

# **This Technology, This Community, This Dream: One Web Day, 2008**

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I am honored to be here to mark, to celebrate, this One Web Day, as it is all together fitting to, like the Earth, celebrate the Web with its own special day.

There is an endless list of technologies with us today that forty years ago only science fiction writers, and professors at MIT, could have imagined imagined. But on that list, there's only one that we could imagine celebrating with a day. There won't be a one iPod day, Steve's dreams notwithstanding. Nor a one PC day, whether or not Seinfeld offers to come. Only this technology — the Web; only this community — the Web; only this dream — the Web; makes sense to celebrate in just this way.

And of course, there is much to be proud of. This technology, this community, this dream, is far more than anyone who created it ever imagined. As Holmes said of the constitution — that it “called into life a being the development of which could not

have been foreseen completely by the most gifted of its begetters” — so too could we say of the Net.

Indeed, that is precisely what we cheerleaders have said of the Net, as we have fought to defend it from changes that would corrupt its most precious feature — that it repeatedly surprises even the most gifted of its begetters. Defend it, that is, by keeping it open to change, free from the inevitable design of those who have made it to make it so the platform on which they have made it doesn't encourage others to displace them.

But as I reflect upon where we are today — and by “we” I mean we Americans, just one part of this world — I grow increasingly impatient with celebrations. I grow tired of self-confident pride.

We are in the middle of a war, paralyzed by terror. In this city, the financial system of our nation is collapsing. Across our nation, the financial system of millions of families has already collapsed.

And yet at the center of this mess is a government — the product of a democracy — which too few of us respect. A president favorably thought of by less than a third of the Nation. A Congress favorably thought of by less than 10%. The only branch enjoying

majority support is the one branch not elected by the people — the Court.

We should pause to think about just what this means. There were more who supported the British Crown at the revolution than support the US Congress today. And I suspect more who had faith in our government attending to the problems that were ours at every point in America's history, save that one point that quickly slid to a civil war.

We must change this. It is time we turn this extraordinary platform for hope, the Web, to more of the extraordinary public problems that weigh us down today. It is time we use the inspiration and power of this technology, this community, this dream, to fix what is broken in this real world. It is time the virtual gets used to fix the real.

Our crisis in governance has perhaps never been as profound. And it feels almost Hollywood-esque, or Harry Potter-esque, that just at the moment when things are as dark as they could possibly be, we get handed a magical tool that could, if used well, save this day.

But the fact is things are this dark, and we have been given that tool. And we must use it to learn again *how citizens govern*.

There is a government we are responsible for. There are enormous problems that it has either caused, or is not curing. Let us take this technology, this community, this dream, and use it to restore democratic responsibility. And community. And a dream.