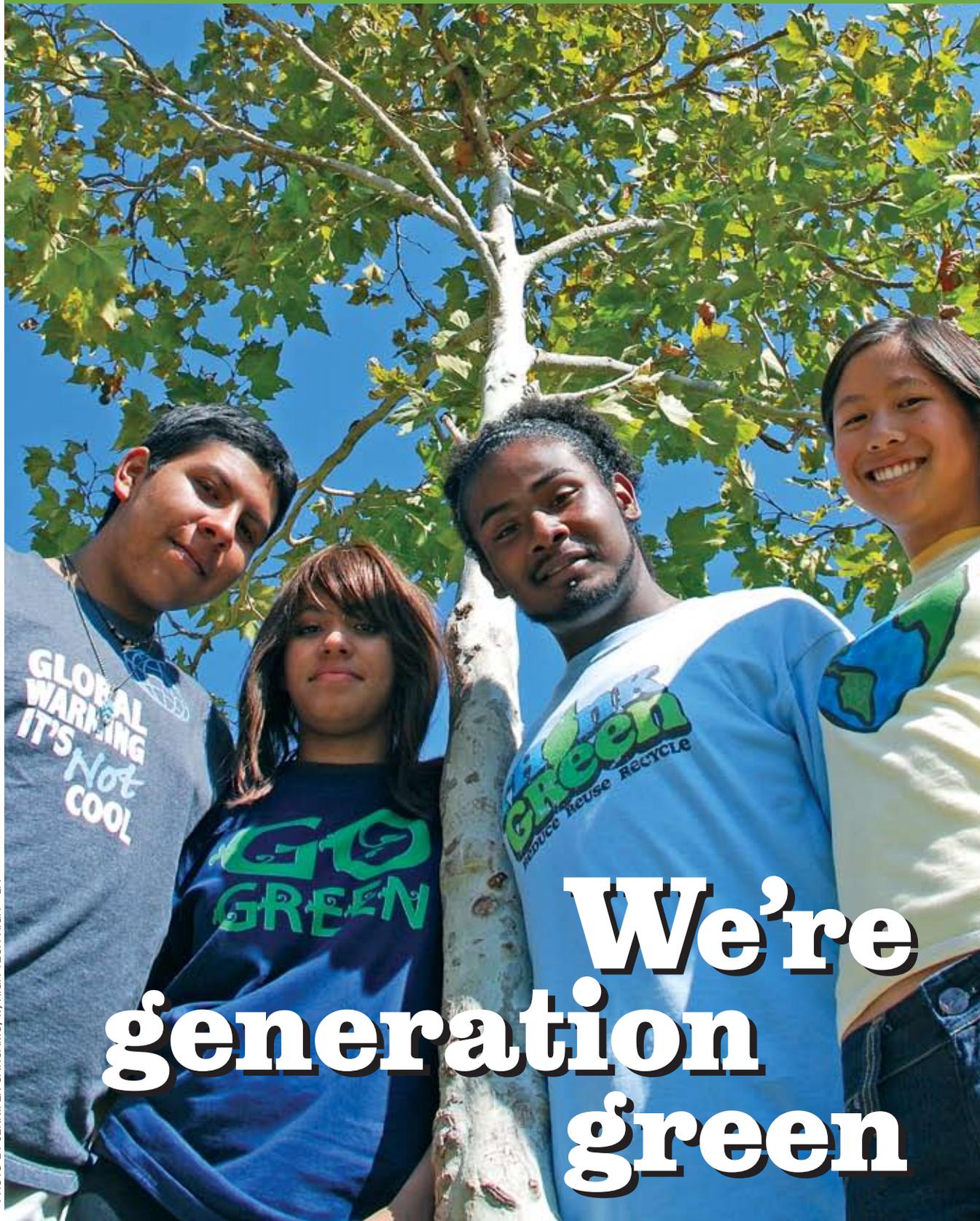


the newspaper by and about teens

L.A. youth

LAYOUTH.COM

SEPTEMBER 2007



ALSO INSIDE

I WAS ABUSED 4

SCHOOL COMIC 9

BECKHAM
MANIA 18

SECRETS 20

COSTA RICA 23

CLASSIC TEEN
MOVIES 26

CD REVIEWS 27

**We're
generation
green**

GLOBAL
WARMING 10

NO-CAR
CHALLENGE 12

BEACH CLEANUP 14

About L.A. Youth

How did L.A. Youth start?

Former teacher Donna Myrow founded the nonprofit teen newspaper in 1988 after the Supreme Court Hazelwood decision, which struck down student press rights. Myrow saw a need for an independent, uncensored forum for youth expression. L.A. Youth is now celebrating its 19th year of publishing.

How is L.A. Youth doing today?

L.A. Youth now has a readership of 500,000 in Los Angeles County. Hundreds of students have benefited from L.A. Youth's journalism training. Many have graduated from college and have built on their experiences at L.A. Youth to pursue careers in journalism, teaching, research and other fields.

Our Foster Youth Writing Project has brought the stories of teens in foster care to the newspaper. For more info, see www.layouth.com.

How do teens get involved with L.A. Youth?

Teens usually join the staff of L.A. Youth when they read the newspaper and see a notice inviting them to a Newcomer's orientation. They also get involved through our summer workshop for writers. Sometimes a teacher or parent will encourage them to get involved.

Newcomer's orientations are held every other month on Saturday mornings. Call for info at (323) 938-9194. Regular staff meetings are held every Saturday from 1 to 3 p.m.

Where is L.A. Youth distributed?

L.A. Youth is distributed free to teachers at public and private schools throughout Los Angeles County. It can also be picked up for free at many public libraries and agencies that provide services to teens.

How is L.A. Youth funded?

L.A. Youth is a nonprofit charitable organization funded by grants from foundations and corporations, donations and advertising.

What's L.A. Youth's mission?

We will provide teens with the highest level of journalism education, civic literacy and job skills. We will strengthen and build our relationships with more teachers to bring relevant issues into the classroom and improve the quality of education. We will reach out to the community to better educate policy makers about teen issues; create a more positive image of teens in the mainstream media; and raise the credibility and awareness of L.A. Youth.

Free copies of L.A. Youth for Los Angeles teachers

L.A. Youth is distributed free six times a year to high school or middle school teachers in most of Los Angeles County. Teachers also can look

forward to getting a free copy of the L.A. Youth Teacher's Guide with each issue. We do not share your info with other organizations or businesses.

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L.A. youth

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mail

These are letters we received about stories in the May-June issue of L.A. Youth.

IS CHEATING THE RIGHT ANSWER?

I can really relate to the article "An honest grade" because I also have trouble with tests. I'm always tempted to look at the smart student next to me. It's so easy but I know it's the wrong thing to do. I don't copy because I know I'll get caught sooner or later. The best thing to do is try your best and let the results come back fair.

Alex Manukian, Wilson MS (Glendale)

This article was by far my favorite because of how much we students can relate to it. It's 100 percent true that some more motivated students study all night, whereas other lazy students depend on their neighboring student so they can cheat off their answers. The article really made me think about how grades are not the most important part of the class, but learning the material is.

Steven Gasparian, Wilson MS

Cheating is definitely tempting. When I look around and see how many people cheat, either on homework or tests, I feel really disappointed. I think that cheating should feel wrong for everyone because we come to school to learn, and the grades we earn are just a visible measure of how much we know. The real test is when we have to show what we have learned by using it in our lives.

A grade shouldn't matter as much as the pure knowledge. Cheating is pointless because the only people cheaters cheat are themselves.

Ani Ahanonyan, Wilson MS

As I was reading the article, "An honest grade," I gained a whole different perspective. The people who spend hours, days, weeks and probably even months studying don't get the credit they deserve if everyone just copies from them. Everyone should admire those who do, but it's come to a point where people believe not many cheaters are being disciplined at home or school so why should they care? I've been tempted to cheat and I think I did once before. After, I felt guilty but honestly it wears off. I really don't know if I should care or not.

Gabriela Chiquito, Wilson MS

A STUDENT GOT CAUGHT CHEATING

In the article, "I got caught," it was interesting to hear about someone who has cheated only once. Being in middle school, it's normal for everyone to cheat and no one really cares, they just care about getting a good grade. I think Christina is right and that cheating has consequences. Until this article, I never thought about the cheating people do outside of school, like cheating in marriage or in sports. This article got me thinking about cheating in a way I have never thought about before. It was really insightful.

Morgan Wilson, Wilson MS

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

Send your letters to L.A. Youth



L.A. Youth
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CONTENTS

SEPTEMBER 2007



On the cover: L.A. Youth staff writers Richard Aviles, Alex Key, Trayvione Travis and Charlene Lee show they care about the environment.

We're generation green

Se says we can do something about global warming **10-11**

Three teens tried to go a week without using a car **12-13**

Beach cleanup **14-15**

An abusive home

After years of being beaten by his grandmother, Deshon finally got away. **4-5**

I finally learned to ride a bike!

Katherine was determined to learn before she started college. **7**

Cooking class

A comic about what can go wrong (and right) in home economics. **9**

Mental health survey results

16

A secret connection

A website of secrets sent in by anonymous people helped Devin deal with family problems. **20-21**

Exploring Costa Rica

A school trip showed Gabe that science doesn't have to be boring. **23**

My favorite flaw

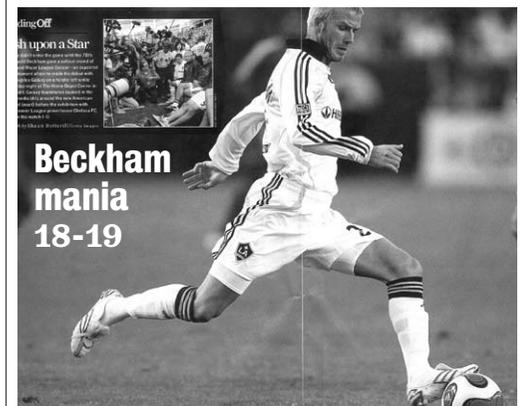
Essay contest winners wrote about embracing moles, doodling and nail biting. **24-25**

Classic teen flicks

Genevieve says these old movies are fun to watch and still relevant to teens today. **26**

CD reviews

Arctic Monkeys, Linkin Park and Ice Cube get thumbs up from our reviewers. **27**



It was hard going back to my house every day, knowing my grandmother might beat me

An abusive home



ILLUSTRATION BY BRIAN LOPEZ-SANTOS, 16, MARSHALL HS

By Deshon Woodson
17, HOLLYWOOD HS

Growing up, I lived with my aunt in Long Beach. I got taken away from my mother when I was 3 because she used drugs and physically abused me. My aunt's house was a real family to me. We'd do karaoke every Saturday. We would sing "R-E-S-P-E-C-T" and "Ain't No Mountain High Enough."

