

## Behold the New Normal

Written by Stuart Sheldon, BT Contributor  
October 2014

---



Today's six-year-olds are high-tech, colorblind, and nonchalant

My son Kai just finished kindergarten, so I'm keeping score.

I believe we learn most of what we need at this age: sharing, listening when another speaks, being kind, cleaning up after ourselves, knowing how to spell A-R-T. But I'm just as jazzed by the things my son is learning outside the classroom. Children are acquiring exceptional and powerful knowledge -- dare I say, wisdom -- unique to this moment in history.

Here are three examples:

**Presidents are black.** For my four- and six-year-olds, Obama is not the first black president. He is not a liberal president. A young president. A good or bad president. He is simply *the* president. My boys have only one reference point for commanders-in-chief. George Bush -- never heard of him. George Washington -- isn't he on money? Jefferson -- nada. But every time we drive past the giant mural in Little Haiti, Kai exclaims, "Barack Obama!"

## Behold the New Normal

Written by Stuart Sheldon, BT Contributor  
October 2014

---

*Doc McStuffins* is a crossover kids' TV hit (\$500 million in sales last year). The doctor is an adorable black girl who cares for her toys with superb bedside manner and medical aplomb. Her blockbuster sales suggest she's adored not only by African American girls, but by children from many racial demographics. I can tell you that my white kids absolutely love her.

"The kids who are of color see her as an African-American girl, and that's really big for them," creator Chris Nee told the *New York Times* in a July 2014 interview. "And I think a lot of other kids don't see her color, and that's wonderful as well."

I believe my kids do see color, but it is immaterial to them. What matters is that Doc is nice and smart and good at what she does. Could this be the generation of social colorblindness? I am optimistic that the current century will not be as racially hate-filled as the last because most of our doe-eyed youth never inhaled the poison air of Jim Crow.

**Technology is a dependable friend.** We've never shown our kids how to use the iPad; they just get it. And they cruise on that thing like they're Steve Jobs's love children.

Kai's homework last week required a collage about the tundra. In seconds we had countless pictures and reams of info about the subject. Who knew that flatfish eyes migrated from both to one side of their heads? Kids now have intellectual independence unique to their generation -- the ability, in seconds, to read the Gettysburg Address, learn to tie a bowline knot, or watch a video about baking mango bread.

Mind you, we're not "give the kids the iPhone and shut them up at dinner" types. We minimize screen time during the week and prohibit mindless, shoot-'em-up games. We believe in the idea of "high-touch" as a critical counterpoint to high-tech -- cuddling up and reading real books. And getting down on the ground and building imaginary worlds together. Still, despite my personal love-hate relationship with tech, I marvel at my kids' fearless enthusiasm and intuitive dexterity on these devices. It's as if human logic is evolving before our eyes. Or did someone put a chip in their heads when I was doing our taxes on the abacus?

**People have two daddies.** "I saw Sebastien today at the store," my wife told Kai, referring to one of his classmates.

## Behold the New Normal

Written by Stuart Sheldon, BT Contributor  
October 2014

---

“The one with the two daddies?” Kai asked, through his toothy grin.

“No, the one with the two mommies,” said Jodi.

Another time after school, as Kai and I assembled the wooden tracks of a train world, he said, “Boys can marry boys and girls can marry girls.” What I found most notable about these exchanges was not their socially charged content, but the nonchalance with which my kindergartener presented them. Two daddies, two mommies. He might as well have been talking about the color of their socks.

My son’s school of 50 kids had five same-sex parents. While the world tries to get its arms around this new normal, it’s simply normal for my boy. No big whoop. And here again, we see the seeds of the magnificent big-tent garden taking root.

Don’t get me wrong.... My former kindergartener is very much a six-year-old kid. He torments his younger brother. He hits us with a whiny “I’m bored” more often than is acceptable (which is never), and has recently added melodramatic pouting to his bag of tricks.

Like all parents, we try to manage his emotional growth and keep his sense of fairness, honesty, and compassion healthy and active.

But there is one particular thing that leads me to believe he and his contemporaries hold the key to a better society: As far as I can tell, they judge people on the content of their character.

*Stuart Sheldon is an artist, author, and Miami native. Follow his blog at [stuartsheldon.com](http://stuartsheldon.com) and [@stuart\\_sheldon](https://twitter.com/stuart_sheldon).*

## Behold the New Normal

Written by Stuart Sheldon, BT Contributor  
October 2014

---

Feedback: [letters@biscaynetimes.com](mailto:letters@biscaynetimes.com)