Mr. Taliban turn over Bin Laden. Daylight come and we drop these bombs."

[CNN News: Bush] There's an old poster out west and it said "WANTED: DEAD OR ALIVE."

[News: Bush] Freedom and fear, justice and cruelty have always been at war, and we know that God is not neutral between them.

ROBIN ANDERSEN: President Bush first going into Afghanistan pitted the world against a very simple binary of good and evil, because there are many sanctions that we have in our culture and society against killing, and when we go to war, what the government is doing is asking the population to put aside those sanctions against killing and allow their government essentially to do state

sanctioned killing. This is necessary to construct the enemy as something horribly vile and inherently evil.

[VH1 Military Diaries] *Now our newest enemy is terrorist. I'll tell you about the terrorist leader and the terrorist themselves. He's a wild animal standing on his hind legs and there's no negotiating with him. The only thing you can do is kill him.*

MERRIE NAJIMY: I'm seeing the children mimic what they're hearing in the media.

[Student] *They hate us.*

[Teacher] *Why do you think that might be?*

[Student] *Because we have freedom and we live lives that are nice. We don't cover our faces and they do. I think they want our lives to be the same as theirs.*

MERRIE NAJIMY: The media frames how children also think about conflict and war.

[VH1 Military Diaries] **[Soldier 1]** *I want to get a little bit of revenge back for what those guys did to us. [Soldier 2] What we all wanted to do was to come over here, load up some real ammo, and put an ass-whooping back on anybody else who had anything to do with that. [Soldier 3] And as far as all Americans that were killed September 11th, we are out here to deliver your justice*

[Student] *I'm not too sad right now because it's not too fair if they do something and we don't do anything because then we're going to have a lot of people being killed and they don't have anyone killed. So I'm not too sad that they are putting bombs there.*

MERRIE NAJIMY: What we see in the media is a very human side of our own suffering.

[CBS News] **[Young Woman]** *This is my father. His name is David... Ferrugio... and he wears a gold cross with a big letter 'D' on it...* **[Reporter]** *David Ferrugio?* **[Young Woman]** *David Ferrugio.*

MERRIE NAJIMY: We learn the names of the people who were killed; we learn about their families, we learned about the significance of their lives and what they've contributed to their community. We don't hear the humanizing side of the "other," the enemy, whoever we're in war with at the time.

[Merrie] *How might Afghani kids might be feeling in their times of trouble right now?*

[Student] *Probably feeling scared, but maybe a little less scared than us.*

[Merrie] *Why less?*

[Student] *Before we've been dropping bombs they went through some tough times, so they might be a little more used to it because I lived in a really really safe country and this happened, and I was like 'Oh my gosh.'*

[CBS News] [Reporter] *After a year we still don't have Osama bin Laden.*

[President Bush] *How do you know that? I don't know whether Osama bin Laden is dead or alive, I don't know that. He's not leading a lot of parades.*

[Reporter] *We haven't caught bin Laden So we're transferring the blame for 9/11 to Saddam Hussein. There are soldiers who think that's why they're fighting him. Hussein is a bad man who didn't have anything to do with 9/11.*

ROBERT JENSEN: We've got the villain Saddam Hussein, almost a villain out of central casting. One of the most brutal dictators left on the planet. In fact one of the last real totalitarian societies, and that was real. Saddam Hussein's regime was among the most brutal left on the planet. Then in this story you have the hero. The hero is the United States. The benevolent empire going forward to do good for the world. And the American military being the embodiment of that. The hero and the villain clash. And of course, the hero, not only because of the great power of the hero, but because of the inherent nobility of the hero's mission is going to triumph. And that triumph results in the liberation of the Iraqi people.

[CNN Report: President Bush] *My fellow citizens: At this hour, American and Coalition forces are in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq, to free its people, and to defend the world from grave danger.*

[TV: The Simpsons] *We are rubber you are glue. We are rubber, you are glue. It bounces off of us and sticks to you. It bounces off of us and sticks to you. Sound off 1-2. Sound off 3-4."*

[CNN News Press Conference: Gen. Tommy Franks] *This will be a campaign unlike any other in history. A campaign characterized by shock, by surprise, by flexibility, by the employment of precise munitions, on a scale never before seen, and by the application of overwhelming force.*

BERNARD WHITE: When these bombs go off and we see these, these, these flashing lights and the clouds of smoke go up. There are people on the other end of that. And they're, as a result of those bombs going off, they're dismembered people, they're children who have had their brains blown out, their limbs taken off. And that picture doesn't come over here.