But things changed when I was in fourth grade. My grandmother lied to the authorities and said my aunt was abusing me. The police came out three times but never found signs of abuse. The fourth time they came, when I was 8, I got taken away. I tried to tell them my aunt wasn't abusing me, but all the cops did was put me and my two cousins in the car. My cousins went back

home, but guess what, they wouldn't let me return home because they found bruises on me (I had jumped in front of a bowl my auntie had thrown because she had been frustrated that I was acting up). I told my attorney that my aunt never hit me, but they don't listen to little kids.

Children's services sent me to live with my grandmother, the one who had reported my aunt. For most of the next six years, living with my grandmother was like living in hell.

When I first got there, my grandmother was great. For Christmas she bought me a big Harry Potter calendar book (everyone knows I'm a Harry Potter freak), a green bike and Rollerblades. She also took me to see Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone. But a year later, things changed when my grandmother began selling and using drugs.

If I said something wrong, she tripped on me. One time I woke up my grandmother to ask her if I could

go to school early. She yelled, "Get the hell out of my face," and threw her shoes at me. Another time when my grandmother and I were arguing, she told me that she had lied to children's services about my auntie abusing me. My grandmother said the only reason she took me in was because she needed money to support her family. She got money from children's services to buy food and clothes for me, but she used it to pay her bills and for drugs. I felt sick to my stomach. I thought she didn't care about me and I felt like I was not really a part of the family.

WHY DID THEY HIT ME?

My grandmother would let my cousins sit around drinking juice and lemonade while I had to do their chores. It wasn't just my grandmother who treated me like s---, but my other family members who lived there, too. My aunts and uncle would hit me when they were

Where to turn

If you are being abused, call for help.
Child Abuse Hotline (800) 540-4000

Childhelp (800) 422-4453, www.childhelp.org. Telephone counseling and referrals.

mad. But I was scared of them so I acted like a wuss. When my grandmother called me, I'd say, "Yes ma'am." I wanted to say, "Why do you hit me? Am I really a bad child? Why do you treat me like I'm not part of your family?"

I'd pray at night that I could get out of there. But I didn't tell anyone because I knew they'd call the cops, and I was scared that my grandmother would hit me if she found out I had told. When my social worker came every six months to check in, she'd ask, "Deshon, how is it here?" I'd say, "It's OK." But when she left I would cry because I wanted to tell her the truth.

In the backyard there was a huge tree. I climbed up there one time when I was 11 and started nailing wood to make a tree house. My tree house said, "Only Deshon." That's where I could get away, where I could be myself and have fun reading and writing in my journal. The tree house was like heaven to me because I had my Bible and I always thought that God or Jesus was talking to me, saying, "Only you can help yourself."

I did other things to try to get away from my problems. I'd go to the library after school. I also started ditching school twice a week to get drunk and smoke weed with friends (the school never called my home when I ditched). It worked sometimes. I'd forget who I was and where I was. But when I got back home I'd be afraid of being whooped.

Once, I asked to leave but my social worker said, "No, this is a good placement" because I was living with my family. I was too scared to tell her my grandma was hitting me because I would have no family to go to. I was scared to go to a foster home, not knowing where my family was. Even though they abused me, this was the only family I had. I wanted to go back with my aunt, but I couldn't.

My grandmother lived a block from my aunt's house, but sometimes it felt like 30 miles away because children's services wouldn't let me talk to my auntie or see her. On the way home from school I'd walk past my aunt's house. When I'd turn on her street, I'd smile and it would bring back memories of the fun times when we'd do karaoke and watch movies. I knew I couldn't go in because my aunt would get in trouble, but it reminded me that I had a family waiting for me.

NO ONE BELIEVED I WAS BEING ABUSED

When I was 12, I ran away to my friend Yvette's house. My social worker found out and asked me why I had run away. I said I was being abused. She asked my grandmother if I was getting abused, but my grandmother said no. Another time I told my attorney that I was being abused. The police came out but they didn't find bruises on me so I stayed. When my grandmother and family found out they thought I was a snitch.

After years of holding it all in, I began taking my anger out on my friends or anyone who was around me. I also started talking back to my grandmother because I knew she was wrong and I didn't want her yelling at me anymore. Once when she threw a cup at me, I told her, "Don't you ever throw anything at me." She grabbed me by the shirt and dragged me to her room. I yelled and screamed, "Get your damn hands off me." She said, "You're not really family. You're just an adopted kid."

One day when I was 14, my friends and I were having so much fun watching Jerry Springer at my friend Yvette's house. That is until my grandmother found out that I had lied to her about being at the library and she came to get me. It was chaos. She was hitting me in the back of the head and pulling my ear. Yvette's mother was screaming at her, "Get your hands off of him." I told Yvette's mom, "Please don't call the police." My grandmother pulled me by the ear all the way home. I went to my tree house and cried. I wanted to run away, far, far away, and never see my family again. I thought, "Why be here if I'm just going to get abused? Why be alive if I'm going to be hit and yelled at for no reason?" I didn't know why it was happening to me. I wanted my grandmother to treat me with respect, to talk to me when she was upset instead of hitting me.

Later that year, my grandmother whooped me with a belt because I came home late. I finally had enough. The next day I had a meeting with my social worker and

**They told me,
'You're safe now.'
When I heard those
words, I jumped up
and screamed. I
realized that I was
really safe.**

I planned to tell her. I was scared. My social worker saw the bruises on my neck and arm and asked me what happened. I said my grandmother hit me. This time she knew I was telling the truth.

That day I went to the doctor's office and the nurses asked to see my bruises. After I showed them, they took me to a shelter. I felt happy because I was out of the house, but I was scared because I still thought my grandmother was going to find out and try to hurt me. A few days later, they arrested my grandmother and put her in jail. I went to court and they told me, "You're safe now. Your grandmother can't come within 50 feet of you." When I heard those words, I jumped up and screamed. I realized that I was really safe.

Over the next two years, I moved around a lot to foster homes and lived with people I didn't know. I was happy to be safe but I was sad because I was not with my family. I had nightmares that I might go back to my grandmother's house, but I pushed those thoughts far back in my mind. Whenever TV shows came on with grandsons and grandmothers, I would get depressed. I watched this one show where the grandmother beat the grandson and I felt like it was me.

I thought about my aunt so many times. I wondered, "Why I am here?" I belonged with my aunt, not in a foster home. But eventually I ended up somewhere nice, a group home in Torrance, which had a lot of rules and support that they thought would help me with my depression. I was scared at first but I quickly got comfortable when I started getting to know the staff members and the other kids who lived there. The staff treated me with respect. One time I cursed out a staff member named Nicole and she ended up talking to me for an hour about my behavior. After that I always called her "Mommy."

I still sometimes took my anger out on my friends, but I realized that if I kept doing that I was going to lose them. What helped is that I started talking to my therapist. He was really, really cool. He was ghetto—he was white and listened to Tupac. I told him how I felt about moving around. He didn't let me talk about my grandmother because he said he knew what I was going through. He said, "Even though I'm an adult, you're stronger than me. I've never been through what you've been through." I got up and gave him a big hug.

I FELT SAFE AND LOVED AGAIN

What also made me happy was that the foster care system finally let me see my aunt on the weekends. My auntie would pick me up and we'd go to her house and hang out, listen to music and she'd barbeque. I felt lucky to be in foster care, protected from my grandmother, and I still got to see my aunt. My favorite time was when my aunt took me and my cousins to Six Flags. When we got there, we prayed and thanked God that I was there with them. It was my first time on roller coasters because I'm scared of heights. On Tatsu, I closed my eyes and squeezed my cousin's hand. On Freefall, my aunt's hair was big and she was screaming, "Are we done yet?"

I left the group home in July after living there for a year and a half and went to a group home in Long Beach that was less restrictive. It was hard to leave my friends. But I was proud because I wasn't depressed anymore. I'd learned I can talk to someone when I'm feeling down and not isolate myself.

To this day, I'm not fully over what my family did. Thinking about it makes me cry, but I wanted to write this story to share my experience with other kids who have been abused so they know that they are not alone. I want them to know to talk about it with someone. If you don't, it's going to be like a soda pop—if you shake it, it will explode. That's what happened to me. Somebody shook me and I exploded open.

I don't think about it too much anymore. The past is the past. I think about the future. I plan to go to college and I have dreams of becoming a fashion designer. Looking back, I think, "Boy you went through a lot." I've overcome a lot and I'm happy now.



Deshon
says that if you're going
through bad times, be strong
because it'll get better.

Calling all foster youth in Los Angeles County

Do you want to let other teens know what foster care is like? Here's your chance.

L.A. Youth is looking for foster youth ages 14 to 18 who want to write an article to be published in L.A. Youth.

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- EARN \$100** for each story published
- IMPROVE** your writing skills by working with an editor
- HELP** other foster youth by sharing your experiences
- INFORM** others about the "system"



Editor Amanda Riddle (right) works with writer Trayvione Travis on his story.

Contact editors



Amanda Riddle or Laura Lee at

(323) 938-9194
or ariddle@layouth.com

Invite Amanda or Laura to speak at your school, group home or foster agency about writing for L.A. Youth.



Got questions?

Go to www.layouth.com and click on the Foster Youth link to learn more and read stories written by foster youth.

← **Go to pages 4-5**

to read a story about how Deshon got away from his abusive grandmother.

I finally learned to ride a bike!

By Katherine Lam

18, RAMONA CONVENT (2007 GRADUATE)

While touring Stanford last year, one of the first things I noticed was that the campus was humongous and most students were riding bikes. Then my tour guide confirmed my fear—most of the students owned bikes. I panicked. I didn't know how to ride a bike. I didn't know how to operate one of the means of transportation at a major university. It was time to re-evaluate my life.

When other kids were learning to ride bikes, I missed out. It wasn't a big deal. My sister and I didn't play with kids outside since my mom thought it was "too dangerous." My parents never rode bikes (as well as I can remember); my mom only talked about bikes in the context of going to and from school when she lived in Taiwan. But since my parents always drove my sister and me everywhere, who needed bikes?

If my sister and I wanted to burn off energy, we would whip out our snazzy inline skates and coast around our concrete backyard. And when my friends and I hung out in elementary school, we played Neopets and then walked to the park to play tennis.

As I got older, I tried learning to ride a bike a couple times. My way of learning, however, was dragging my cousin's rusty bike with an almost-flat tire out of our garage, sitting on it and attempting to ride around my backyard. I didn't think to ask my parents for help or to inflate the tire. All I could feel was the bike teetering and tottering from side to side because I couldn't balance.

Every couple months I'd have 10 seconds of glory—actually traveling more than 10 feet in my backyard. But all my dreams of riding a bike were shattered when I got going and felt myself traveling at the speed of light. Since I wasn't sure how to stop, I would shift my body weight to one side and put my foot down before I hit a trash can.

