

World needs a reboot: TED

February 15 2010, by Glenn Chapman



Outed CIA spy and author Valerie Plame Wilson seen here in January 2010, urged wiping nuclear weapons off the planet while Microsoft co-founder turned-philanthropist Bill Gates backed a case for investing in "terrapower" nuclear energy plants at the TED annual conference in Long Beach, CA.

Nobel laureates, technology titans, artists, scientists, and academics spent five days here grappling with how best to reboot the world.

Outed CIA spy Valerie Plame Wilson urged wiping nuclear weapons off the planet while Microsoft co-founder turned-philanthropist Bill Gates backed a case for investing in "terrapower" nuclear energy plants.

Author Michael Specter railed against a maddening societal shift away from scientific facts while fellow writer and philosopher Sam Harris argued that the separation between science and human values is an

illusion.

"We've never needed science and progress more than we have now," Specter said at a prestigious [TED Conference](#) that ended Saturday.

"Yet we'd have to go back before the Enlightenment to find a time that we fought things more than we do now. You are entitled to your own opinion, but you are not entitled to your own facts; sorry about that."

The annual TED gathering was a thought-sparking swirl of perspectives, revelations, and creative presentations delivered by vaunted personalities asked to pack the talk of a lifetime in an 18-minute punch.

Physics [string theory](#) was spun with insights into spider silk, synthetic life forms, the psychology of happiness and even a prototype mosquito zapping laser.

Ukelele-playing YouTube sensation Jason Shimabokuru captivated the audience with a performance that meshed Handel's Ave Maria with Bohemian Rhapsody by classic rock band Queen.

Natalie Merchant enchanted with new songs she lovingly crafted from the lyrics of revered poets such as E.E. Cummings.

Actress and comedienne Sarah Silverman rattled some in the famously upscale crowd with bawdy humor while former Talking Heads band front man David Byrne joined Thomas Dolby to sing "Nothing but Flowers."

The entertainment buoyed spirits and moods during days spent dissecting global woes from climate change and overfishing to disease, poverty and pollution.

"I have been bottling up a fair amount of rage," TED curator Chris Anderson said at the conference that ended Saturday.

"At a time when there are so many smart people capable of solving problems, what happens? Nothing. Running into walls. Grubby murky compromise. I really hate this. What the world needs is a restart."

The 1,500 people attendees included entrepreneurs, celebrities, and founders of Internet stars Google, YouTube, Zynga, and Amazon.com.

More than 900 groups of people in 75 countries attended virtually, with talks and presentations streamed to them online.

Recorded talks from gatherings are posted online at TED.com for free viewing.

More than 200 million "TED talks" have been seen at the website, according to event organizers. Volunteers recently started translating the presentations into scores of languages.

British conservative leader David Cameron made a teleconference visit to this year's TED to say that he will use Internet technologies to better connect people and government if he becomes prime minister.

"The Information and Internet Revolution Age has happened in our lives, but hasn't gone through government," Cameron said.

An annual TED prize gives each winner an altruistic wish that the community's members promise to help fulfill.

Renowned ocean explorer Sylvia Earle's TED prize wish last year to rally support for a global network of sea life havens has resulted in "Mission Blue" set to launch in April.

The mission aims to support fighting poachers at sea and to enlist allies online. Earle will join scientists, politicians and others on a Mission Blue fund-raising voyage setting out April 6 for the Galapagos Islands.

"TEDsters" were invited to join the adventure at a price of 20,000 dollars per passenger.

"Ideas are all well and good but what the world needs now is action," Anderson said as heady subjects ricocheted at the mind-jarring gathering.

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Citation: World needs a reboot: TED (2010, February 15) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-02-world-reboot-ted.html>

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