

Information Overload Is Turning Our Kids Into Nihilists

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SUMMARY

The discussion centers around the rise of protest movements among educated youth, driven by a profound distrust in traditional institutions and a search for meaning in an age dominated by digital information. Martin Gurri, a former CIA media analyst, argues that this unrest reflects a larger societal shift rather than specific political failures, with young people seeking connection and purpose in a chaotic world.

- *Millions of educated young people are protesting globally, driven by a sense of nihilism and disillusionment.*
- *The "fifth wave of information" has led to a collapse of trust in institutions, with public trust in government dropping from over 75% in the 1960s to below 25% today.*
- *Today's protests often involve mainstream, educated individuals rather than marginalized groups, indicating a unique demographic of discontent.*
- *Modern protest movements tend to be short-lived, sparked by outrage but lacking sustainable goals or visions for change.*
- *Young people are increasingly seeking meaning in politics, which is ill-equipped to provide it, contributing to feelings of anger and frustration.*
- *The decline in religious and community engagement leaves a void that many youth attempt to fill through political activism.*
- *Parents play a crucial role in guiding children towards constructive outlets for connection and meaning, emphasizing the importance of community involvement.*
- *Despite concerns about their digital lives, children are often more adept at navigating online spaces than parents realize, requiring open dialogue and guidance.*

(invigorating music) - Over the past decade, across every continent, millions of the most educated, affluent young people in all of human history have taken to the streets, demanding that their societies be dismantled in a revolution. - [Group] Whose streets? Our streets. Whose streets? Our streets. Take down Wall Street. Shut down Wall Street. - What's drawing a generation with more opportunity at their fingertips than ever into movements like Antifa, QAnon, Black Lives Matter, and The Proud Boys, united mainly by negativity that verges on nihilism.

Why is this happening to our kids? And what, if anything, can we as parents do about it? - [YouTuber] I got a

black lives matter tattoo. - There's few people who understand this phenomenon better than former CIA media analyst, Martin Gurri. And as a Cuban immigrant to America himself, he knows a thing or two about populist revolutions. - I am Martin Gurri, at least I was the last time I looked I used to be an analyst of global media for CIA.

And I'm the author of a book called "The Revolt of the Public." My thesis is a pretty simple one, it says that what you think are the important players in politics and society today, right, left, conservative, libertarian, whatever, are not. The fundamental conflict of a moment in history is the conflict between a network public empowered by digital platforms, and the elites that are perched on the hierarchical institutions we have inherited from the 20th century. - Martin's book is incredibly dense and packed with case studies from around the world.

At the heart of his analysis, is an insight that all of us must confront. Much of this turmoil we're experiencing, the mistrust, the confusion, the chaos, it's not the result of one political party, or leader, or election result. It's bigger than any one event or cause. In fact, it's the result of the information tsunami that has hit humankind with the advent of the internet. And it's just getting started. Martin calls this moment, the fifth wave of information, and not since the printing press has a transformation this disruptive taken place.

And here's the thing, it's our kids who are the first generation to grow up in the eye of this storm, and its impact is leading millions of them to take to the streets. - Because the 99% is only visible when we're in the street. - The reason I've done all my writing and my research has been 'cause I am concerned about liberal democracy, and the future of liberal democracy. Liberal democracy is one of those institutions that has been bettered by the tsunami of information.

- If you wanna better understand how the information tsunami is impacting our kids and our future, here's the top five things I learned from former CIA media analyst, Martin Gurri. But first, if you like our videos and wanna see more, please hit the like button and subscribe to the channel, it really helps us out. (jazz music) Now, let's dig. Number five, the emperor has no clothes. (Child laughs) - The emperor has no clothes on. (ominous music) - As Martin's subtitle suggests, the fifth wave has caused a total collapse of trust in

everything.

Every institution seems corrupt, but especially our political and media elites. That's actually a really big shift in our country compared to most of the 20th century. According to Pew research polls, public trust in government in the 1950s and '60s was over 75%. Since 2007, that trust is averaged below 25%. And that's despite the valiant efforts of modern politicians to seem relatable on social media. - Hold on a sec, I'm gonna get me a beer. - [Martin Gurri] I elect you my representative, look at you, you're just like me.

Then you come to Washington, and suddenly start talking differently, and you dress differently, and it's like you become a movie star or something, you become a celebrity. (cameras snap) (crowd clamors) - According to Dr. Jean Twenge, author of "iGen," the only institution our kids trust less than the government is the media itself. And that's probably because they see so much of it. Our parents generation only had three channels, a few newspapers, and the nightly news. - Walter Cronkite has told us, there are only three stories, he was voted the most trusted man in America twice.

