

The Lie Heard 'Round the World: An Open Love Letter to the Youth of America; Also, A Call to Arms

by David Jamison

Wait! . . . There! *Didja hear it?* There it goes again. It's so . . . elusive. But I know it's there cuz I've been hearing it in my head since I gained consciousness. It's the dull hum, the numb droning, the constant chitter chatter in our ears about what it takes to live a happy life. And, it's funny, you know, cuz we really all really *knew* the truth right away. Remember firstly that warm mother's hug and the drug of a full tummy? Remember those times when we woke up and went to bed *knowing* what was right and wrong without anybody telling us?

And that was why it was so weird when we started getting *deprogrammed* like it was just . . . *alright*. And the sneers and knowing shrugs and petulant looks about what it takes to "survive in the world." Fucking *survive*, we were told. We started to be told that the game of life was about acquiring green, and status, and power; and was *not* about Earth's great gifts, and the ability to *dig existence*, and a full warm tummy! But I have great hope and empathy for today's youth as I stride boldly out of mine. Because I know what you go through, young America, and I know *you know* how fucked-up your situation is.

I have dedicated the rest of my life to informing the world about the truth of the civilization that we live in. As you know, this will never be a battle that will be "won," but is simply a life-path choice. At any rate, *I get what*

*you're trying to do. I know you're trying to communicate with us and I know we're not paying attention. Here's what's in store for you – you will soon be fed the lie that “kids don't know what they're talking about” – probably when you're around 18, and looking for a sign that that age is significant. Now, everyone won't buy it, and some will turn out to be good fathers, or cool teachers, or girl scout troop leaders. But many do choose to turn their back on what they know to be right and wrong and they buy into a new set of ideals that America places out precariously for you. Now these new ideals are tricky – because they can hurt people. But we are told that if we play by these new rules, we will subsequently be given lies that will excuse them. You must be especially careful about these lies because they come oftentimes perfumed and garlanded. It is at this point that I will dispense with the flowery metaphors and *get specific*:*

Boys: You will be told that you cannot learn anything from women. You will be told that they aren't as smart as you are and that they can't make rational logical decisions. Take a look around at the world and then tell me what rational logical thought has done for it. You will also be told that sexual objectification is okay in some situations, that your only real duty is to make money for your family, that it's okay to not have a particularly close relationship with your children, and to always choose Overtime when faced with the option of seeing your daughter's school play and working overtime. Look over these lies and recognize them as the ridiculous ruses that they are. Know that what you know NOW is the truth – that grown-ups lie because they're afraid of not looking as smart as other people. Those corporate CEOs? Those politicians squirming under the glare of scrutiny? They really do just want to be liked by popular kids;

or impress their old buddies with cool job titles. And the decisions they make? Best guesses given the circumstances, often motivated by the fear of reporting an earnings loss; almost never respectful or cooperative or life-affirming, the way your best kindergarten teacher taught you to be. Life tries to teach you to stop having integrity. That turns out to be one of the bigger disappointments.

Girls: First, you will be told that you are not beautiful. You will be told this again and again, despite all evidence to the contrary, despite any definition you give to the word “beauty.” The blows to your ego will assail you in a masterful set of military maneuvers: attaching your self-image to your self-esteem; imprinting you with a preternatural need for acceptance from men; alternately deifying and then lionizing you. Even more invidious, the barrage of negative self-esteem will leave you with the impression that your relative beauty is your most relevant quality! Second, although you will be told that your opinions *do* matter, you will be taught that they matter less. This idea will be slipped to you stealthily through a manipulative mélange of innuendo, propaganda, and demeaning cartoonish portrayals directly proportional to how many times Hilary Duff swoons in a “cute-boy” movie. You can’t win, unless you hold on to the Truth you know to be self-evident: You are the givers of life. You should be honored and respected at all times. Your input into the course of world events should not only be hoped-for, but demanded. But everywhere and often you will be pelted with stones, burned at stakes, taught to reshape the way you think, and any mention of you in history will be fleeting. Please recognize this pervasive fallacy for what it is. You have been told this to justify the kind of aggressive and insular culture people need for

empire. You have been told this so that the hunt for gold and land can go on without conscience. You have been told this so that you can waste away your life searching for the perfect man rather than trying to manifest the perfect realization of yourself, you beautiful beautiful human being. THAT is the truth.

White children: You will be told that you are the scourge of the earth, and that you are the only reason anyone ever does anything bad. You are told this despite the fact but principally because some people you have never met did a lot of things you are not responsible for. And though, sadly, many people are proud of this legacy and derive identity from these crimes, please dismiss this discourse as the putrescent claptrap that it is. There have always been good and bad people of all races. Furthermore, the idea that races even exist is perhaps the most sinister trap of all (gotcha!). This lie is told to us to divide us, diminish us, degrade us, on and on into infinity. You are not “white” – you are my brother and you are my sister. Or didn’t you know?

