

MS. GREENE: Good evening, everyone. Let's get started, please. Please take your seats. Abigail Disney is back in the room. Hello. Great. Awesome.

I just wanted to make sure you could all turn and look at her at a particular point. Thank you again.

I'd like to share with you the story of how I learned about the film, Pray the Devil Back to Hell, which we are all about to see, and I'd also like to tell you why I feel it is the perfect backdrop for our program theme of creativity.

I sat in my Hamlin office last July, wearing my fleece jacket to keep warm during the San Francisco summer. Despite the chilled air and opaque fog, I just loved the cozy quiet of summertime. The school buildings are empty, the phone hardly rings, the flood of e-mail ebbs, and on most days the head of school can take time to think in a lofty and sustained way. It is the head of school's version of daylight savings time. One uninterrupted workday in July is the equivalent of about two weeks during the school year.

On a workday in July, I opened my mail and found a fairly bulky envelope sent to me by a Hamlin parent. I confess, my first thought was: What could possibly be the matter? It is July, for God's sake, and you and your family should be on your way to someplace warm.

Reluctantly I tore open the envelope, only to discover a folded program for a screening of a film called Pray the Devil Back to Hell. The quickly scribbled note that was attached to the program read, "Wanda, we're on our way to Mexico, but we wanted you to know that as the head of a girls' school, this film is a must-see."

Because I had the time, I read the program thoroughly and then went to the website to learn more. I ordered the DVD soon thereafter and viewed it when it arrived a few weeks later in the mail. As I watched intently, I was disturbed by the violence and the bloodshed of war, and I was absolutely horrified by the brutality against the girls and women of Liberia.

Make no mistake about it. You are about to see bone-chilling images and hear personal, heart-breaking narratives that will trouble you deeply. Yet I was also deeply moved -- and you will be, as well -- by the strength, the audacity, the wisdom, and the resilience of the women of Liberia, women of varying ages, both Christian and Muslim, who harnessed their courage and their creative ideas to pressure the government to end a deadly civil war. I felt that the film was a compelling object lesson, revealing the power women have to make a dramatic and lasting change in the world.

About a year prior to viewing the film, I had the pleasure of meeting the dynamic president of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, who, as you know, is the first female president of an African nation. It was the grass roots peace movement which you will see in this film, staged and led by the women of Liberia, which paved the way for President Sirleaf's election in 2005 and installation in 2006.

I suggested this film, Pray the Devil Back to Hell, to the program committee, imagining that a close look at the global landscape might inform and illuminate our work at the national and local levels. For the women of Liberia and for all of us, creativity is about daring to do things that have not been done before, believing that persistent problems can be solved through innovation and courageous conversation and stepping forward with boldness into that empty and sometimes scary place of uncertainty.

Creative leaders are those who stand in the dark and say, "Let there be light."

As we begin our annual meeting with a viewing of this award-winning film, I want us to ask ourselves: What can we learn from the women of Liberia about crafting an effective long-term strategy, about developing creative solutions to challenges, about managing the pace of change and about leading with a single mission in

mind? What civil wars are being waged in subtle or not so subtle ways in our schools and in our communities? What will we do about them?

I'm so pleased that the producer of Pray the Devil Back to Hell, Dr. Abigail Disney, has joined us this evening for the viewing of this film and for a conversation which will take place during dinner tonight. Thank you, Abigail, for being here.

Many of you already know and others have probably guessed by now that I'm the daughter of a preacher. As a child, I remember looking up at the pulpit from a church pew and listening to my father read the Creation story from the Book of Genesis. I was in awe of any spiritual force that could speak things into existence by the mere words, "Let there be." Now, that's power, I thought.

As a grown woman, I now believe that there is something divine in each of us, especially in women, and we possess the power to create new realities for ourselves and for others with precisely uttered words and deliberately chosen actions, which can change their circumstances for the better, and become authors of a new kind of genesis. We are all here in Napa because there are young girls -- and boys, too -- in our schools for whom we are responsible and to whom we are deeply committed. And we know that creativity and innovation are necessary skills for success in the 21st century. The noble and sacred work of preparing children for the future begins with preparing ourselves and nurturing our own creative spirits. Therefore, let there be a room filled with new ideas and out-of-the-box thinking in the days ahead. Let there be bold conversations between NAPSG members about how we can make our schools better. Let there be speakers who stretch our minds so that they never regain their original dimension. Let there be a provocative film that calls us to action. Without any further ado, I present to you, Pray the Devil Back to Hell.