And he would end every broadcast, and he would say, "That's the way it is." - And that's the way it is, Friday, March 6th, 1981. - So there was tremendous trust in the media. And of course, those of us who had certain doubts, couldn't talk back. - Government and the media haven't become less authentic or less trustworthy, they've always been inauthentic, spin doctors. JFK lied about the Bay of Pigs, and the media covered for him. The New York Times carried water for Joseph Stalin.

What's changed today is that the fifth wave has smashed the media monopoly. - Anybody who wants to is now an author, right? (foreboding music) Anybody who wants to now can send a message out into the ether. Anybody with any point of view, whatever, no matter how crazy, no matter how dangerous, can just send things out. And the elites who used to be protected by the fact that they had this cozy top-down informational structure, happened strip naked, and are in a state of panic and cluelessness, trying to figure out what to do about this.

- With so much hitting our kids, it's no wonder many of them are taking to the streets to protest everything they're seeing, but who exactly is protesting? Number four, protesters are not who you think they are. Martin has studied dozens of mass protest movements all around the world, in the wake of the fifth wave. On the surface, they have very little in common. Israelis protesting high rent in Tel Aviv, Egyptians protesting military rule, Chileans taking to the streets by the millions over a small increase in bus fares.

Some oppose immigration, or climate change, or the 2020 US Presidential Election, or police brutality and racial injustice. But below the surface, what they have in common is surprising. - This is the opposite of what you would expect. This is not marginalized groups, this is not ethnic minorities or racial minorities, this is not the poor by any means. It tends to be the mainstream in America, that would be white, middle class, hyper educated, this is probably the most educated rebels ever.

- President Trump, I'm in the top 99th percentile of intelligent people on this planet... - This is what drew me to Martin's work in the first place as a dad. I want my son to go out into the world and be a positive contributor, I want him to change it for the better. And maybe there's times when taking to the streets is the right thing to do, but Martin's work suggests that a lot of these movements are less about real progress for civil rights, and more about well educated young people coming together to vent, and find something, anything transcendental.

Which leads us to number three. (upbeat music)
Number three, modern protest movements don't last. Whatever happened to Occupy Wall Street? Did the yellow vests in France get everything they wanted? Have you noticed that we haven't heard much about Black Lives Matter lately? Today's protest movements are usually triggered by a sensational event that causes outrage. But it's hard to stay mad forever, so these movements usually start with a bang and end with a whimper. Why is that?

- The web is a geyser of memes and slogans. So if you talk about, for example, Defund the Police, that's a slogan, you can't build a policy on three words. Andrew Cuomo, now disgraced

governor of New York, essentially encapsulated the lack of content in Black Lives Matter. He appealed to the protesters who had just pretty much devastated Midtown Manhattan, and he said the following. - You don't need to protest. You won. You won. What reform do you want?

What do you want? - That the crowd says "get lost," okay. These are movements of negation, these are anger to the eighth degree, but if you accept them for what they say, it means that every institution of society has to so probably drastically altered in a way that is never specified. Public has a world in mind that cannot possibly exist. They have a moment in which, in the fever of the protest, they feel they're achieving it within themselves.

And if you listen to them, this is almost religious ecstasy among the protesters. Now everybody's together, is a band of brothers and sisters and such, the system that they oppose is everything that is not utopia. - I give you the Springfield Monorail. (Spectators gasp) - Here's the thing, anger and outrage burns hot and bright, but it fades out fast, kinda like viral memes themselves. It's easy to burn things down, it takes much more time, and an actual positive vision to build something new.

That's a lesson that everyone learns with time. And it's one of the reasons we try to tell the optimistic side of the story here at Dad Saves America. The biggest truth our kids aren't hearing is that for all the elite corruption, they've been born into the best time for humanity ever. (upbeat music) That leaves it to us, as dads and parents, to tell them the truth. And the truth is, number two, you can't find meaning in politics.

I'm an Italian American, so I grew up Catholic, and somehow after 12 years of Catholic school, I stayed Catholic. Seriously though, while I'm not the best practitioner of my faith, I've always found it to be a source of solace, and yes, meaning, especially in difficult times. There's piles of social science research that shows how human beings long to belong to something bigger than themselves. And for generations, it was your religious community that provided that connection. Well, no longer.

