

What Do Teenage Girls Really Think About?

Written by Jack Sparacino

Tuesday, 01 October 2019 08:02 - Last Updated Wednesday, 02 October 2019 05:08



"You try your hardest to raise your teenagers with patience, honesty and good manners, but they still end up being like you."

"Having teenagers is like living with a bowling alley inside your head." - Anonymous

Sure, you're probably thinking the same thing I was: What on earth does this creaky old fellow know about teenage girls? Does he now or did he ever raise such a person? No. Does he have a sister? No sir, no ma'am. Has he ever spoken with one? Ah, yes. I did go to high school. OK, so it *was* the 1960's but girls are girls, right? They thought about boys, being popular, doing well in school since they knew they were going to college, music, and boys. Plus, uh, more boys.

My friend Puika is 31. Asian American. She believes that teen girls fret over their social standing, usually through social media. They worry about whether they are pretty and cool enough to compete in this social hierarchy. Make that social morass. A jungle, complete with snakes, flowers, fruit and wolverines. Many of them complain to their mothers that they're too fat or too ugly. She thinks some of them become suicidal. Most are obsessed with their appearance.

A young lady of 30, Lisa, was walking in the park with her one year old daughter and golden retriever. Tossing a ball for Ranger, Lisa insisted that she really didn't remember. We talked

What Do Teenage Girls Really Think About?

Written by Jack Sparacino

Tuesday, 01 October 2019 08:02 - Last Updated Wednesday, 02 October 2019 05:08

about Greta Thunberg's international thrust for urgent climate change action. Ranger kept chasing that ball, but Lisa's memory bank kept failing her.

Ms. Thunberg's poise, forthrightness, and bulldog tenacity have made her a hero to many teens around the world, and an increasing number of adults. Every ton of coal we burn, every gallon of gas we consume, every day we do little or nothing to combat the climate emergency that has engulfed us, bulldozes us one day closer to global destruction and hundreds of millions of refugees desperate for relief. Better have one heck of a wall, right Donald?

Did I mention that Greta, Swedish, has led school strikes and appeared to testify on climate change before Congress? She is attractive and nailed to the truth. As she told the United Nations General Assembly, *"We are in the beginning of a mass extinction and all you can talk about is money and fairy tales of eternal economic growth. How dare you?"* □ □

Greta Thunberg is devoting her teenage years—and probably those well beyond—to thinking globally if not inter-galactically about climate disaster. She is a frontrunner for the Nobel Prize. Arm wrestling with authority figures and dunderheads.

Parachuting down to everyday teen issues, CNN's Ivana Kottasova noted, *"It's not that parents and their adolescent offspring can't communicate, but that the gulf between them is often difficult to bridge. Dad has enough trouble remembering where he left his car keys or if he's paid the gas bill this month without having to remember what it felt like to be a teenager; junior may find it impossible to imagine what it's like to walk a mile in the old man's dress oxfords."*

Musing about other people's thoughts can be a dreamy, academic, sludgy, delicate undertaking. And rather enjoyable in many cases. In other cases horrifying... I don't want to know what they are thinking and certainly not what they're feeling. I have enough feelings of my own, thank you. A poem started to float through me as I thought about young ladies and all their challenges ahead.

*Who knows what the cat drug in
Who knows what the day will bring
Must we watch the night grow cold*

Must we watch us all get old

What Do Teenage Girls Really Think About?

Written by Jack Sparacino

Tuesday, 01 October 2019 08:02 - Last Updated Wednesday, 02 October 2019 05:08

*Could we share the day's great news
Without all the fighting
Without all the blues,
Even the hard kind that gets in your shoes*

[illegible]

Enter Gabriela, 22. She is smart, personable, pretty and Hispanic, born and raised in Boston. Just out of her teen years, I asked her what she thought about back then. Her responses flowed like Teddy Roosevelt's *River of Doubt* only without the malaria, alligators, and hostile natives. Gabriela went to a prestigious high school, Community Charter School of Cambridge, and then went to college at the University of Massachusetts, Boston.

Gabriela told me that her thoughts in high school centered on doing well academically and her uncertain future. She applied a lot of pressure on herself to perform and plan ahead. She thought about her commitments to softball, basketball and volleyball. She loved listening to Spanish and American music and dug Beyonce, Drake, JZ, Rihanna. She carries a worry bubble around that she won't be able to find a job someday (she currently has a very good job) or will land in a job she doesn't like. She wants to run her own business, or work from home. In either case, control is important. She thought about someday being in a position to help others like herself who came from minority, rough neighborhoods, peppered with low income, single mothers.

Ah, control. I tend to lose control over time and place when a painting really catches my eye. Or a photograph. The photo of the three girls in this case really took itself. They look lost in thought, right where they should be on a Saturday. Thinking about their friends, assorted boys who don't gross them out too much, a party coming up. Possibly raising a family is too far off but the aromas from the maternal kitchen are there to be sampled. Maybe thinking about girls they like especially, their clothes, their popularity.

Maybe one of them wants to be the next Greta Thunberg, or the next Amelia Earhart, or the next Venus Williams. Maybe Steve Jobs (without the obnoxious personality) or Bill Gates. Maybe they admire CEO's who are kind and generous above and beyond their pure business

What Do Teenage Girls Really Think About?

Written by Jack Sparacino

Tuesday, 01 October 2019 08:02 - Last Updated Wednesday, 02 October 2019 05:08

skills. Maybe they want to run the best ribs joint in town. Beat the boys at soccer. Beat the men at tennis.

Star in your own movie, young ladies. Write it, produce it, direct it, film it with your friends. Knock 'em dead, tigresses, knock 'em dead.

Photo above by Jack Sparacino