

MARIELI ROWE

INTERVIEWERS: DEE MORGENTHALER AND TESSA JOLLS

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(Quote)

I have an ultimate goal to take away the word media because reading and writing have always been a goal of all education - becoming literate. And what we are using today is just a new pen and a new book... It seems to me that if we could get to the point where the word "literacy" means all of the media, and it pervades our education, and a goal for a healthy society is to be literate and that includes all of the media -- then I think we won't need organizations, non-profits, volunteer organizations anymore - it will be part of the infrastructure and the system. That is the ultimate goal - to be obsolete.

BIOGRAPHY OF MARIELI ROWE

Marieli Rowe has been the executive director of the National Telemedia Council since 1978 and has turned a four-page newsletter into one of today's major print journals in media education: *The Journal of Media Literacy*. Additionally, Marieli has been involved in numerous projects such as developing Children's Film Festivals in the early 1960s as well as being a part of Governor Lee Dreyfus' early 1970s Cable Regulation Committee. From her involvement with this committee she was inspired to help develop the Sun Prairie's Children's Channel in the late 70s, which was dedicated to children's programming. As evidenced by her contributions to the world of media literacy over the past several decades, Marieli Rowe is devoted to educating children and parents to create a healthy society in the midst of the media.

INTERVIEW TEXT

Selected Questions:

How did you become involved in media education?

What were your goals in terms of media literacy?

What has surprised you about this journey?

Were there specific people that have inspired your work?

What did you see as some important milestones?

(Interview Begins)

DM: How did you become involved in media education?

MR: Of course there is never just a single answer. It is a bundle of circumstances that just seem to have happened.

I can think of three things that came together for me; one of them being that we had moved to Madison, Wisconsin and I had the early experience of meeting the founders of the American Council for Better Broadcasts - which is the oldest ongoing media literacy organization in the United States. That was the name of the council from 1953 to 1983. It was already built upon a previous, more local group that started in the mid 1930s in Madison as a committee of the local American Association of University Women (AAUW). They studied social issues and they decided that in the mid 30s, one of the things that educated women should learn about was radio.

So here in Madison, the founders Leslie Spence and Jessie McCause were the leading people in that effort. It started as a local idea and it spread all throughout Wisconsin. In 1953, the group was incorporated as a national organization, The American Council for Better Broadcasts - ACBB. In 1983 we changed the name to reflect the fact that by now there was more than just broadcasting because by this time cable had come in and the beginnings of satellite communications were there as well. Of course, we didn't have the internet at that point. But we wanted to get away from the word "broadcast" as being the only means of communication. So the group came up with an equally obtuse name: the National Telemedia Council (NTC). We had a subtitle that would identify what it meant which was "Look, Listen, Think, Respond". This was based on our annual evaluation project that we used to do called the Look Listen Project.

I don't have to go into all of the detail behind ACBB right now, but its philosophy evolved into media literacy.

DM: What brought you to Madison, Wisconsin?

MR: I came to Madison as a wife and mother. My husband had just finished his PhD in Natural Products Chemistry in Zurich, Switzerland so we had lived in Switzerland for four years. During this time we had added a second baby to our family. So, we had these two little boys aged three and four when we arrived in Madison, where I knew no one. I got involved with some of the wives of the Chemistry Department and the Forest Products Lab in Madison, and they were all busy, doing the Look Listen Project. At the same time I was also struggling with coming from no television in Switzerland to people watching Captain

Kangaroo and who knows what else.

I was faced with this new thing – television -- that the neighbor's children were watching and we didn't have a TV; we were going to do without. We just didn't think it was necessary, and in fact, we managed for a year, but it became impossible because the kids were watching at friends' houses where we couldn't control it, so we finally decided to get a TV. At least that way we would be able to manage so that our children would watch what we wanted and when we thought it was right. This was purely without any premeditation - it was merely parenting. I had this feeling that people were using TV to keep their children quiet, to keep them busy while they were cooking dinner. To me this was an uninvited babysitter. How could I have somebody walk into my house and have them take care of my children without knowing who they were and what they were doing?

So I really came through my own personal experience to some of these ideas. At the same time I was talking to all of these people who were doing the Look Listen Project. This was an evaluation of TV programs. Every year people were asked to evaluate and fill in a little sheet of paper that asked, "Did you rate this program excellent, good, fair, or poor?" Then, there was a space where you were supposed to say why you gave it that rating. It was a qualitative evaluation and the Council's main objective was not to tell anybody what's good or bad, but to try to get people to come to their own conclusions, to develop their own criteria for excellence and apply them. They had little study groups where the moms - who in those days weren't working - would have time to meet in each others' houses and talk about programs. So this all started from AAUW.