According to Gallup, only 47% of Americans attend church, synagogue or mosque, which is down from 73% when pollsters first asked the question in 1937 (sober music) - What is important? And the sources that used

to provide the answer, historically, from the beginnings of time, religion, community, family, have been withdrawn from these young people. But my guess is that they are putting the burden of meaning in politics. They go to the streets, and initially, if you ever participate in a protest, there's a moment of euphoria, and a moment of we're transcending everything that our society has clamped us down.

- My community is other anti-fascist people. These are the people who help me through some of my toughest struggles. And so, I am able to feel like I have a family. - Our kids today are suffering from an epidemic of loneliness unlike any prior generation, and their relationship to their digital life and their screens plays a big part in that. According to the Survey Center for American Life, over 55% of Gen Zers report feeling lonely one or more times a month, that compares to 37% for Gen Xers like me, and only 24% for baby boomers.

Our kids are hungry for connection, community and meaning, and they're trying to find it wherever they can. When there's a void, people try to fill it in other ways, like with drugs, or maybe worse, politics. - They're trying to wean meaning out of politics, and of course, politics was not erected for that. Politics is transactional. Everything breaks down. There is no meaning. And so, the anger and the frustration only grows. I think a lot of the anger can be explained by the attempt to get out of politics, something that politics could never ever produce.

- I'm not here to preach my faith or any particular religion to you or your family, but one thing is abundantly clear, politics is about the worst substitute religion humanity has ever come up with, whether it's nationalism, socialism or environmentalism. And make no mistake, it's this religious itch that our kids are scratching when they take to the streets demanding revolution. So what, if anything, can we do about it? Well, if you're religious here's the good news, researchers find that those big declines in faith practice I mentioned earlier don't happen for kids whose dads take them to church regularly.

when it comes to faith in church attendance, so goes' dad, so goes his kids. So your actions here make a huge difference. And if you're not religious, your relationship with your kids plays a huge role in keeping them on a

healthy, positive track to discover meaning for themselves. So make an effort to get your kids off their screens and engage in their community from an early age. - Are you in need of any assistance today, sir?

- No. - I could help you cross the street. - Let's help our kids tap into something bigger than themselves that's actually constructive, and leave those Christopher Columbus statues alone. (Crowd clamors) (statue thuds) (upbeat music) Before I get to the number one thing I learned from Martin Gurri, please take a second to like this video and subscribe to the channel. (bell dings) It really helps us grow this community of dads who wanna save America together. And now, number one, your kids are savvier than you think.

When I was a kid, Apple computers were still in black and white, if they came with a screen at all, and the internet only connected a handful of computers worldwide. Today, according to the CDC, American kids spend more than 30% of their lives in front of screens and online. And yes, that's probably too much. Understandably, we, as parents wonder if our kids are equipped to handle what they might find. But the truth is, because they were born into this digital world, they're naturally more adept at navigating it than you or I.

- These kids were born, and they grew up, with a smartphone in their hands, connecting every moment and reflecting on every moment, and the early millennials really learned to be digital natives. So they know more than you do, they probably protect themselves better than you do. Because why? 'Cause they were born into it. - When it comes to navigating the web, our kids have a better radar than we give them credit for. They can tell when someone's being genuine, or trying to sell them something.

I know, for example, that my son and his peers are fully aware that they leave a digital footprint for life. So they've already developed some pretty advanced online street smarts. And I think ironic and absurdist humor we see on the web is another sign of our kids' healthy skepticism of elite narratives and top-down messaging. This doesn't mean that boomers like us have nothing to offer our digital natives. Oh, and we're Gen Xers, by the way - Life just keeps getting better.

(Both grunt) - Using tools to manage screen time and access to age appropriate content

are essential for young kids. Asking our kids questions about their digital lives, their sources of information, and patiently listening to their answers does wonders. We can learn a lot, and empower them to feel heard. Ultimately though, our job is to model our values in our actions. So once our kids are old enough, they'll have the tools to make their own decisions and navigate the stormy waters of this fifth wave when we're not around - Fine, you're on your own.

- If you enjoyed this video, be sure to check out our full conversation with Martin Gurri, where we dive deeper into this and much more. got new recommendations for people we should interview? Please, let us know in the comments below. (upbeat music)
We're a nonprofit channel dedicated to unleashing the heroic spirit of dad. If you wanna help us build the most optimistic community of parents on the internet, head over to dadsavesamerica.com and donate so we can keep producing videos like these.

Oh, and don't forget to like, subscribe and ring the bell. (bell dings) Thanks for sticking around.