I WAS SCARED OF CRASHING

The closest I had ever come to riding a bike was at a family gathering in middle school. I saw a bike and exclaimed that I couldn't ride one so my cousin Lisa tried to teach me. She held onto the handlebar to steer me for the first couple feet, but as soon as she let go, I would panic and lose my balance. I didn't have the guts to keep riding after that. I envisioned falling in the street, getting a concussion or cracking my head open. After that, I came to the conclusion that there are special bike-riding powers that are only accessible from ages 5 to 10.

It wasn't until high school that I started noticing my friends' shocked responses when I told them

that I didn't know how to ride a bike. At first, I figured they were just overreacting. However, as I started talking to more people about my inability to ride a bike, I noticed that they all wondered what had gone so terribly wrong in my childhood. I was confused and brushed off those reactions because it still had not clicked in



Rachel Chung
synth

ILLUSTRATION BY RACHEL CHUNG, 17, UNIVERSITY HS

my mind that bike riding was something as common as learning to read. My sister, Mabel, was also getting similar reactions. We both wondered why neither of us had ever learned how to ride a bike.

Last year, my English class went off on a tangent about bike riding. Some classmates and I yelled out, "We don't know how to ride bikes!" My teacher was surprised that we had never learned and others laughed. I was amused to see their reactions. Why was it such a big deal? Biking was not a matter of life or death. Finally figuring out that *not* knowing how to ride a bike was atypical, I went to search for non-bike-riding buddies on Facebook, an online networking site. There was a group dedicated to people who had never learned to ride a bike—finally a group related to biking that I could belong to!

This past summer, my mother pestered me to give it one more try. I rode a couple inches until I realized something was wrong. It turned out that all the bikes in the garage, which were collected from my cousin and old garage sales, had flat tires.

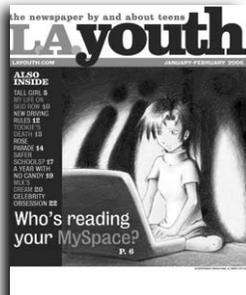
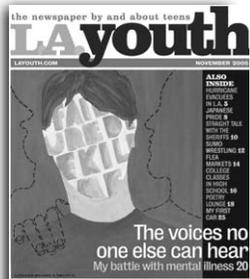
The next day, I was more determined. After my dad managed to fix one of the bikes, I hopped on. For some reason my brain told my hands to twist the bike at weird angles to avoid falling when I lost my balance, which, at first, happened every few seconds. Since the bike was too high, I had to practically jump off to one side to stop and catch myself each time. Of course, any experienced bike rider would know that balancing a bike takes smooth turns and not jerky moves, which my hands seemed to enjoy doing.

This time I didn't give up so quickly. As I shed the nervousness and stopped making jerky moves, I was able to ride the bike more than a couple feet without falling! After 15 more minutes of coasting around my backyard, I'm proud to say that on July 27, I finally learned how to ride a bike!

Now that I'm at college, I'm glad to have the choice of whether to get a bike. Most students say that I don't need a bike but I'll probably get one because it'll be easier to get around. And hey, I'm a true Angeleno at heart—why would I want to walk more than a block if there is an easier mode of transportation available?



Katherine knows it's odd that she learned to drive before she learned how to ride a bike.



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No experience necessary. Come with your story or drawing ideas and bring a friend to L.A. Youth at

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You will be invited to stay for the regular staff meeting which starts at 1 p.m.

NEXT
ORIENTATION:
**SATURDAY,
OCT. 13**
11 A.M. - NOON

CALL (323) 938-9194
E-MAIL editor@layouth.com

COOKING CLASS



Francisco Sandoval, 15, of Nogales HS, created this comic strip about what can go wrong (and right) in home economics.



It's in our hands

Once I learned about global warming, I realized that we all can do something about it



ILLUSTRATION BY SARAH EVANS, 17, TEMPLE CITY HS

By Se Kim

16, PACIFICA CHRISTIAN HS (SANTA MONICA)

At the end of ninth grade my science teacher assigned an extra-credit project—watch *An Inconvenient Truth*, the documentary about global warming by former Vice President Al Gore, and write a two-page report on the movie. I was excited to watch the film, but for the wrong reasons. I wanted to raise my A- to an A and didn't care what the film was about.

At the time, I wasn't really interested in global warming. All I knew about global warming was that the polar ice caps were going to melt and flood the Earth. It's kind of like talking about how an asteroid might hit the Earth or like saying there will be a 9.0 earthquake. You know it could happen but you don't know when and you can't stay home worrying about it. So I took a pen and notebook with me to take notes and walked into the screening expecting a boring hour and a half.

I was stunned by the scary facts in the movie. Gore showed slides of the Andes, Himalayas and Alps mountain ranges, where ice had melted off the summits because of rising temperatures. I thought these pictures were sad, but even worse, as temperatures continue to rise, more ice will melt. But I asked myself, "Why should I care?" Gore said that nearly half the world, especially people living near the Himalayas in Asia and the Andes in South America, relies on the melted ice during the summer. Less ice will mean that millions, if not billions, of people will be in a drought, and they could die from a lack of water for drinking and crops.

But I wondered, how do we know this is caused by carbon dioxide emissions from cars, factories and power plants? A chart in the movie showed that the Earth's temperature has risen as carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has increased. The movie also mentioned that the 10 hottest years on record were between 1992 and 2006. It also said the hottest year on record was 2005. I was pretty surprised because living in Los Angeles, I hadn't felt the temperature rise, but the movie said that temperatures at the North and South poles have risen faster than temperatures near the equator.

How does global warming work? The sun's rays bounce off the Earth and some leave the atmosphere while some get trapped by carbon dioxide and other gases, so-called "greenhouse gases." This is actually good because it warms the Earth and makes it possible for life to exist. But when people burn more fossil fuels, such as coal, oil and gas, there is an increase of greenhouse gases. This causes more heat to be trapped in the atmosphere, raising temperatures.

In the last 25 years, the Earth's temperature has gone up 0.4 degrees Fahrenheit, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Although that may seem insignificant, the Earth's climate can be affected with even a small change in temperature.

After the movie my friends and I decided that *An Inconvenient Truth* was one of the scariest movies we'd

Can teens make a difference?



"I do think teens can make a difference by spreading the word about global warming and telling others some of the possible causes and effects, and what will eventually happen if we don't take measures to do something about it. I recycle, turn off the lights, brush my teeth with no water and make sure I take the bus."
Janett Guzman, 15, FAIRFAX HS



"Yeah, by changing their habits. I take shorter showers."
Jordan Calvin, 16, FAIRFAX HS



"I don't think they can do anything, it's out of their control. I try to conserve but it's more than that."
Jill Bonomolo, 18

seen. I joked, "I don't want to die." We talked about the movie for a minute, but then talked about where we were going to eat.

Although it seemed like I didn't care, I was still interested in global warming because the movie showed me that there is more to it than melting polar ice caps. When I got on Yahoo or watched CNN or the Daily Show, I paid more attention every time global warming was mentioned. It was fascinating. It can cause severe droughts in some areas and heavy rainfall in others. Animals are feeling its effects, too. Polar bears are dying because the ice is melting, according to news reports.

CALIFORNIA WILL GET LESS RAIN

Global warming is already causing problems around the world. We saw it with Hurricane Katrina as it swept through New Orleans two years ago. Scientists said higher temperatures made the ocean warmer, which caused the hurricane to strengthen to a Category 5—the strongest category of hurricanes—as it passed through the Gulf of Mexico. In Southern California, we're in a drought. It has rained 2 ½ inches in the past year, compared to an average of 12 inches. I read in the Los Angeles Times that according to reports by the United Nations that came out in the spring, there will be less rain in California in the future because global warming is changing where precipitation is moving, and it is moving away from the Southwest. Our state's agriculture could be threatened by a lack of rainfall within the next 20 years.

These reports were significant because they confirmed that global warming is caused by human activity. The Bush administration had been slow to acknowledge that global warming was caused by human activity. And by doing so, it was denying that the federal government had a responsibility to help (now the Bush administration acknowledges that humans are responsible). Ac-

ording to the Los Angeles Times article about the UN reports, global warming will hit the poor countries first. If we don't do anything about it, by 2020 a quarter of a billion people in Africa will face a water shortage, which could mean millions of people dying. It was sad that the developed countries were causing all these problems, yet the hardest hit were going to be the poorest nations. It seemed unfair that America's wastefulness could affect billions of people.

I never recycled or conserved energy, but as I started learning more I felt obligated to do something. One day other students at L.A. Youth were excited to talk about global warming and felt that as teens they could do something about it. I realized that what I do can turn into a habit that can influence others to do the same.

I started taking the bus even if my parents offered me a ride. Now I don't go to sleep with the computer or TV on. I open the blinds instead of turning on the light during the day and turn off lights when I leave a room.

I told my parents to recycle, rather than throw plastic bottles away with our trash. Now we have a bag by the front door where we put bottles to recycle. It's become a habit for my mom so if someone accidentally puts a bottle in the trash, she digs it out and puts it in the bag.

Then late last year I went to my parents' clothing business and saw a bunch of empty water bottles in the trash. I told my dad they should put the bottles in a nearby bin to recycle them. My dad said he would but I knew he was just saying that to get me to go away. Still, a month later the bin was full so I took the bag to a recycling station near my house. Now one of the workers takes the bottles home to be recycled.

I got my parents to recycle, but my friends didn't care. In summer school, my friend threw a Coke bottle into the trash even though the recycling bin (with "RECYCLING" stamped on it in huge letters) was right next to it. "Use the recycling bin," I told him. "It's fine Se, no one

cares about recycling," he said.

One of my friends said, "Why worry about global warming when we could focus on global poverty or more immediate issues?" Another friend even argued that global warming is a hoax and even if it were real, would teens be able to do anything about it? Because if we can't, why even care? I said that when teens become adults, we will be the ones responsible for the environment.

TALKING ABOUT IT RAISES AWARENESS

Sometimes when I walk down the Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica, I stop to talk about global warming with volunteers from Greenpeace, an environmental organization. We'll talk for 10 minutes while my friends stare, waiting for me to finish. Now when my friends see someone from Greenpeace they drag me to the opposite side of the street. One time my friend Madison said, "It's a waste of time with a bunch of random people." But talking to them made me feel good. I want to make a difference and be part of a change. For me, even talking about global warming is an accomplishment—the more people talk about it, the more others will know about it and its consequences.

I think we should all try to recycle, turn off lights, walk or take the bus more instead of driving, and even tell our parents to drive less. We can't stop polluting completely, but we can reduce the amount of energy we use and influence the government to do more.

The federal government should require companies and states to use less coal, oil and gas. The government also should give money to scientists so they can research alternative forms of energy so that we're not so dependent on fossil fuels.

The other day while riding the bus, I thought about how changing our habits will do more than just help the environment. Using the bus or carpooling means less pollution and cleaner air that we all breathe. Buying from a local farmers market will give us fresher produce than supermarket produce, which often needs to be brought in from hundreds of miles away by heavily polluting trucks. Changing our habits can improve our health and change our lives for the better.