DM: Do you know if there were other organizations going on at the same time that were doing the same thing?

MR: I probably don't know everything that was going on, but I do know of an organization that existed at the same time called the National Association for Better Radio and Television in Los Angeles, headed by a man named Frank Orme. But his attitude was not at all like ours. Leslie Spence and Frank Orme tried to collaborate, but he was more interested in censoring and telling people what was good and bad and going after the broadcasters with boycotts, which was never the approach of the NTC. We were always based on a philosophy that did not tell anyone what was good and bad, but asked people to think about it, evaluate and come to their own conclusions. You can do that with grown-ups and with children, so we had lots of high school kids doing this project throughout the United States. Eventually it became too difficult to continue it because there were many more programs around with cable coming in.

Adding to the circumstances that led to my involvement in media literacy education was my own upbringing. My family was dedicated to deeply philosophical thinking. My parents were very educated people, and scientifically oriented. For example, you didn't just express or come to conclusions without a

basis for it – that is critical thinking. My dad was a neuropsychiatrist and my mother was a PhD in Zoology as well as a singer and a musician. I studied biology. We all had that science background, but with a great deal of awe and appreciation for the arts and nature. So I think I had the stuff inside of me that responded to media literacy.

This tells you something about the opportunities and joys of being a parent of young children. By your own living and your own example, your children absorb your joy and need for deeply thoughtful living and for studying. They see it. You don't even need to tell them. They see it. That's what is so beautiful about it.

DM: What were your goals in terms of media literacy?

My goals were on several levels and they evolved. I will freely admit that as I started this, I looked at TV - which was the main focus because I wasn't thinking about radio so much. Radio for me was listening to music, it wasn't so much about all of the other programs - but I looked at TV with an eye to what it was doing to my children – the media effects. I went through the process that so many people go through starting out with wanting to get rid of sex and violence or at least not wanting it in my household. So what are you going to do? Are you going to censor? Manage? Or are you going to let your children watch what they want to watch and talk about it? Not at ages three and four, I wasn't going to. But I realized eventually that you can get young children to think and to make choices by giving them limited choices. You say, "Do you want the blue cookie or do you want the red cookie?" And then they choose and you say, "Oh, you chose the red cookie, so why is that?" I could get them started to think and to become aware. You can actually start the critical thinking process at a very young age but it takes parental guidance. So my goals began on a personal level and eventually spread to a much broader stance - it went from media effects to media literacy.

It became a fascination and I began to realize that - not just for my own family - it was an incredibly important part of a healthy society in the midst of the media environment. We need to be educated about the media. This education is a process that needs to start as early as possible and it should be a lifelong process. One thing led to another and I became involved in the organization- it was my first "real job."

I was a very busy mom. So I said, "I don't think I have time for this project now, but if and when I do, it's got to be about children." Then I was invited to help plan the first ACBB Children's Film Festival, and so that became my first project. We did this Children's Film Festival in 1962 or 1963. The idea was that we were trying to prove that the broadcast industry's claim that they were airing all these cartoons and mediocre popular programs to children" because that was what children want," was flawed. That was the industry's ploy. We decided to show them that this was not true. We wanted to show that if you give children some really exciting, beautiful programs, they will want those just as much...maybe

even more. So we held this children's film festival at one of our local high schools where we showed films such as "Madeline," "The Red Balloon," "Harold and the Purple Crayon," "White Mane," and many other famous children's films. It was a three-day event to which we invited not only the children (and their families), but also an entire audience of specially chosen adults who sat up in the balcony - broadcasters, psychologists, teachers, FCC commissioners, journalists and other professionals. We wanted them to watch the children watch these programs. It was a big success and that was one of our big claims to fame back in the early 60s.

Eventually my goals broadened and I became very aware that there was a lot more to this than just on a personal level.

My goal today - and really always has been - is that we need to have media literacy throughout our society. I have an ultimate goal to take away the word 'media' because reading and writing have always been a goal of all education - becoming literate. And what we are using today is just a new pen and a new book. It's the same process. There is more to learn because there are more issues involved - more complex factors such as who's paying for it and who's behind it, how is it represented and whose choice is it and all of those basic criteria that we use when teaching kids about the media - but essentially we are using a new pen, aren't we?

