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Through Rainbow Colored Glasses

By Christine Dinsmore

A delightful weeklong visit from our 3-year-old great-niece has just ended. Kate leaps through life like a dolphin in Key West's Gulf waters. Sharp as a laser beam and happy as a teething puppy in a shoe store, she trusts the grown-ups in her life to keep her safe. Kate believes all things are possible.

Together, as we searched for animals in the forest, explored South Lake by paddleboat, tried to reach the giraffes at the Catskill Game Farm with our loopy tosses of crackers, and squealed running through every room in the house, I couldn't help but feel dismay about the world I will bequeath to her.

Kate is two generations removed from me. I already owe her parents an apology for what my generation failed to do. It makes me wonder if my lefty Dad felt the same way when his children participated in Cold War drills, hiding under school desks with our hands covering our heads to "escape" nuclear annihilation.

Is this cyclical? Does each generation ponder what more it could have done as it sees what it has left for future generations? Does it mourn opportunities lost? Or cringe at its broken promises?

No, no, this is not a Prozac moment. Nor the inevitable letdown after a glorious visit from my rough-and-tumble "cha-cha girl" (one of many nicknames Kate has accumulated over her first three years on Earth). If anything, this is a confession of an aging hippie who naively believed that her generation would fulfill the promise of the Age of Aquarius, leaving to its offspring an era of peace and justice.

As we inch toward the November election, I wonder if we can get things a little more right in the world through the ballot box. Maybe not Utopia, but can we jump-start a political movement that will challenge the utter disregard for civil and human rights that has flourished since the start of this millennium?

The midterm election is usually a low-turnout event. And the Democrats aren't giving us much to rally around. But look what an unchallenged Bush administration has spawned: a hopeless war in Iraq, a world bubbling over with anti-American sentiment, Guantánamo, Abu Ghraib, the Patriot Act, John Roberts and Samuel Alito, a proposed constitutional amendment that writes

discrimination into our revered document, unabated global warming, record levels of entrenched poverty. The list of Bush-Cheney debacles is endless.

Dubya wants to go back to the “good ole days” of the 1950s. The frat boy rejects the 1960s idealism of his youth. He instead relishes an era when people danced to the music of African-Americans, like The Platters and Chuck Berry, while blacks were relegated to the back of the bus, and when girls were cheerleaders and prom queens, not athletes or valedictorians. If he continues to create the United States in his image—and he’s getting closer with each Supreme Court appointee—we’re sunk.

The opinion polls don’t look good for the GOP in these fall elections. So the Republicans will pull out their terrorist trump card by Nov. 7—guaranteed. Be prepared for Homeland Security to raise its color-coded advisory to orange before the first frost. And watch Middle America flock to the voting booths fearful that, without Karl Rove’s reactionaries in Congress, we’ll all be wearing burqas. Instead, the Ten Commandments will sprout up in every classroom and courtroom. We’ll get Rove, but we’ll lose *Roe v. Wade*.

The future of this country will rise and fall with people younger than I. My hope is that Generations X and Y, joined by the iGeneration, will stanch the bleeding. If not, aging iPodders someday will be apologizing to the 3-year-olds they love.