Black and brown children: You comprise the vast majority of people on this planet, and yet popular culture will reduce you to the lesser half of a racial binary comprised of you and white people. You will be essentialized into terms like “black” and “brown,” despite the multitudinous array of chromatic diversity we display. You will be sold a bill of goods regarding how you are supposed to act, the deficiencies to which you are heir, the standards for machismo or “sassiness” you are supposed to exude. Everyone and always people will expect you to “sense things” and “be intuitive” and “emote” – but to have little control over your passions. Get

used to it . . . and then reject it. Realize and know the fear and insecurity from which this tendency derives. Recognize that the worldwide campaign to demean you has only a tangential bearing on your actual potential. Call out this pusillanimous con game right there on the street, right amidst the pickpockets and carnival barkers. Shine a light on its deception, so that it knows its own shame. And then summarily reject any attempt to prevent you from realizing your own unique self. Because the world needs you.

Straight children: You will be told that you are the norm. There is little evidence to prove this except the vast amount of people willing to tell you that you are the norm. You will also be told that there are certain perks in life to which you have a special privilege, and that you have every right to maintain an air of contempt for those different from you because you “chose your affections right.” Furthermore, you will be encouraged to maintain this air even if every other area of your own life falls to shambles. You will be granted a false sense of superiority. You will be conditioned to have a false sense of superiority. You will be given sensibilities and aspirations upon which to hang a false sense of superiority. That sly normed elision will excuse your lapses into injustice and bullying. It is incumbent upon you to pluck this penury out of your soul before it becomes a part of you. I urge you to seize it *in vitro*, and then doggedly prosecute those who tried to infect you.

Gay children: There is no end to the parade of falsehoods, fabrications, half-truths, and halfwits that will attempt to explain to you who, what, and why you are. I will not even attempt to list any here, except to make note of the most insidious, that the sole determining factor of your identity is

who you have sex with, as if not having sex with a certain person will make you somehow “not gay.” Please reject this particular piece of poppycock at your first opportunity, and continue to be a stand for its eradication from the face of this planet. Take heart, of course, in the knowledge that those who would abuse you, slander you, and attempt to reforge you into their image are only the most desperate and doleful captives of their own fear, deserving only of your pity and, for only the very bravest among you, an example of how to love.

I see you out there trying, young America, banging your hands against our heads, telling us to wake up and stop feeding you *shit*. I hear you asking for our attention, and real values, and something other than “branding” to believe in. I get it, and believe me, it *will* be done—but I’m afraid you have a little task, too. You’ve got the last keys to the puzzle. You *must* break that wall of communication with your teacher, your parents, your youth-group leaders yearning to breathe free. Once you teach *us* to stop being so afraid of everybody all the time, then maybe we’ll have a chance. And I know what you’re thinking: *It’s impossible. The way I was taught to treat people is not the way I see people in real life doing it, so why should I care?* Except, no. You *must* care. Because the people who run the world are the purveyors of a shell game *that we don’t know how to stop playing*. I know because I was young, too, and on the verge of disillusionment, too.

So now, a call to arms! Maybe you’ve been told to aspire to purchasing a home in a gated community. Perhaps you were taught to wile away your hours in shopping malls and cineplexes. But inside, you really knew you were meant for more, didn’t you? You knew there had to be a better

purpose, no? Well, the secret's out – there *is* a job needed of you, and quick. Your duty: You must remember the lessons we taught you about how the world was supposed to be and re-teach them back to us. You've been training since you were in your crib. Remind us when we cheat on our taxes, or skimp a little off the top at the checkstand, or call people bad names who move too close. Start making us responsible for the people we've turned out to be. Cuz we were young, too. And had golden dreams about striding into our futures, too.

We are in desperate need, young America. We need a fresh battalion of soldiers to stand for what's right and to for-real never sell out EVER, even if you become the Next Big Meme, or the Real Housewives of Yourtown, U.S.A. storm the barricades of your best intentions. We need you to keep in our face, reminding us sometimes quietly cuz we're old and distracted, about what being a *hero* means to you. Demand our focus, and then proceed to teach us to start acting like grown-ups. And we'll sneer at you, and tell you you're too young to understand how the world works, and we'll give you every justification to simply accept our wisdom – but then just look at the food we're feeding you, or the air you have to breathe in, and then slowly look right up into our smiling mugs and deny the lie. You must keep banging our heads. And I know it stinks cuz we don't listen to you. And I know it sucks cuz you've already got enough to deal with with school and family and just making it from day to day. But, you see, we're counting on you, and the planet is counting on you. And, well, that's all there is to it. There is no time to lose. The need is dire and the odds are great. So quit your bitching and strap on your capes. It's time to go save this fucking world.