It seems to me that if we could get to the point where the word "literacy" means all of the media, and it pervades our education, and a goal for a healthy society is to be literate and that includes all of the media then I think they won't need organizations, non-profits, volunteer organizations anymore - it will be part of the infrastructure and the system. That is the ultimate goal - to be obsolete.

A wonderful example of the diversity of that "new pen," the pervasiveness of "media", and their reach into our everyday lives was invented by our Canadian friend Barry Duncan . When Barry was teaching high school he used to send his students to the local mall and he called that event a "Mall Crawl," and the kids were supposed to go to the mall and observe how things "worked" in the mall - where they put merchandise, what soothing music they have in there, and that it is really hard to find a clock so that you lose yourself in there. He is the one who invented the "Mall Crawl." We once did such a 'Mall Crawl' at one of our conferences in Madison. Barry Duncan was our major speaker and he sent the whole audience out up and down the main street in Madison for about an hour and a half to bring something back that showed an illustration about media literacy. An unforgettable experience!!

DM: So, what has surprised you about this journey?

MR: It is full of surprises. But it wasn't so much a surprise as it was becoming informed as each new discovery was found. For example, some surprises were

learning about the various agendas, the politics and the lack of awareness. One of the things that really keeps surprising me is the resistance that comes from education. That always goes back to the argument between media effects versus media education. And the fact that people don't seem to be able to differentiate what are media effects and what is media education. So you have people doing exercises in the classroom that are really not media education – they address media effects.

This points to the difficulties encountered in teaching the critical thinking skills that are basic to media literacy education. I was reading in the "Media L" a discussion by Faith Rogow in regards to Boy Scout Merit Badges. Having three boys myself, I got involved with Boy Scout Merit Badges. I had the Madison Scout group interested in doing a merit badge in media literacy, so we were doing that for awhile but when my kids grew up it was gone. We did it by using media production and we found the American Family Insurance people who had a studio and were willing to help us teach scouts how to produce a program. That became a scout activity, although it was only temporary, as the insurance people pulled out eventually. Now, apparently, someone has come up again with a media literacy merit badge in the scouts, and again they do not understand what is needed. Faith was saying that this is not media literacy; it's media effects. It pervades. There is a major gap here in the need to teach the teachers. So those are the things that keep on happening. It doesn't surprise me anymore because I am so used to it.

DM: What do you think about the fact that people are creating so much media on the internet and on their personal computers?

MR: I will go back to my earlier thought, which was that you didn't have to produce the stuff to learn about it. You could just sit there and not necessarily have to know how to wield a camera - and you know in those early days the studio cameras were huge, so I was thinking, "Is this really necessary to become media literate?" But I came to realize that just as in print literacy you can't possibly be a good evaluator until you have tried writing, so that's when I began to realize that yes, there is more to it; you have to try it yourself. Our "KIDS-4" Children's Cable Channel was an early illustration of this powerful tool. The internet and new media have made the process of production, interaction, creation, re-mixing and a host of other previously impractical or impossible activities possible, indeed easy, and in fact crucial. It has fundamentally and irreversibly changed everything.

DM: Were there specific people that have inspired your work?

MR: Some inspiring people I have met along the years are most definitely the pioneers of ACBB - Leslie Spence and Jessie McCause. The two of them started the ACBB and worked together as teachers and innovators that started this whole effort. They taught me so much, but most importantly they taught me the

difference between media effects and media literacy. They started that whole concept of evaluation when they did the first qualitative evaluation project in the U.S. It certainly was the single most innovative thing I had ever heard of and at its peak we had 10,000 nationwide people involved.

Leslie Spence was incredibly influential in my life. To give a bit of a background, Leslie Spence was a PhD and one of those women who should have been a professor but in those days, women with PhDs got to be high school teachers. She never married but dedicated her life, money and everything to this cause and organization. Jessie McCause was the wife of a professor and the daughter of the president of the University of Missouri; she had two children of her own. These people were just incredibly inspiring folks who never wavered from their basic philosophy and vision.

I hesitate to try naming the many many incredible innovators, pioneering educators and truly exciting people who have inspired me along the way...they have become my friends as well, and the list is long and still growing, as we move so rapidly into new territories!...how can I do justice to them all without omitting!

TJ: What do you see as some important milestones?

MR: It starts out with the fact that the realization of so much of what ended up being my passion in this was really already instilled in me from childhood. I had two parents who were so incredibly reflective, globally oriented and open to the positive things that anyone and everyone had to say. That doesn't mean that they didn't have opinions. We were living through the Nazi years in Europe, so some if it was pretty dark, but I think I grew up in a very rich environment where I had the ability to be passionate. It was a wonderful gift from my parents and probably their parents before them.