My friends think I'm obsessed about global warming. But I don't think I am. I just care. Every little thing we do makes a difference.



Se says that if everyone does their part to stop global warming, it will add up to something bigger.

Steps you can take

- Walk, ride the bus, bike or carpool. We need to be less dependent on cars because they produce 1.5 billion tons of carbon dioxide annually, making them the second-largest source of carbon dioxide pollution in the United States, according to the Natural Resources Defense Council.
- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. Recycling is one of the easiest ways to cut carbon dioxide pollution. Recycling paper, glass and metal saves 70 to 90 percent of the energy used to make new products, and less energy used means less pollution.
- Change your incandescent light bulbs to compact florescent bulbs, which are four to six times more efficient than regular light bulbs.
- Conserve energy at home. Turn off lights when you leave the room and open the blinds instead of turning on the light. When it's hot outside, keep your air conditioner set at 78 degrees.
- Talk to others about global warming. It is important to tell everyone that global warming is taking place.

Traveling green

At a meeting this summer, some of our teen writers mentioned that they wanted to use public transportation to help the environment, but that it was hard to get around the city on the bus. So we challenged them to go a week without riding in a car. That meant no driving or rides from parents or friends. They had to use the bus, train, a bike or their feet to get where they wanted to go. Here are three teens' experiences getting around Los Angeles without polluting as much. If you want to take the bus, go to www.mta.net to look up bus routes and plan your trip.



As a first-time bus rider, the experience was easier than I thought

By Alana Folsom

16, MARSHALL HS

Day 1

My Los Angeles exists in a 10-mile radius around my house, which is a little northeast of Dodger Stadium. For this challenge, I confined my world to places I could get to on the 176 and the 780 buses, along with the Red Line subway and Gold Line train, roughly from Pasadena to downtown.

The last time I had tried to ride a bus, I waited at the bus stop at the bottom of my street for an hour before I gave up. When I went online, I learned that the 176 bus didn't run on weekends. No wonder the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) is so unpopular.

This time, when I trekked down to the stop I had timetables, maps and \$3 (it's \$5 now) for a day pass, which lets you ride any bus or subway in the MTA system all day. I feared that I would get lost and end up in some foreign place. The bus driver eyed me suspiciously as I nervously smiled at him and sat down. The bus was seven minutes late.

I took the 176 to the Gold Line's Highland Park Station feeling a sense of accomplishment. Then I rode the Gold Line to Union Station, caught the Red Line to Vermont and Wilshire and got off. I walked about two blocks and met my friends, albeit 20 minutes late, at Machos Tacos. I could have gotten to Machos in about 10 minutes from my house by driving. Instead it took nearly an hour by bus and train.

Day 2

The voyage to my clarinet lesson posed a major threat to "Operation Transportation" (my code name for the no-car challenge). First, my mom got mad at me when I insisted that I take the bus, and second, because it was out of my 10-mile radius. Once again equipped with my maps and timetables, as well as better walking shoes (ballet flats may be stylish, but, man, they didn't bode well for long-distance traveling), I hopped on the

PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CHRIS LEE, 17, WALNUT HS

trusty 176, and smiled at the bus driver, thinking he would recognize me from earlier. Wrong.

I took the Gold Line and transferred to the 91 bus, which I took to Foothill Boulevard. I thought the bus driver would announce each upcoming stop like they do on the train, but there were no announcements. Do I tell him where I need to get off, brave the stare and maybe him laughing at me? Or do I sit here and hope that I will recognize whatever I see out the window? Embarrassed, I walked to the front and told him. He was really nice and dropped me off right at my lesson.

Day 3

I took the 176 to the Gold Line to meet my friend for lunch downtown at Olvera Street. Surprisingly, I got there 10 minutes early. After lunch I walked back to Union Station and tried to find the Gold Line. I saw the trains to Santa Barbara, but the Gold Line seemed like Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ —accessible only to wizards in Harry Potter's world. I looked everywhere and couldn't find it. I wandered, going down random tunnels bustling with people. I finally found the right tunnel, but it was about 30 minutes and a panic attack later.

Day 4

While waiting for the Red Line someone asked me for directions. Unfortunately, 10 minutes later I realized that I had given her the wrong information and the automated voice was announcing stops for a different line, the Purple Line. I didn't know there was a Purple Line. I got off and found that the Red and Purple lines had split three stops ago. I backtracked and tried to find the Red Line in vain; there was no one to ask and no signs. I asked a janitor and he led me down a set of stairs I hadn't noticed before to an underground floor.

While I was waiting for the correct train to arrive, a woman started yelling at me about how Jesus ate his brothers and how since my shoes were black, I was black. Finally a woman sitting near me told her to leave. I finally got on the train.

Day 5

After spending all day cooped up, my mom came home and told me we had to be at my school in 10 minutes for an awards ceremony. We didn't have time to ride the bus, so I got in the car, reluctantly, and rode to school. Cars are good for one thing: they can get you where you want to go fast.

In retrospect, the bus wasn't as bad as I envisioned it. Now I know that, if time is flexible, which it usually is for me and my friends, the bus is an option.



I even got my parents to take the bus

By Emily Clarke
14, PALISADES CHARTER HS

Day 1

When I heard about the no-car challenge, I pictured myself exploring the city, jumping on buses as they flew past and getting to know the bus system like the back of my hand.

In reality, I traveled within a six-mile radius of my house in West Los Angeles. The bus carried me to places within Santa Monica and Westwood where my parents usually drove me or I had taken the bus to before, but never new places. Still, it was interesting thanks to random moments, like on the first day when a man grabbed the strap I was holding onto. He didn't appear to care that he was practically holding my hand, or that my armpit was near his face, but I did. So I let go and planted both feet on the floor, though not without swaying at stops and starts.

Day 2

My dad and I walked home from UCLA, his workplace. That was really fun. We talked about my great-great grandparents and what they were like. He told me that my grandpa's grandpa kept locks of his wife's hair because he wanted to hold séances. Still, I learned that flip-flops might not be best for a three-mile walk.

Day 3

The first few days were easy. But on the third day, I planned to go to a memorial service for my cousin's grandmother in Whittier, but my parents told me transferring buses in downtown L.A. was unsafe. I used the "Girl Power!" argument,



I went all the way to Pomona, no problem!

By Victorino Martinez
18, DANIEL MURPHY CATHOLIC HS (2007 GRADUATE)

Day 1

The bus has been my main means of transportation for the past few years. I'd go from my house near USC, just south of downtown, to my old school near The Grove (seven miles), to my girlfriend's house in Beverly Hills, to Santa Monica and even to Pasadena (which takes one bus and two trains). Starting the no-car challenge, I thought it would be easy even though I had to go 30 miles to my college, Cal Poly Pomona, to turn in some paperwork. The bus ride took an hour and 35 minutes to get there and about two hours on the way back. I spent \$4.80 on bus fare, which was a lot cheaper and easier than driving. I'll be making this trip to Pomona two to four times a week in the fall. It's not as bad as I thought it would be.

Day 2

I had to go to L.A. Youth. I've made this trip more than 100 times. It's easy and relaxing.

the "I've Got to See For Myself" argument, the "What Does That Say About Our Bus System And City" argument, and eventually fell into the "This Is So Unfair!" yell. My parents also said things wouldn't change when the week was up, that I'd just go back to riding in cars. Maybe if I were a black belt in karate, they would have let me take the bus.

Day 9

Because I had failed on day three, I kept the challenge going for a couple more days after the week was over. On the ninth day, I got on the 720 bus to go to UCLA, turned my iPod up and opened Crime and Punishment. Small tip: Never, ever, get on a bus when you're not paying attention. You will miss your stop. (Also, don't sit next to someone who looks sleepy. They will slump in your direction and at one point their nose will be two inches from your thigh.)

I got off at the next stop and called my dad. A man walked by, motioning for a smoke (I'm not sure he was asking for the legal kind). I felt a little disconcerted. My dad told me I just had to cross a couple streets and take the bus in the opposite direction, until I hit the Westwood stop. Back on the bus, I was worried I'd miss my stop again and go too far in the other direction. Fortunately, 10 tense minutes later, I was on familiar ground.

The public transportation system is a wonderful service. The buses are usually on time, the drivers friendly and bus stops marked clearly. I advise using mta.net to find out which buses you need to take and then looking up the intersections on Mapquest, because the map on mta.net is too small.

Driving may be the only option for some trips right now, but we can definitely cut down on greenhouse gas emissions if we ditch cars for the common trips. My parents now take the bus together to and from work. My family hasn't given up cars completely—I failed again because I wanted to go to Ralphs with my mom and she was planning on buying a 50-pound bag of charcoal. I still think we should have taken a shopping cart and walked it home.

Day 3

It's hard to keep up with the challenge when you have an upcoming trip out of the country. My mom needed to go to Target and she wanted me to accompany her. We couldn't take the bus since we had to buy kitty litter and large gifts for our trip to visit family in Mexico. I was sad that I had to break the challenge.

Day 4

I had to help my mom at her office. We could drive or walk, since it's about a 15-minute walk from our house. We decided to walk. It was good exercise and we even ate out near her office, which we usually don't do. Later I took the bus to my girlfriend's house, which took about an hour. I arrived around 5 p.m. and we walked to the Beverly Center from her house (about 20 minutes). Even though it was a busy day, I had no problem taking the bus and walking to all of these places; it's easier since you don't have to worry about finding a ride.

Day 5

The last day of my no-car challenge. I was stuck home all day. The challenge taught me that the bus is more than just my transportation—it's also eco-friendly. It saves gas and protects the environment! Sometimes you have to drive, like for supermarket shopping or carrying big things. But the bus can get you to most places you need to go.

Mental health survey results

Last spring we asked our readers about their attitudes toward seeking help for mental health problems and how to make getting help more acceptable. Here are the answers from the 630 students who responded (thanks for helping us

out!). We randomly chose four respondents to win \$100: Congrats to Isuara Ramirez from Lennox Academy, Tanya Vazquez from Downtown Magnets HS, Melissa Ramirez from Huntington Park College Ready Academy HS and Rosalia

Greenberg from Malibu HS. Note: Some percentages do not add up to 100 because respondents skipped a question or checked all the answers that applied.

RESPONDENTS WERE:

36% Male 64% Female

Ethnicity:

22% White 12% Black
55% Latino 10% Asian
9% Other

Living arrangements?

84% Living with parent(s)/adoptive parents
7% Living with relatives
5% Living with foster parents/in a group home
0.3% Detention center
6% Other

Which of the following situations might cause you to seek help?

59% If I experienced physical or sexual assault
55% If I felt suicidal
54% If I had a serious drug or alcohol problem
50% If I was failing school
47% If I suffered a terrible loss, such as the death of a loved one
46% If I felt depressed
45% If I felt like I might seriously hurt someone else
27% If I felt really anxious all the time
13% No matter what, I probably would not seek help
(Respondents checked all that applied)

If you've had a problem in the past that you kept to yourself and did not seek help, what were the major reasons for that?

