



## Ultimate Block Party Presents... Professionals at Play

*Play is serious business. Unfortunately, it's also a fast-diminishing commodity for today's kids. Despite a direct correlation between child's play and the development of critical thinking and other skills vital to success in school and a competitive 21<sup>st</sup> Century workforce, time allocated for play-based learning is on the rapid decline in the U.S., leading to a growing crisis for future innovation. **Play for Tomorrow**, a nonprofit organization dedicated to underscoring the crucial role of play in children's development and education, aims to bring playful learning back to the forefront with the **Ultimate Block Party**. The first "play date" in a national education movement, the Ultimate Block Party will transform the Bandshell area of New York City's Central Park into the world's most innovative playground on Saturday, October 3, demonstrating the real power of fun and games for education and helping to reinforce that how we play as children helps form who we become as adults.*

Many prominent figures throughout history, including some of today's "most valuable players" across a wide range of fields, recognize the impact that play has had on their illustrious careers. Some of these past and present "MVPs" include:

**Oprah Winfrey** (Born in 1954) - As a child, the world-famous talk show host, producer, actress and philanthropist entertained herself by "play-acting" in front of an "audience" of farm animals. Today, she hosts one of the longest-running and most successful talk shows on television and has earned the top spot on *Forbes's* 2010 list of the world's 100 most powerful celebrities.

**Stephen Gillett** (Born in 1977) - The Starbucks CIO credits the online role-playing game *World of Warcraft* with helping him to hone some of his key business skills. The accomplished executive says he has applied lessons learned as a top "guild master" in a highly-competitive virtual arena to the real-world coffee business.

**Frank Lloyd Wright** (1867-1959) - One of America's greatest architects remembers literally building his inspirations as a child playing with wooden blocks shaped as cubes, spheres and pyramids. Later, Wright wrote, "the maple wood blocks...all are in my fingers to this day." These geometric shapes, which held an infinite and playful number of combinations, gave Wright the core forms of his architecture.

**Hillary Clinton** (Born in 1947) - The U.S. Secretary of State and former First Lady and New York Senator, who is globally recognized as one of the most powerful and famous woman in politics, recalls having the "the best, most wonderful childhood"<sup>1</sup> filled with imaginative and unstructured fun. She played all kinds of games with the neighborhood kids, especially "chase and run," which she has described as a "complex team-based hide-and-seek and tag combination" - one that may have helped prepare her for the diplomacy she now practices every day.

<sup>1</sup>*Psychology Today.com*

**Larry Page** (Born in 1973) - The Google Co-Founder recalls that his interest in invention and discovery began when he was only 6 years old and would take apart everything in his house to see how it worked. Through his youthful exploration, Page went from building electric go-carts to co-founding the world's most popular search engine and one of the most successful corporations of our time.

**Thomas Edison** (1847-1931) - The celebrated American inventor had very little formal education. He was taught the "3Rs" by his mother, but was always a very curious child and learned much through reading on his own. When Edison was 11, his mother set up a laboratory in the family's basement. There, he began experimenting and "playing" with science, activities that led to some of his revolutionary ideas and inventions, several of which we continue to rely on to this day - such as the light bulb.

**Jane Goodall** (Born in 1934) - The world-renowned primatologist and UN Messenger of Peace was just 2 years old when her mother gave her a stuffed chimpanzee toy, which Goodall named Jubilee and which she continues to treasure to this day. She credits her fondness for Jubilee with helping to instill in her an early passion for animals. She still takes her loyal friend along on her many speaking engagements with children - and most everywhere else as well!

**Audrey Hepburn** (1929-1993) - The humanitarian and famously-feminine *Breakfast at Tiffany's* star was the younger sister to two brothers and quite the tomboy. As a child she acted out the adventure scenes from her brothers' books and disliked all things girlish. Audrey later grew up to be a world-renowned actress, one who was adored for what's been called "the perfect combination of tomboy and sophisticate."<sup>2</sup>

**Walt Disney** (1901-1966) - Founder of the animation and entertainment empire that bears his name, Disney was a boy who loved to sketch animals and other features of the natural world. These creative doodles became the basis for some of America's, and the world's, most beloved characters, including Goofy, Donald Duck and the iconic Mickey Mouse.

**Mae Jemison** (Born in 1956) - The first African-American woman to travel into space loved both science and the arts when she was growing up. As a child, Jemison learned to make connections to science by studying nature and playing outdoors. This ongoing curiosity and quest for discovery ultimately led to Jemison's career as an astronaut.

*How you play is who you become. To learn more about the **Ultimate Block Party** and **Play for Tomorrow**, visit [www.UltimateBlockParty.com](http://www.UltimateBlockParty.com) and follow **Ultimate Block Party** on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).*

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