[Spanish Channel News] *The result of the bombing show the precision bombs have not been precise. Despite the grandest claims of the opposite. The hospitals are full, and so are the morgues. In this war, children are merely called collateral damage.*

NANCY CARLSSON-PAIGE: There are horrendous civilian casualties that are reported in the international press, but are rarely reported in the US press.

BETTY BURKES: We don't have to see it so we don't get to experience our own humanity that's being wrecked by this war.

ELI NEWBERGER: Everything we know about the impacts of war on children it's plain from all of the information we have, children suffer substantially, not only to many of them who are witnessing deaths, lose people whom they depend on and whom they love, because these are the people close to them. But additionally, there are a set a psychological effects of children who witness serious violence.

[News Interview] I saw a child with his head cut off and another without arms.

ELI NEWBERGER: We tend not to think of course about the effects of war on the populations that are exposed to our soldiers, exposed to our bombs.

[CNN News] [US Soldiers in Iraq] Come out, come out. Come out, come out. Open the door, open the door. Get your hands up and come outside. Come outside. Everybody in the house needs to come outside. Keep going. Keep going. Clear the house now.

BETTY BURKES: It's ironic that we're using the excuse of Iraq having weapons of mass destruction to invade Iraq. Especially given the history of this country's use of weapons of mass destruction. And I'm thinking of the atomic weapons in Nagasaki and Hiroshima. The weapons used in the Gulf War by the US military, in Bosnia and now in Iraq.

[TV Azteca (Mexico) News] Human rights organizations denounce the Pentagon for using cluster bombs. The CBU-87 was first used in the Gulf War in 1991. It is over two meters long and contains 200 small bombs. After CBU-87 is dropped, it fragments and releases small bombs, each guided by a parachute.

BETTY BURKES: And these weapons aren't finished when they're dropped. It's not that they're dropped and it's over. The way they're constructed, the depleted Uranium, the cluster bombs that spread and proliferate are with those people for many, many, many generations to come.

[TV Azteca (Mexico) News] [Iraqi Woman] We are asking the world to help us. There are many unexploded bombs around and we are worried for our children.

ELI NEWBERGER: But everything we know about the impacts of war. That far more children than soldiers die and are wounded in war.

[TV Azteca (Mexico) News] In the Gulf War the US Air Force dropped on Iraq 940 thousand bombs containing depleted Uranium. And known sicknesses

appeared after the bombing. The cases of malformation and children diagnosed with cancer have multiplied five-fold.

BETTY BURKES: The danger of this simplistic thinking about good and evil is that in that process of punishing the evil, one *becomes* the evil that one deplors.

[ABC News] *The concept of evil is not uniquely Christian. Jacob Neusner teaches theology at Bard College. [Reporter] Do Christianity, Judaism, and Islam essentially define evil the same way? [Jacob Neusner] They reach the same conclusion. They tell different narratives to account for the world as they see it, but their narratives in each case produce the same judgment, which is that mass murder of men, women, and children is evil.*

[TV Azteca (Mexico) News] **[Child 1]** *It's a war without reason. It's a sin to kill children. They haven't done anything wrong. [Child 2] They feel sad that they might die, because a bomb might go off over there. [Child 3] I feel bad for them because some of them are dying and bombs are killing them and I don't agree with the bombs, of just dropping blindly because it kills innocent people.*

BETTY BURKES: Our children will inherit the world that we have created. And they will learn from the models that we have presented. Given the world that we've created, and given the ways in which we have modeled our way of being in the world, what is the future that we can expect for them?

[Poem read over credits] Today I submit my resignation from adulthood. I decided to go back to being six years old. Today, I want to believe that candies are better than money because you can eat them. I want to leave my home without worries, put down my guard, and not be afraid of the sound of silence. I want to go back home for a nice hot meal. I actually want something to eat. I want to hug my parents. I want to help them both. I'm not sure what has happened, but somewhere along, I matured. Someone forced me to grow up. Maybe I have learned too much. I have learned about pain, about sickness, about death. I've learned of a world where they know how to hurt and they do so. Today, I want to go back to knowing just about colors and fairy tales. It was then that I was truly happy. Today, I would like to believe that there's no weapon more powerful than a smile. I wish to go back to trusting grown ups. I want to believe that anything is possible, and go back to being six years old. Today I am eight years old.