63% Felt I could handle it myself
48% Was afraid of what my parents or other family members would think or do
27% Was afraid of what my friends would think or do
21% I did reach out for help
13% Thought I would be a failure if I needed to see a therapist or psychiatrist
11% Did not know where to go for therapy
(Respondents checked all that applied)

If you looked for help, where did you look?

68% My friends
62% My family
34% Other adults in my life (teachers, counselors, religious leaders, social workers, probation officers)
16% Therapist/Psychiatrist

10% Doctor
7% Other
6% Chat rooms or websites
3% Hotline
(Respondents checked all that applied)

How did your friends, family and others treat you when they found out you were having problems?

74% They said they'd be there for me
25% They encouraged me to get help
17% They told me to get over it
13% They didn't take my problem seriously
8% They told me I was just trying to get attention
9% Other
4% They stopped hanging out with me

Place a check mark next to any of the following statements that YOU agree with:

46% Talking to a friend is better than talking to a therapist
43% Talking to a parent or family member is better than talking to a therapist
27% Taking medication is just an excuse to keep from dealing with your problems
24% None of the above
18% You should talk about problems only within the family
18% Therapy can't really help you with your problems
14% It's OK for other people to have therapists, but not me
(Respondents checked all that applied)

Place a check mark next to any statements that you feel reflect your PARENTS' OR GUARDIANS' beliefs:

46% Talking to a parent or family member is better than talking to a therapist
41% You should talk about problems only within the family
26% None of the above
21% Taking medication is just an excuse to keep from dealing with your problems
19% Talking to a friend is better than talking to a therapist
19% Therapy can't really help you with your problems
11% It's OK for other people to have therapists, but not anyone in my family
(Respondents checked all that applied)

Place a check mark next to any of

the following statements that YOU agree with:

77% Mental illness can be caused by circumstances outside the family, such as stress, problems at school, friendships or relationships
63% Mental illness can be caused by bad relationships with your parents
63% Mental illness can be caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain
52% Mental illness can be something you inherit
51% Mental illness can be treated with medication and therapy
(Respondents checked all that applied)

Place a check mark next to any statements that you feel reflect your PARENTS' OR GUARDIANS' beliefs:

66% Mental illness can be caused by life circumstances outside the family, such as stress, problems at school, friendships or relationships
57% Mental illness can be caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain
54% Mental illness can be caused by bad relationships in the family
51% Mental illness can be something you inherit
51% Most mental health problems can be treated with medication and therapy
(Respondents checked all that applied)

Where do you think you would find the MOST support if you had a problem?

37% Family
27% Other
21% Friends
7% Other adults (doctors, social workers, probation staff, group home staff, etc.)
5% Place of worship
4% School

Where do you think you would find the LEAST support if you had a problem?

42% School
28% Other adults (doctors, social workers, probation staff, group home staff, etc.)
17% Family
17% Place of worship
13% Friends
9% Other

What views about mental health do you get from the media (TV, radio, printed articles, websites)?

70% If you have a problem, you should talk to a friend or family member
60% It's normal to feel down or depressed sometimes
43% If you have a problem, you should get therapy
27% There's something wrong with you if you have a mental health problem
26% Only crazy people go to therapy
20% Therapists don't understand what teens are going through
2% Other
(Respondents checked all that applied)

If you had a problem, which of the following would you find most helpful at your school? Please put these in order of priority from 1 to 5 (with 1 being most helpful and 5 being least helpful).

A close friend I could trust was selected as most helpful, with 56%.
Other choices were:
--A peer-support program where I could talk to other teens
--A psychologist so I could talk to a professional about my problems
--A teacher who had time to listen
--A listing of resources where I could turn for help, such as hotlines and clinics that provide low-cost therapy
--None of the above

What would be the best way to encourage teens to get help when they have a mental health problem? Please put these in order of priority from 1 to 5 (with 1 being most helpful and 5 being least helpful).

Hearing from other teens about how they got help was selected as most helpful, with 56%.
Other choices were:
--Advertisements to inform teens about the signs of mental illness, where to seek help and how to help others get help when they need it
--Hearing from adults about how they got help
--Helping teens recognize images in the media that express negative views about people with mental illness
--Other

HAVE YOUR VOICE HEARD AT L.A. Youth.com

Poll results from layout.com:

- 75 percent said that school administrators should NOT be allowed to censor the school newspaper.
- 32 percent said that they spend most of their money on clothes.
- Only 15 percent say glasses make you look nerdy.

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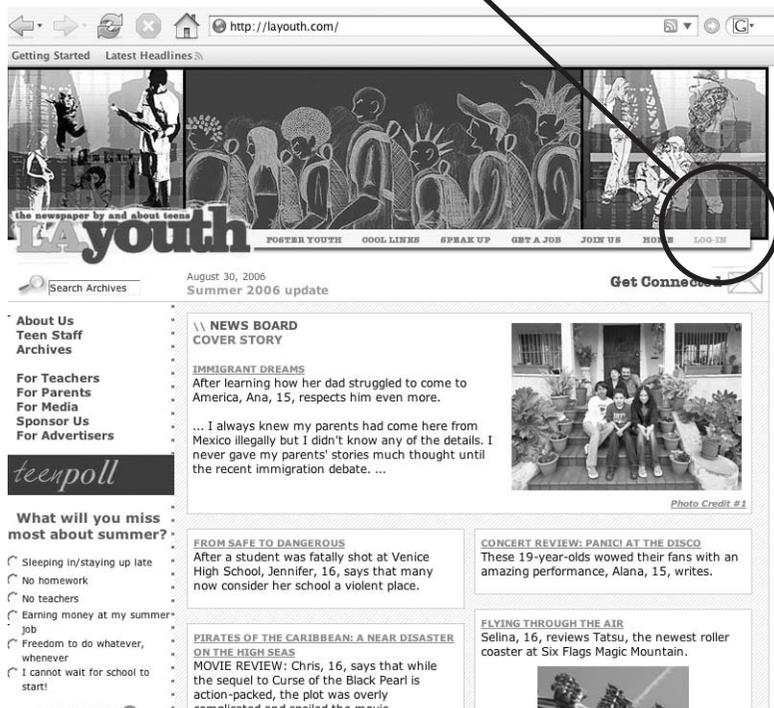
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A new soccer fan

English superstar David Beckham's arrival in L.A. got me excited about the sport

By Nico Curl
16, CULVER CITY HS

I have always been a sports fan, but I never paid much attention to soccer. Ever since international soccer star David Beckham came to play for the Los Angeles Galaxy this summer though, I've discovered soccer can be exciting.

Growing up, I played lots of sports and soccer was the one I played the longest. As I got older I drifted away from playing sports and became more of a fan. I mostly followed baseball and football because they were the easiest sports to watch on TV. Before this year, soccer was not even on my radar. It was so hard to care about professional soccer because it was not on the front page of anything, or on any major TV network. It wasn't that I was ignoring Major League Soccer; it was that I didn't even know it was there.

Then last year, my dad got a job at the Home Depot Center (a sports complex in Carson where the Galaxy play). He kept asking me if I wanted to see a soccer game and one day I finally said yes. I was lucky to be in a box suite, but that meant I was more focused on the constant free food and drinks being brought in than the game. Even though I subscribe to Sports Illustrated and frequently read the sports page in the Los Angeles Times, I recognized only two players.

One day in January I came home from school and turned on ESPN to see that Beckham had signed a five-year deal with the Galaxy that could be worth up to \$250 million. I had heard about Beckham, and how great he was, but I had never seen him play live. Immediately, I realized that my dad working at the Home Depot Center could help me see him play.

The signing was groundbreaking. It was compared to when Wayne Gretzky, who is considered hands-down the greatest hockey player of all time, was traded from a team in Canada in 1988 and boosted the popularity of hockey in Los Angeles. Major League Soccer Commissioner Don Garber was thrilled to have Beckham. He stated, "David Beckham is a global sports icon who will transcend the sport of soccer in America." As soon as I realized that Beckham would be playing for the Galaxy, going to Galaxy games seemed more attractive.

COUNTING DOWN TO HIS DEBUT

Beckham signed a contract in January, but wasn't going to play until July. Before the MLS season began, ESPN signed a contract with the league to show at least one game a week. This made it easier to watch MLS matches on TV (now I watch a game when I can). Soccer was hitting the mainstream and I had already jumped on the bandwagon.

As Beckham's arrival got closer, the hype built more and more. His wife, Victoria (or Posh Spice), had plans for a reality show surrounding her arrival in the United States. Beckham was on the cover of Sports Illustrated the same day he was introduced at a press conference as a member of the Galaxy. I made sure I didn't miss

Beckham's introduction, so I set my alarm clock to wake me up just in time to see it on TV.

Ten days before Beckham arrived I went to the Home Depot Center to see a Galaxy game. The crowd that showed up for the Saturday night game between the Galaxy and the Kansas City Wizards was given a great show. The game ended in a 2-2 tie. I was left thinking, "How could a game end in a tie? There must be more."

In an American sports world where we want to see everything go into extra innings or overtime, this sport was different. After I got over that, I realized that it's OK to end in a tie. It still was a great game.

I was getting more excited to see Beckham. His picture and commercials were everywhere. TV stations counted down to game day. Then finally the day came when me and 26,999 other people sat inside a sold-out Home Depot Cen-

Five reasons to watch soccer in L.A.

- **BECKHAM.** He recently hurt his knee, so you may not see him play this season, but he'll be here for the next four years. If you get a chance to watch him play live, you'll see how good he is. Other players raise their own games when they play against him.

- The Galaxy has cool new jerseys. The team ditched its old green and yellow duds for newer, better looking white, blue and gold ones.

- The Galaxy stadium, the Home Depot Center, is only four years old and was built specifically for soccer. It seats 27,000 (compared to the Coliseum which has 92,000 seats) so there are no bad seats. Tickets are as cheap as \$10.

- The players don't have big egos. They exit through a tunnel that is really close to the fans. You might occasionally get a high-five, autograph or even a jersey from a player.

- **Chivas USA.** If you just can't get excited about the Galaxy, there is another MLS team in town that plays at Home Depot Center, Chivas USA. And they're actually considered the better team.

ter. On Saturday, July 21, Beckham finally took the field in a Galaxy uniform. The Galaxy was playing an exhibition game against European powerhouse Chelsea FC.

As soon as Beckham exited the tunnel the "BECKHAM! BECKHAM!" chants started. As he reached the bench, what seemed like a million photographers surrounded him. Beckham was on the bench for the first half because of an ankle injury, but that did not stop

countless shots of Beckham on the bench and his wife Victoria in the stands from appearing on the big screen. The second half of the game wasn't as much a game as it was a countdown.

