

# Through the Looking-Glass

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**R**ecently, I've been thinking a lot about some of the books of childhood, and realizing that many of them had very complex, dark themes that were probably meant more for adults than children. Perhaps this was because of the dark views of life and the difficulties of living that predominated in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Exposing children to these harsh realities was considered both necessary and desirable, but it was recognized that these harsh realities had to be packaged in the guise of fantasy and whimsy.

Of course, I, like countless kids since 1865, was captivated both by *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, published in 1871. Alice's adventures seemed, as a kid, to be a great combination of fantasy and whimsy, with more than a few outlandish occurrences woven in. Of course, there were the dark references, i.e. "Off with her head!", and the wry, ironic ones, such as "The Judge was the King, and the King was the Judge, and he wore his crown atop his wig, which was rather unbecoming!" This last quote particularly appealed to me as it reminded me not to take myself too seriously as a Judge.

The basic precept of *Through the Looking-Glass* was that everything was reversed; whatever happened was the opposite of what it should be, what was illogical became logical, and vice versa. What was wrong became right, and what was right became wrong.

I've thought much more about *Through the Looking-Glass* lately,

particularly because it seems that as I look around, I find that logical precepts, accepted forms of behavior, and basic truths are being twisted and perverted. Indeed, I feel as if I, and the rest of us Americans, have become modern-day versions of Alice. We've gone through the looking-glass and emerged to find an American landscape that is very different from what we generally know to be right, true, and good.

I grew up being taught that we had a duty to be kind to others, to treat others as we would wish to be treated, and to value and appreciate our differences. And yet now, with each passing day, we see increased examples of a lack of tolerance of others, resulting in incidences of police brutality, mob violence, and other destructive forms of conduct. We are exposed to speech that is hurtful in the extreme, insularity is being encouraged, and America seems well on its way to becoming a series of armed aggressive camps. It has become much easier to tear down rather than to build, and inciting others to follow in bad behavior seems to be the path that is encouraged.

As lawyers and judges, we have a duty, a responsibility, to advocate for positive change. We need to lead by good example, turning away from behavior, speech, and thought that

we know to be wrong and destructive. We need to come out of the looking-glass and return to a clearer understanding of right and wrong, reject the wrong, and reembrace what we were taught to be some of the basic foundations of human activity.

I have always enjoyed fiction; good writing can captivate, stimulate, and enlighten us. But we must remember that what we see on the other side of the looking-glass is an alternate reality; it is not, and should not, be the reality that we continue to embrace.

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