Anyway, my interest in media didn't really start until Jack and I came back to the United States after having lived in Switzerland, where we had two preschoolers. Until then, we had not even become aware of the existence of such a thing as media, and certainly not as something that touched our lives. But I began to think of it because I had those children. Now for myself personally, I hadn't studied media studies, journalism or anything that could've pointed me in that direction. In fact, I remember meeting a woman once when I was a child in Switzerland who had said she was a journalist. She looked and sounded very autocratic and strange and I wondered what on earth kind of a weird creature a journalist would be. Anyway, I was a biology major and that is science and nature. I was very interested in ecology. As I was studying as an undergraduate and also as a graduate student at the University of Colorado in Boulder, I was fascinated with the study of the interaction of evolving ecosystems and their impact on all living things within their changing environments. That eventually translated into my interest in my children and what constituted their world. So it was a very natural

transition for me in terms of "The Ecology of Childhood." It's the process I've been talking about for years. In this light, things like television and other media were changing the traditional environment of childhood. When a baby is born, he or she faces a very limited world of the mother, father, or maybe someone else. The mother is the first impression in the environment of a newborn baby. And then the child's world grows and expands to the home, the neighborhood, churches and school. In a natural environment all this can progress at a pace commensurate with the child's normal brain development. But today's children enter into the new media world even at birth, faced with visual stimuli that are very strong. When you put a baby in front of television or other visual media, a whole new experience is there. I think a lot of the new brain research corroborates that media can stimulate new brain synapses; there are connections made.

The milestones from this were all connected later on. I would say looking for milestones in my personal life, it's really all connected to people. First, the Wisconsin people that I met like Leslie Spence and Jessie McCause who introduced me to their wonderfully sage philosophy of the educational and positive approach toward media, as opposed to negative reactions, such as turning off the TV or boycott - which were being done back in those days. In contrast, the point for the NTC group was to evaluate, to see what there is, and to choose wisely. That was a very big "first" for me.

Later on, I met people like Barry Duncan from Canada who put a new spin on all of this. Barry and his group of educators in Ontario had established basic criteria for teaching this thing called media literacy. We had always said, "Yes, we recognize media literacy," but there wasn't this well defined set of basic concepts. Actually, these concepts were based on the work of Len Masterman, who was the first to put a systematic pedagogy into media literacy education.

I began to expand my own knowledge and my own horizons to see that media literacy was really a very well definable and teachable topic. My personal journey began when I started to think in terms of getting media literacy into schools. Before that, it was all parents and teachers but on an informal level, such as developing good viewing habits and being able to say why you liked a program and why you didn't and as a family decide what is worth your time. Now, I did believe that you could teach a very small child something about making choices. It was an evolution for me. Becoming aware through Barry's acquaintance, I went to my first conference in Guelph, Canada. John Pungente was also there and he was very influential and people need to give him credit. At the Guelph conference, I also met Len Masterman, as well as Eddie Dick and Barrie McMahon from Australia, and many of the amazing group of Ontario educators. Several of us came from Madison, including Mary Moen and Jean Pierre Golay. I will never forget when Barrie McMahon was giving his keynote address. He said, "Before I begin, I cannot start this speech of mine without paying tribute to someone who is in the audience here, and that is Jean Pierre Golay who has

been so influential.” It was an incredible moment. Jean Pierre is so modest, he doesn’t say these things but he sat there. So that’s one of those times that were milestones for me.

Then we began working with a new generation of pioneers later on, as the media began to become more interactive. We had started an early interactive group back in Madison in the late 70s; a children's channel. That idea came from the fact that when cable first came on the screen (and that was in the early or mid 70s), I ended up on a governor's commission to study whether cable should be regulated or not. The chair of that commission was Lee Sherman Dreyfus, at that time Chancellor of UW Stevens Point, future Wisconsin Governor. Lee had also been manager of WHA-TV Public Television Station in Madison and a professor of media studies at the University of Wisconsin, and a former student of Marshall McLuhan. He was chairing that commission and he knew that I was working with the American Council for Better Broadcasts (ACBB). I got an official letter from the governor asking me to serve on this commission and I knew nothing about cable. I thought, "I'm the wrong person; they must have made a mistake." So I sent back my response saying, "I'm sorry, I couldn't possibly be on that commission." The next thing that happened was Lee Dreyfus calling me on the phone, saying, "Marieli, you've got to be on that commission. I want you on this commission because you don't already know everything about it." He had two of us from the ACBB (the other was Phyllis Young). If I was going to be involved in something like that, I would have to learn something, so I went to some workshops and learned about cable and read everything I could and pretty soon got myself fairly well informed. And that is where this idea for a children's channel was cooked up: if you're going to have that many channels, why not have one channel that would be completely dedicated to children's programming? There would be no ads and the mother could safely say, "Yes dear, you can watch television." It's like putting a good book in their hands.