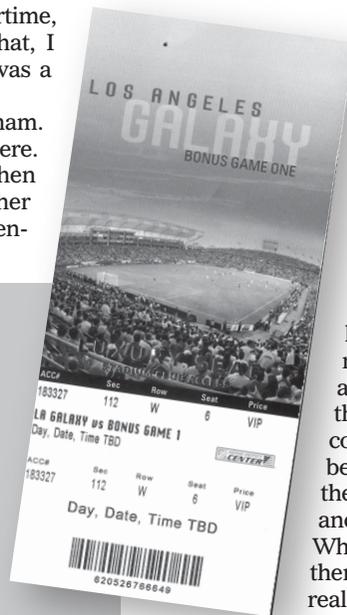
At halftime I stretched my legs, used the bathroom and got some food to make sure I would not miss any part of Beckham's first appearance. Chelsea scored quickly to quiet most of the crowd. And then the moment everyone came to see. Beckham began to warm up with about 25 minutes left in the game. He jogged and stretched up and down the side of the field. The roar in the stadium was contagious as the fans closest to the bench started to cheer and eventually the stadium was electric. It spread to me and I clapped along with everyone else. While he was stretching it seemed like there was no game going on at all. The real event was Beckham stretching on the sidelines. At one point, the ball rolled out of bounds and ended up next to Beckham.

When he kicked the ball back to his teammate the stadium erupted.

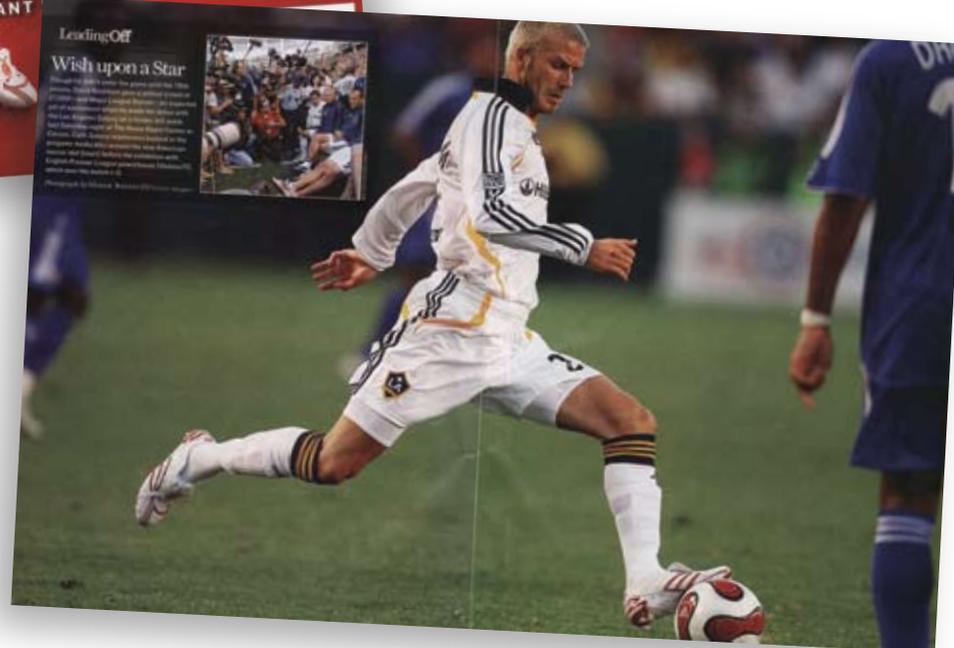
ALL EYES WERE ON BECKHAM

After Beckham finished warming up, he took off his jacket, tightened up his laces, and headed toward the sideline. When Beckham placed his feet onto the Home Depot Center grass, I wasn't able to hear myself think the crowd was so loud. The game literally stopped as all the players on the field stood motionless waiting for Beckham to enter.

I couldn't help but stand and bask in what could be the turning point of soccer in America. Usually a player does not get a crowd at a sold-out stadium on its feet for a simple substitution. The crowd stood cheering their soccer-loving hearts out for several minutes and continued to roar every time Beckham touched the ball. However, in the 88th minute, the air seemed to have been sucked out of the stadium. Beckham, still nursing an injured ankle, was taken down hard and grimaced in pain on the ground. He was down only seconds, but everyone in the stadium, including me, gasped. All I could think of when he hit the ground was that he had pushed himself too hard to please the crowd and the media, and he probably should have sat out the game.



The Sports Illustrated and Los Angeles Times articles Nico saved show that Beckham mania spread from Los Angeles to the rest of the country. He also kept his ticket (opposite page) from Beckham's first game with the Galaxy in July.



As Beckham's arrival got closer, the hype built more and more. Beckham was on the cover of Sports Illustrated the same day he was introduced at a press conference as a member of the Galaxy.

The final hurrah of the night was when the Galaxy got a shot at a corner kick that was their last chance to tie the game. Beckham jogged toward his first corner kick for the Galaxy. Beckham is known for his kicks, and the movie Bend It Like Beckham was named after them. The kick did bend, but ended up bouncing off the head of a Chelsea player away from the goal, and the game soon ended. Beckham gave a curtain call and clapped in appreciation toward the four sections of the stadium.

I think that Beckham could make a serious impact on the soccer culture in the United States. In August, Beckham was named team captain in his first start. I was at the game and saw him score his first MLS goal with a beautifully bended free kick. He also had an assist to former team captain Landon Donovan in a 2-0 Galaxy win. Three days later, the Galaxy played against the New York Red Bulls at Giants Stadium in New York. The sta-

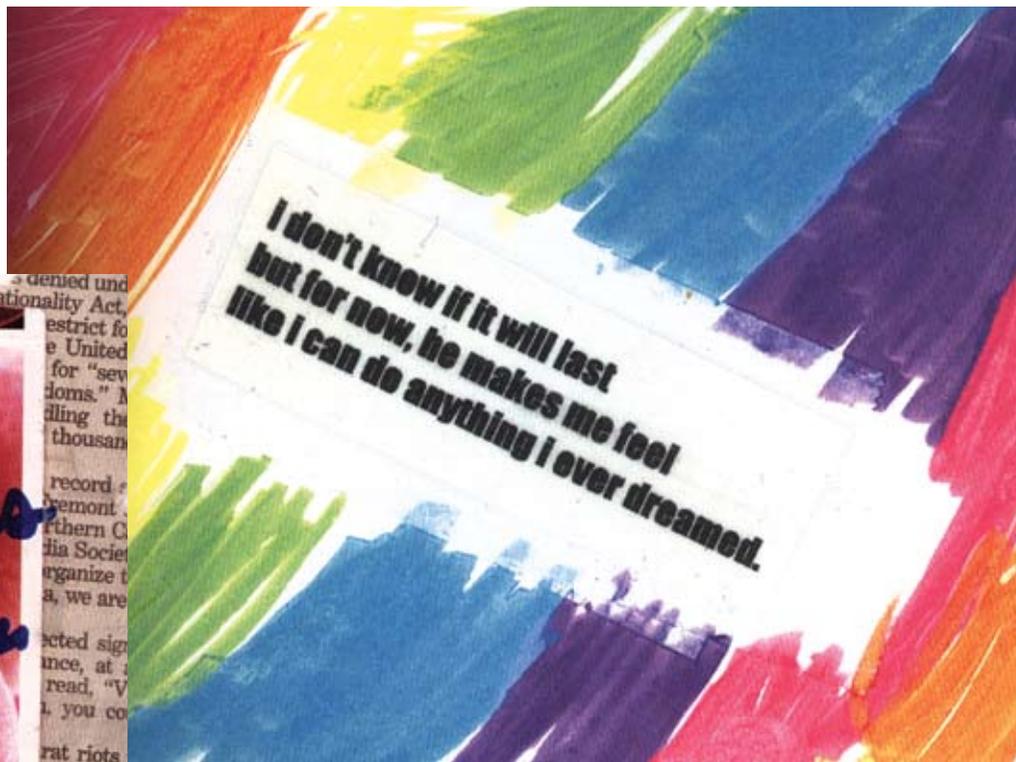
dium sold an MLS record 66,237 tickets. I watched the game on TV and it was the most exciting soccer game I had ever seen because there was so much back and forth scoring and so many exciting plays. It's too bad the Galaxy ended up losing 5-4.

It's not just L.A. getting excited about Beckham, it's the rest of the country, too. Beckham had three assists in that game and the New York crowd seemed to enjoy watching him set up his teammates' goals. I believe that more people will not just start to watch and attend MLS games, but they'll actually care about them. Beckham makes the game more intriguing because he's on another level and is one of the league's best players. However, in just his fourth game with the Galaxy, Beckham hurt his right knee last month and it's likely he'll miss the rest of the season. But he'll be back, playing with the Galaxy for at least the next four years. As Galaxy General Man-

ager Alexi Lalas puts it, "I think in the next 10 years [the MLS] will pass hockey and continue to develop side by side with basketball." Even if Beckham's arrival could not change everyone's perspective of soccer across the U.S., it sure changed one. Me.



Nico says that although Beckham might be injured for the season, he will still root for the Galaxy.



IMAGES COURTESY OF POSTSECRET

When Devin saw the rainbow image above on the PostSecret website, it reminded her of her boyfriend, Josh. At left is the rose image she found online that got her obsessed with PostSecret.

A secret connection

A website of secrets sent in by anonymous people helped me deal with family problems

By Devin Ruiz

16, RAMONA CONVENT (ALHAMBRA)

Last year while searching through Google Images for flower pictures to set as my MySpace background, I saw one that caught my eye. It seemed to be just a regular rose pasted onto a newspaper, but as I clicked to view larger, written across the rose was, "I thought I was in love with him." When I think of love and roses what comes to mind is romance, but this image showed the reality, that not all love is like a fairytale.

I wanted to know where this image came from so I clicked the link and was directed to a blog with more pictures. I scrolled down the 20 or so images, each one a picture with messages about topics like rape, insecurity, religion and fear of what the future holds. This blog was called PostSecret. I read on the blog that the pictures were postcards that held secrets sent in by anonymous

people. Knowing that these were people's secrets made me want to read more and more. Photobucket, Flickr, Yahoo and Google, I searched them all. I spent hours that first night reading them. I even neglected my six-page English paper to look for more postcards. At 11 p.m. I couldn't find any more, so I thought, "OK, I guess I should write for English now."

THEIR PRIVATE THOUGHTS FELT LIKE MINE, TOO

After that I started checking the blog every Sunday when it's updated. There were postcards in which people came clean about being beaten, being made fun of or falling in love. One person even found Hitler sexy, but swore she wasn't a bigot.

After several months I wasn't just being nosy reading other people's secrets, I felt like I could relate. The postcards put how I felt into words, like when people admitted their insecurities and crushes. There was one about someone obsessively cleaning their ears, and I

thought, "Hey, me too, I clean mine twice a day." One postcard was a black and white image of two young girls sitting side by side and smiling at one another. In a silver pen it said, "the best secrets I ever kept ... were hers." It reminded me so much of my best friend, Gaby, that I immediately sent it to her.

