

Your child's future

by

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Last weekend, I took my 7 year old daughter to see *An Inconvenient Truth*; the documentary film about climate change based on a lecture series by former US Vice President, Al Gore. For a movie billed as “By far the most terrifying film you will ever see” (enough to scare away her mother) you might think that I was being somewhat irresponsible. But I had read the reviews (including the family oriented ones) and decided that there was a good chance that it had been poorly sold. And I was right.

This is a movie at the level of 9 to 15 year olds. For everyone else, there is not alot new and, indeed, time might be better spent reading deeper on the issue (such as in the excellent survey in this week's *Economist*). The basic facts of global warming are in the scientific journals, the idea that it may cause damage to ocean currents is out there and the experience of the last two years in storms and heat cannot be ignored. You do not need to see this movie to make yourself more aware. What you need to do is take your children to see it. And when I arrived at the movie theatre this weekend, my daughter was the youngest person in the room (that shouldn't surprise you) but I was pretty much the second youngest (and that surprised me). Think about it. The theatre was filled with people who would not be around to see the full consequences of it and, in reality, were likely to be in the least favourable position to do something about it.

Here is why the film is good for kids. First, Al Gore is a great lecturer. Essentially, the movie centres around his own slide shows and the presentation of the facts is clean, graphical (including Simpson's like cartoons), non-technical and decidedly non-sensationalist. Second, it presents a nice view of the world we live in. It shows how connected we are and it shows how things are changing. Finally, it does not preach. There is hardly a suggestion as to what people should do; although there is a suggestion as to what governments might do and, as it turned out, this resonated. It is a tad long for a 7 year old but add a few years and that should not be a problem.

Ultimately, the reason to take your children to see this is not the film itself but the questions it stimulated. We had an extensive discussion about scientific evidence, uncertainty and what the role of government was. And we were left as a question that I did not have a good answer for — at least for a 7 year old. The question was why Australia stood out as a country that had not agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. So then we discussed who might answer it and my daughter decided to write to the PM directly. Originally, I had thought about a letter but was told, convincingly, that an email would be better. We would not waste paper that was coming from the much needed trees.

We, of course, have no reply (yet), but the story made for a good show and tell presentation the next day and the discussion we had filtered into school.

All this leads me back to the marketing campaign around *An Inconvenient Truth*. The selling of this as something sensationalist is wrong on every level given what the movie is. It has been billed as unnecessarily scary. When I showed my daughter the trailer her reaction was “no wonder people thought it would be scary. If they advertise the movie like this, it isn’t true at all. They will make less money as people won’t come and see it.” Some so-called marketing guru needs to be fired when a 7 year old can work that out.

The movie’s point is that climate change is anything but sensationalist but actually remarkably pedestrian. To provide that kind of marketing diminishes that point and what is more drives away those who ought to be seeing it (families) and does nothing to attract others. Terrifying movies only do that when they are not real.

Take your children to see this movie. There is nothing like having them at your side. It is by far the most stimulating film you will ever see.

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