Through this idea (and it eventually took several years more) came KIDS-4, the Sun Prairie Children’s Channel, which is still in existence today. It’s a channel of television by and for children. They are the producers; the on-air talent, the camera crew; they do everything. This was a very early pioneering idea. Interactive TV was something that we were involved with very early, but it was still nothing like what happened much later with the era of the internet. When you have a television station it’s a very real and physical experience; you see the people and camera and you learn how it works. People like me who need to know “why it works” and “what are the wires inside” can get a handle on it.

Another landmark for me was literally broadening my knowledge base. I went back to school to get my master’s degree and experienced running conferences and assuming the role of executive director of this organization. I came from having no experience and then being told after three months of being executive director that you’re supposed to put out a newsletter. So it’s really been a huge learning curve for me.

Then came the age of the last real change: working in the new virtual world there were two particular people who were incredibly influential. One was Martin Rayala, who comes as an Art and Design educator and artist. He came onto our board because he was interested in new media. It was Jean Pierre Golay who suggested him; he knew him from the art world. Martin opened up this world of media literacy and the Arts. And then the other person is my own son Peter. I watched him and learned from him, and I developed a definition of an artist as "someone who sees where others have not yet begun to look." For an artist such as my son, it is an innate thing, a talent they are born with. They are walking to a different drummer, which you can see when they are children.

However, while the rest of us may not be gifted with that, we can learn it. And that is media literacy. You may not become the genius or a Michelangelo; but at least you can learn to understand why he was a genius and what it was that made him a genius. So you can become a highly educated media literate person.

One thing that occurred to me was that milestones of the "movement" toward media literacy cannot just be enumerated. It's just so huge and broad because it's a whole new world culture. We need to study this from a new point of view, at least. What I say about one event and what someone else says about the same event would be really hard to match.

But I was thinking what the stages are that are needed to see change. First of all, you have to have an identity, and the second one is people following the idea...the third thing would be finding evidence...I know that the last part is reaching a critical mass. That is the question. Have we reached a critical mass? I do not know.

TJ: I feel that so much of education has been going on a different track in recent years. It's been in an environment that has been very hostile to what we are trying to accomplish. My bottom line is I think that people are seeking an innate freedom and independence that our work supports, and it feeds into a basic human need and desire. So, with that in mind eventually it will triumph because it has to.

MR: First of all, a point of view has to be identified, if we talk about how to effect change, we could say that some of the high points were the early pioneers, the educators and scholars of the 30s and 40s that I happen to know because it's in the Wisconsin history. But there were people like Louis Forsdale, at Columbia Teacher's College, and Edgar Dale and Keith Tyler at Ohio State. They laid some of the foundations of what you might call critical thinking and listening skills. So on an academic level, it was an important period when people who were educators and scholars in pedagogy began to think in terms of fundamentals to critical listening and thinking. Then congressional studies were done in the 60s where Congress conducted a million-dollar study on media

effects. And the FCC did an inquiry about the media, violence and sex and one additional question that actually came about because we suggested it: it was about critical viewing skills. That was a landmark question because FCC commissioners Abbot Washburn and Kenneth Cox apparently had a very strong personal relationship with Leslie Spence, and it was at her request that they included these questions in the Inquiry. That particular study at the FCC came up with the insight that media do have an effect on the viewer, etc. but the effect can be mitigated through parental or other guidance. That was, to me, the go-ahead sign for media literacy: That you didn't have to just sit there and be dumb, but rather you take that material and do something with it in your head.

Then that was followed by the million-dollar congressional allocation to develop four curricula: One was in New York with the WNET, one was in Texas, one was in Boston and one was in San Francisco. There were four stages of schools: primary, secondary, college-age and post college. And our wonderful Wisconsin Senator Proxmire gave the Congress one of his Golden Fleece Awards for money badly spent, because according to him, all they were doing was teaching kids how to watch television (and wasn't that a terrible waste of children's and teachers' time...)