When I saw one that I really liked or related to, I would drag the image into my photo library, or set the image as my desktop background. My iPhoto became packed with PostSecret images, and my desktop background would change at least a few times a week, or even every day. I was totally obsessed.

I came across one PostSecret, colored in a messy rainbow with a block of white and the sentence, "I don't know if it will last but for now, he makes me feel like I can do anything I ever dreamed." This PostSecret said it all. I had been with my boyfriend Josh for a year and four months, and he made me feel better than most people could. When I was with him, I could be myself, however weird I was, and he liked it. He pushed me to

get better grades and try things I was afraid to do before, like run for class council.

Then that spring I found a PostSecret that really hit home. It was a picture of what I interpreted to be a father and a young daughter, holding hands, with black bars across their eyes to conceal their identities. In small red letters at the corner of the postcard were the words, "I forgive him, and most importantly I forgive myself." It made me think about the problems I had been having with my dad. I never thought I wouldn't be speaking to him.

My problems with my dad had begun at the end of my freshman year, when I received my report card. I had two Cs—in Spanish and math—and a "needs improvement" in English because I talked a lot. My dad got really mad and pulled me out of my school, Ramona Convent, without telling my mom. He didn't have the right to do this because my parents have joint custody of me. I told my mom and she was angrier than I was. She filed court papers asking that I stay at Ramona, and they went to court at the end of that summer. The judge ruled that I could stay at Ramona. I sensed my dad and stepmom felt like I had betrayed them.

After that, my stepmom stopped talking to me, and living at my dad's house was almost unbearable. When I came home from school, I went straight to my room. I did my homework and got more sleep than I ever had before. I didn't even have my cell phone because my dad took it away on Tuesdays when I got there, not giving it back until Friday mornings, when I left to spend the weekend at my mom's house. He said that I talked too much and it affected my grades.

Every morning when my dad would drive me to the bus stop we would fight. He would tell me to apologize to my stepmom. I would cry and tell him that it was her decision not to talk to me and that I hadn't done anything to deserve it. Then one night we had another fight and he told me to have my mom pick me up from his house because he wasn't taking me to school anymore. I got as many of my belongings as I could and left in tears, knowing that I wouldn't be back.

I BLAMED MYSELF

After leaving his house everything seemed to remind me of being there—seeing fathers and daughters and the father-daughter dinner dance at my school. I would become sad and blame myself—for not trying harder in school and for fighting with my dad, thinking I should have gone to whatever school he wanted me to. I was even madder at myself for not just sucking it up and apologizing to my stepmom.

At the same time, I knew that blaming myself wasn't right. I had tried to explain my side of the story, but he wouldn't listen. He should have wanted the best for me and kept me in Ramona. He should have talked to my stepmom about apologizing to me. I tried to be nice to my stepmom. Why was I the one who had to make the first move, why couldn't she do it?

But then I came across that PostSecret and it showed me that my dad and I were both the cause of these problems, and that I shouldn't dwell on who's to blame, but forgive—forgive my dad and forgive myself. That PostSecret said it better than anyone I knew could. My friends, my mom and my grandma had been telling me it wasn't my fault. But seeing it on the postcard, and knowing that someone else had problems with a father figure in their life and was able to forgive, showed me it was possible.

After finding the postcard, I wasn't as stressed and could focus on my homework again. I even considered

getting back in touch with my dad, who I hadn't talked to in eight months. But I was afraid that he would still be angry with me. Would he yell at me?

I missed my brothers so one day I decided to call my dad's house. No one answered so I left a voicemail. A half hour later my phone rang and across the screen flashed "Dad's House." I was too scared to answer. My heart was beating fast as I waited for the ringer to stop. All these thoughts ran through my mind. "Oh my god he just called. Do I call back? Or is he going to call back?" Then I looked at the screen and saw the symbol indicating I had a voicemail. When I listened to it, my mouth hung open. It wasn't my dad who called, it was

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my STEPMOM!! In her message she asked if everything was all right. I was so nervous to call back, but I did five minutes later. What I had been afraid of—that they would yell at me—didn't come true. There were pauses, prolonged "uhmmss" and nervous laughs. She told me how my brothers' basketball and baseball teams had won their championships. I told her about going to prom with Josh, and my plans for the summer. After an hour my mom told me I should go to sleep, so we hung up. I let out a sigh of relief. I was proud of myself because by talking to her, I had started the healing process.

Since then I have talked to them a few more times. Last month I visited my dad's house for the first time since I had moved out. Seeing my brothers, and how they had grown, made me cry, but I felt like I had never left. When I saw my dad, he walked over to me and gave

me one of the huge hugs he used to give me, the ones that I would always complain were too tight. Standing there hugging him, both of us teary eyed, made me happy that I had forgiven him, and I thought that this was how I wanted things to be.

PostSecret helped me reconnect with my dad and build a relationship with him again. It also made me feel not so alone because I knew someone else had experienced problems like mine. All this thanks to one man.

According to the PostSecret book (there are three books of postcards in addition to the website), a man named Frank Warren wanted to start a community art project, so in November 2004 he printed out 3,000 postcards that were blank on one side, and on the other side gave instructions:

Steps: Take a postcard, or two.

Tell your secret anonymously.

Stamp and mail the postcard.

Tips: Be Brief—the fewer words the better.

Be legible—use big, clear and bold lettering.

Be creative—let the postcard be your canvas."

THE POWER OF SHARING

The PostSecret book said that Warren gave away these postcards at subway stations, left them in art galleries and even placed them in the pages of books at local libraries. Soon after handing these postcards out, they arrived in his mailbox. In a video posted recently on the website, he said that what amazed him was the soulful artwork on the postcards, the thousands of secrets sent to him and the heroism in the secrets sent by everyday people. After he ran out of the 3,000 he printed, handmade postcards started arriving and he continues to get 100 to 200 postcards a day. He started the website in January 2005. Later that year, the band The All-American Rejects asked Warren if they could use the PostSecrets in the video for their single "Dirty Little Secret." They offered him \$1,000, but Warren suggested a \$2,000 donation to the Suicide Helpline. They donated the money and Warren gave them 100 postcards to use in their video.

Going to the PostSecret site has helped me realize that everyone has secrets, no matter how strange, hilarious, sad, touching or even shocking. But most people keep their secrets hidden, their own "dirty little secret." I think it's because people are afraid of how others will react. But they shouldn't be afraid because secrets are a part of being human. Looking at these postcards made me unashamed that I had secrets, too. It made me more open to admitting them to myself. It also showed me that sharing my problems could help others, just like that person sharing her secret helped me. I hope that writing this article can help others who are having problems with people they care about. Every Sunday as I read through the new postcards, I think about how grateful I am for the PostSecret website.



Devin
says to experience
the website yourself, visit
www.postsecret.blogspot.com

mail

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

A 4-FOOT-9 GIRL

I can relate to the story "Growing pains" in the opposite way. I'm 5 feet 9 and tall for my age. At school people tease me because they are jealous of my height. They used to call me King Kong, Godzilla, ogre, bulldozer and monster. That really hurt me. I got into a fight with a kid because he called me one of those names. I was suspended and I realized, who cares what they say; accept who you are and life will be better.

Rafael Mkrtychyan,
Wilson MS

I can relate to the article "Growing pains" because I was in the same position as Samantha. When I was in fifth grade I was short and I would get teased. I tried to ignore the comments, but I was afraid I would stay short forever. I decided to go to a doctor and she said that I could still grow. Right now I'm in seventh grade and I'm pretty tall. When I see short people, I don't make fun of them because I know how it feels to be made fun of. I have a friend who is 4 feet 11 and she is worried that she will not get any taller. I tell her that she will grow in her own time.

Astine Shagbalyan, Wilson MS

A MENTOR BECAME A FRIEND

I really enjoyed reading this article, because the girl in the article is very good at making choices. She chose to hang out with a mentor instead of people who didn't really care about her. I've had the same experience in my life. When I was little, I had a counselor I felt so comfortable around. I had a counselor because my mother had no time because she was always at work. My counselor was there for me whenever I needed her and she always had faith in me, even if

I didn't have faith. For example, when I had a problem with a boy I really liked, but didn't know if he liked me back, she guided me through the steps from her past experience. That was a great experience for me because she helped me solve my problems and was a best friend to me.

Briana Collura, Wilson MS

For more letters see our website,
www.layouth.com.

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Exploring Costa Rica

From white-water rafting to watching an active volcano, a school trip showed me that science doesn't have to be boring

By Gabe Andreen
14, PILGRIM SCHOOL

Being from Los Angeles, I never thought I'd be rushing down a river or dangling high up in trees.

Last year, my school organized an eight-day trip to Costa Rica, a country in Central America. We were told we would get half a year of science credits. When I told my parents about the trip, which cost \$2,000, they said, "You can go but you have to raise your own money to spend." I started a dog-walking business and earned \$700 by the time the trip came in June. (Costa Rica is actually pretty cheap and I spent only \$160.)

The night before I left, I was so excited that it was hard to fall asleep. I was wondering what the trip would be like. It turns out that the days were long and some of the academics were boring, but it was worth it for the fun outdoor activities that I would never get the chance to do in L.A.

After the seven-hour flight, we drove to our hotel in San Jose, the capital. As we stepped outside the airport, the oppressive heat and humidity almost made me turn around and walk right back in. (Throughout the trip, whenever I went outside I turned sticky and began sweating. And taking showers did nothing to get rid of the stickiness.)

The second day, we traveled over the mountains that divide Costa Rica in half. The tour guides said we were going to a hotel, but it didn't look like one at all. We stayed in large tiki huts that let all the heat and humidity in. That night we learned about bats at a research center. We were told that bats are often misconceived as evil creatures that follow Dracula's will. It turns out that bats are good-natured and people think they're bad because sometimes bats get caught in people's hair. They showed us a bat that had long, evil-looking fangs.

We didn't just learn about bats, some lived in the roof of the hotel. That night, I came into the hotel lobby and out of nowhere, whoosh, a bat flew past me. I screamed, slammed the door and stayed in my room until it left. The information we had been told about bats made it less scary, but I still freaked out because it wasn't expected.



PHOTO BY GABE'S MOM TONI DEVITO

Gabe poses on a bridge in the Sarapiquí rain forest during his school trip to Costa Rica, where his days were packed with science and outdoor adventure.

Since we were there during the rainy season, it at least drizzled every day. The next morning it was pouring rain while we did a science experiment in an orange grove, writing down our guess of how much the trees were being choked by other plants. The whole time, we were talking about wanting to go white-water rafting. It was the third day—wasn't Costa Rica supposed to be more adventurous? Luckily, we still had the rest of the trip.

I HAD THE BEST TIME RIDING THE RAPIDS

That afternoon we finally got to take a break from all the learning and went white-water rafting. On every turn the raft almost hit the riverbank, but at the last second it would turn away, turning fear into excitement. The rapids were the best; you get that dropping feeling, like when you go over a hill in a car. My clothes got sopping wet, and never dried even when I hung them up. At one point I got so desperate, I tried to use the hair dryer in the hotel but it didn't work and I was stuck with a pile of wet clothes.

