

WHY APATHY IS KING OF MY GENERATION

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When I think of the generation that was reaching young adulthood in the period between the mid-50's to mid-60's, I see sock hops, hamburger joints, *Leave It to Beaver* on TV, and basically a uniform American dream. This dream consisted of a white picket fence around a quaint American house with a husband, wife, and 2.533 kids. When I think of the generation growing up in the period from the mid-60's to the 70's, I see flower children, tie-dye, war and peace. The period from the mid-70's to the 80's shows me disco, indulgence, and the growing power of money. It is surprising to me that the generation I see going through the thickest fog is the one I am growing up in, the one which has been given the name "Generation X."

Every period of time with its own group of people which we call a generation had certain fads and trends. We could all identify the decades which gave birth to bellbottoms, poodle skirts, and the infamous grunge flannel shirt. But these things are not things that were owned by absolutely everyone growing up in a certain time period. They are just things that we pick to characterize a time. If we had to characterize our own time as it is now, what would we pick? It seems today that no trend can hold our attention for more than one year or even less. I think that is the key to unlocking the lasting fad of our generation. We are all restless in one way or another. To many, this restlessness is indulged in sports, music, drugs, fashion, work, fun, alcohol, prayer--you name it. The bottom line is that it seems a majority of people really don't know quite what their lives are all about--and no one seems to care.

Don't get me wrong; it's not that no one cares about life anymore. That's far from where my point lies. It's just that there seems to be a growing majority of young adults that live life day to day with no long term goals driving their actions. Is it because hope for conventional happiness is gone? Is it because the means of achieving conventional happiness are impossible to men and women? Or is it because there simply is no definition of conventional happiness anymore? These questions and more plague my mind every time I think about my major, my career, my future. This raises another pair of interesting questions: where does my generation see itself in ten years, and what is the future to bring? I think that the future has become less and less important than the present. I don't know a lot of people who know exactly where they will be in ten years from now, but I do know a lot of people who plan to "cross that bridge when I come to it." Why worry about things we may not be able to control? We all just want to be happy for the time being. If I could print up a tee shirt with the previous phrase as its slogan, I bet it would outsell the classic "shit happens" motif.

Why do more and more young people smoke? Why do we flock to possibly cancer-causing tanning beds? Why doesn't anyone my age vote? It all points to the driving force behind my generation, another slogan for our team tee shirt--apathy rules. NO ONE CARES. Since the day we were born, our eyes and our minds have taken in millions of ways to be rejected, millions of ways to be infected.

When we were old enough to know what politics was, we were old enough to know it was corrupt.

What was rated "R" then is now "PG-13," and no one likes to go to see things that are "PG-13."

We are aware of the depleting ozone as we play in the sun.

We know we should recycle our cans, recycle our plastics, recycle our aluminum world.

We know sex and violence. We know violence and sex.

We fight censorship, but many of us don't f@!ing know why.

A I D S

These are just some of the reasons that I can give for explaining why times are how times are. We are all expected to obtain a higher education. We are all expected to be politically correct. We are all expected to be fat-free and low in sodium. With this criteria in mind, is it any wonder that so many people resort to apathy? Is it any wonder why so many people just don't care?

I am not trying to convince people that this is a pathetic predicament which limits and restricts us from hoping and dreaming. We still dream; it's just that we dream in different colors and flavors. We have different standards, not lower standards. I believe that this period of time in our history will be a time of reflection, a time of introspection. I believe that this time is a necessary period for the human race because it is as if we are clearing some sort of slate. There is only so much more technology to be discovered before we realize that we don't need anymore conveniences. There will come a time when we resent fast food, fast times, and easy roads.

This apathy, along with a driving restlessness common to our generation, just might be a good thing. It might lead us to search for answers previously not known. It might help us discover a greater scheme or pattern when we look back through the decades of old. This might help us to see just where we stand and where we can go from here. If the American dream of today is simply to live and to prosper, then we should have a lot more time to perfect these things. It may seem that "Generation X," as it is called, is simply a generation that has perfected the art of wasting time. The way I see it, any time spent wondering why and searching for a purpose is far from wasted. We do have a collective purpose--to find out what the "X" represents and how we are all a part of it.