A major contribution was made in developing theory and practice by the influence of Len Masterman in England and the Canadians Barry Duncan, John Pungente, their colleagues, their new organization, the Association for Media Literacy. The last big milestone is the media explosion, which was – and is -- a huge shift. All the earlier things could have been ideas that you could add into the curriculum, which were very much friendlier to the old way of teaching school. You could teach those concepts within the school curriculum, whether it was across the curriculum or a list of courses. But now, suddenly came the age of the chip covering everything from interactive media learning to literacy and learning. Much has changed in education and we have people who say that the way we used to teach is completely obsolete and there are different ways we ought to teach.

There are people who like to teach by doing games which of course is a teaching tool, but it isn't the end-all. In my view, the games people have are a wonderful and valid approach, but it's just not the only thing. Also we have Henry Jenkins who believes in all of that, although he would agree that it's not only games. We believe that there is such a thing as media education.

These are some of the latest directions in the development of a new media literacy education and I wanted to give you a quote from Lee Dreyfus. In 1983, as I stated earlier, we changed our name from American Council for Better Broadcasts to the National Telemedia Council because we were aware that between the rivals of cable, satellite, the new desktop computer in our office, the spectrum of 100 television channels -- the time had come that our very name was obsolete. And our speaker for this big convention that we had in Madison,

Lee Dreyfus, said this: "As you change your name today to the National Telemedia Council I tell you, you are on the verge of changing an entire organization to adapt to the chip." Now this was 1983. Most people didn't even know what a chip was. Then he predicted, "The last 30 years of the explosive telecommunications growth may have just been a garden hose compared to the potential Niagara Falls of the next 30 years of telecommunication. The public defense against inundation rests in the citadel of the individual mind through education, and in selective attention to the media."

TJ: Why do you believe media literacy is important?

MR: It seems to me as basic a part of life as being alive. You need to know the air you breathe, to make sure there is oxygen in it. I mean it's that basic. The media are our path to communication and mindful and meaningful communication. So it's the literacy of the age. In the early days of writing, only the monks could write and everybody else was ignorant. Among the Native Americans or Incas, the king was illiterate and therefore didn't know anything but his scribe was the one who had the knowledge. The power was in those people who could communicate and who were literate. And that hasn't changed. So why teach anything? We're still saying "first learn to read and write." Now in this new media age, all of these basic principles prevail. That's why we need media literacy. People say, "Why would I need to learn that, I already know how to watch television and use my cellphone." For instance, a person who wants to sing can just open his mouth and sing. But if you want to become a true singer, you have to take lessons on how to breathe so that you can keep the skill well into your life.

The most urgent - I'm convinced - is a willingness to change a decades-old atmosphere of confrontation, politics and competitive negativism to a culture of inclusiveness and collegiality, mutual respect and collaboration that is devoid of personal agendas in which new ideas in education in a new century can thrive.

As for achieving the goals of a multimedia-wise and reflective society, the quest goes on. Learning to be literate is a personal journey, the challenge is to be global while remaining relevant at home -- to expand the vision to tomorrow while remaining grounded today, to strive for a positive non-judgmental and passionate spirit of listening to diverse voices of individuals and cultures and to know that achieving the goal in the age of the global village is not static but involves living mindfully with change.

The other thing about this need for media literacy that I've wanted to say is that media literacy is becoming necessary - indeed crucial - way beyond anything most of us had imagined even up until a couple of years ago. For instance, what is happening in the Middle East is an example. It has become so graphic that in a way it's an advantage for us who are trying to bring media literacy into the forefront, it's so obvious. Anybody will say you can't believe everything you see

or hear; it's manufactured. A picture isn't necessarily worth a 1000 words because it could've been manufactured. All of that is media literacy.

In a way, the extremism that is happening all around us now might just be an ally in really showing the need. People in those countries, like in Libya, etc. put their hopes on this because they had a chance to see. You cannot keep it from spreading when it's being put out there on little cell phones.

So when Lee Dreyfus talked about the "Niagara Falls." I see his Niagara Falls happening in the Middle East right now. At the same time, I also see that people are misunderstanding Americans, because we don't know other cultures. So when we walk in with our cultural ideas, it may absolutely not work for some other people.

This is a global instant and a totally invasive digital world in which all are equal, and at risk in power. We're all in the same boat. Media literacy's apex may very well be a road to new sensitivity for becoming a more civilized global society if we could develop common language through the rich variety of media.