Later we took a hike and the tour guides pointed out a tree with leaves that had evolved from flat to gutter-like so it wouldn't drown in the rain. I preferred learning about science on the hike rather than doing boring experiments.

But then a storm came up and I was behind everyone else. I tried to rush across a river to catch up to them, but I lost my balance on the slippery rocks and fell in. The river was waist high, fast-running and rocky. I was scared. I grabbed a big rock and the tour guide pulled me to shore. I was safe but my clothes were soaked and

covered in dirt. Walking back to the bus, barefoot on the gravel path, I was hot, wet and tired.

I just wanted to sleep but that night they took us to Mount Arenal, an active volcano that is dangerous on one side but safe on the other because the lava flows too slowly to reach the bottom, and most of the ashes and gases from eruptions are blown away by the wind. All that was between the volcano and us was a four-lane road and a patch of land. We could hear it rumble and see the bright orange lava flow down the mountainside and cool.

The next day, we hiked a trail in the Monteverde Cloud Forest, a rain forest in the mountains. It was cool and moist, a nice change from the heat. I learned that Costa Rica is more biologically diverse than North America or Europe, although it's much smaller. That made me realize that animals always surrounded us, even the ones we didn't see. Like when we were walking to our hotel and heard a deep howling noise, which we later found out were howler monkeys.

After yet another rice and beans lunch, we ziplined across the tree canopy in the cloud forest. We wore harnesses that attached to a wire above us and we zipped across the line. Going from platform to platform, I screamed my lungs out, terrified but also excited because I felt like was going to fall 80 feet to the forest floor. It was like a really fun roller coaster.

I liked that Costa Rica was different and tourist-centered, and tourism there means showing off the country's natural beauty. Wow, the trip was worth it, but being a city person, by the end I was ready to leave. I missed my dogs, my bed and most of all, my clothes dryer.

essay contest:

My favorite flaw

1ST PLACE \$50

My moles make me unique

By **Tina Nguyen**
VILLAGE ACADEMY HS (POMONA)

Mom, why do I have two moles on my face?" "Because honey, when you were a little girl, a fly landed on your face and pooped in those two places. The poops ended up drying on your face and *THAT* is why you have two moles on your face."

You know, I actually believed her when she told me that. I always assumed that I was born with these moles, that they were lucky because they were birthmarks. But looking back on my kindergarten and first grade pictures, I saw no signs of them anywhere. Meaning that over the course of my life, they have developed and grown into the 3D-looking black dots they are today.

I am now 17 years old and have a pea size, three-dimensional mole on the left

side of my face just below my mouth. In addition to that one, I have another tear shaped mole to the left of my left eye. Growing up, I always felt embarrassed about having moles on my face. I would constantly ask myself, "Why on the face, where everyone can see them?" I always felt that people saw my moles before they saw me. I was always too shy to talk about my moles. When friends would ask me about my moles, I would just give them a brief, "Oh, they're birthmarks," and leave it at that. To me, it was an unspoken topic.

Can you imagine how I must have felt when the movie *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* came out? In that movie there was a character with a mole right above his mouth and Austin called him "Moley, Moley, Moley." I was so afraid to come to school, just because I knew someone would say that to me. That movie increased my embarrass-

ment so much that I began to hate my moles and wanted them removed as soon as possible.

Now, looking back on those days, I find myself laughing at the fact that I let something that ridiculous upset me. By having time to grow and mature, I realize now that my moles are what make me unique, what make me stand out. What are the chances that I will find someone else with two moles in the exact spot as mine? Not that likely. My moles have helped me break out of my shell. When I meet new people, if my moles happen to come up as a topic, I tell them what my mom told me, and that usually breaks the ice. Because of my moles, I learned that to love yourself, you must first accept yourself, and once you are able to do that, others will love and accept you as well. And also, that life is a learning process—what doesn't kill you, can only make you stronger.



PHOTO BY CHRIS LEE, 17, WALNUT HS

2ND PLACE \$30

Doodling helps me in so many ways

By **Eddie Harty**
ARCADIA HS

I have the inconvenient yet blissful burden of doodling in class while the teacher is talking. Ever since I was very little, every time I would pick up a pen, I couldn't resist doodling.

Through many years of school and even today, I have completely missed lessons, because I was wrapped up in my doodles. I have doodled over notes,

doodled whole pages, and even doodled the entire surface of my desk. My teachers used to yell at me and my parents used to punish me, but I never stopped. After a while, everyone gave up.

Although these doodles were distracting and for the most part are completely useless, I love them. I have kept every one I liked since I was 6. They serve as a way of remembering what was going on in my life when I look at them. They have become like photographs and help

me remember better than pictures do.

They come in particularly helpful when I want to write something down, but don't want anyone else to read it. Most people don't understand my doodles, but I can write a full message to myself through pictures and be the only one able to understand the message.

They have also been an extremely good stress outlet. At school, before a test, or at home when I have a mountain of housework to do, a quick doodle al-

ways calms me down and keeps me focused. This would be even more helpful if I didn't doodle through all my classes, but with every blessing comes a burden.

Doodling also helps me think. When I need to brainstorm for an essay, or figure out an extremely difficult math problem, I simply doodle a quick design and I am back on track.

Overall my doodling problem is at times a complete annoyance, but I wouldn't dream of giving it away.

3RD PLACE \$20

I won't stop biting my nails

By **Maria McCarty**
MARSHALL HS

Why can't I stop? It's like an addiction. It controls me, it surrounds me, and all I can do is give into it. The true definition of a flaw is something that is wrong with one's self, yet my definition is a little different. Flaws, to me, are things that everyone else believes to be wrong with you, but make yourself just that, "yourself." Flaws tell a story about people's lives. They tell you where they have been, what they have done and who they are.

My "flaw" isn't really a flaw. Only the fact that everyone else thinks it's a flaw makes it a flaw. I am an obsessive nail-biter. For me, it's like a gravitational pull and the next thing you know, my finger is in my mouth and I'm gnawing away at it as if there is no tomorrow. But it's more than just nail-biting. It's comforting. It's soothing. It's one of those things that have a special meaning, as many flaws do. Whether it is a good or bad meaning is debatable, but it has a special meaning either way.

I don't know why I bite my nails. It's so natural now. It's a subconscious call-

ing that has been nagging me since I was little. My flaw doesn't help my appearance too much. Most of the time, I am biting my nails or thinking about biting them. I also tend to have a lot of hang nails, which are extremely annoying. Biting my nails helps me stay calm. It becomes a distraction to whatever may be stressing me out.

Biting my nails doesn't have limitations. Many people think that it's vulgar and unsanitary, but I rarely get sick. I don't like biting my nails, but I do think that it gives my hand and my entire body a little more character. These are my hands and by biting my nails they become a part of me even more. Biting my nails, I believe, is one of the least harmful ways to deal with stress. It helps me and in some ways, keeps me sane.

Flaws are what you make of them. If you think about it, people are the ones who make flaws; the flaws don't make the people. If no one had flaws, everyone would be the same. We should learn to embrace our flaws because once you embrace them they are yours. Once they are yours, they are no longer flaws; they become the things that make you beautiful.

HONORABLE MENTION

My pessimism helps me move on after failure

By **Erica Win**
ARCADIA HS

People say just five minutes after meeting me that I am too pessimistic. It is true, but I think it helps me protect myself from being too disappointed in life.

My pessimism is a bubble of protection that helps me through difficult times. Some may say it is a bad thing, but I think I need to be pessimistic to be ready to accept the failures that I will endure in the future. I can move on rather than linger on failure.

Being pessimistic makes me think that the worst is going to happen and that I need to be ready for it and whatever harm it brings. It prepares me for

the challenges I'll face sooner or later in life.

There was a time when I was optimistic, but after disappointing myself and being disappointed by others, I now view life somewhat negatively. I am prepared to accept the negatives in life and have learned not to be too attached because nothing in life is permanent. I may sound emo right now but if you really think about it, it is true. My pessimism is not extreme to the point where I think life has no reason. I still know that life is full of surprises, sometimes good, sometimes bad. However, pessimism is my flaw because being pessimistic makes a person lose hope and sometimes hope is the last thing we have.

ESSAY CONTEST

My third place

A sociologist came up with the idea of thinking of home as your "first place," school as your "second place," and then there's your "third place." It's the place where you can go and be with friends, be yourself, be creative or just be. You probably have one and don't even realize it. It could be anywhere, maybe your best friend's living room, the beach, the tree in front of your school where you and your friends hang out, the practice field, church or your favorite cafe. Tell us about your "third place." Tell us where it is, what makes it different from being at home or school, and what it means to you. Describe what you do when you're at your third place. How does it help you?



is, what makes it different from being at home or school, and what it means to you. Describe what you do when you're at your third place. How does it help you?

Write an essay to L.A. Youth and tell us about it.

Essays should be a page or more. Include your name, school, age and telephone number with your essay. The staff of L.A. Youth will read the entries and pick three winners. Your name will be withheld if you request it. **The first-place winner will receive \$50.** The second-place winner will get \$30 and the third-place winner will receive \$20. Winning essays will be printed in our November issue and put on our website at www.layouth.com.

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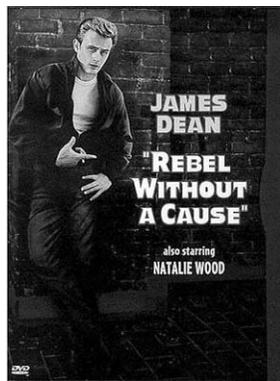
Classic teen movies that are still good today

By Genevieve Geoghan
17, MARLBOROUGH SCHOOL

I've always loved old movies, like *Bye Bye Birdie* and *Rear Window*. On a rainy day, there's nothing better than watching an old movie and slipping into a story from long ago. Here are three classic movies that I suggest you check out. They are suspenseful and thought provoking, and also about teenagers and their struggles in the past. If you've ever wondered what life would be like during the era of hair grease and bobby socks, after watching these movies you might be surprised at the differences—and similarities—between then and now.

REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE (1955)

Because this movie is so well known, I wanted to think that it was over-rated. But when I saw it, I realized that it's famous for a reason—it's a really good movie. It doesn't glamorize or criticize what it's like to be a teenager; instead it represents teen angst in a very real, timeless way.



Rebel Without a Cause traces the frustrated and restless Jim Stark (James Dean) through his first day of school in a new town (Los Angeles), where he is treated as a social outcast by a group of violent kids—think knife fights and illegal car races. Even though a knife fight might be considered “quaint” by today's standards, the scene is still suspenseful. Jim also has to deal with his overbear-

ing mother and a weak, distant father.

The film packs a lot into one day: after the leader of the pack, Buzz, dies in a fight, Jim runs off with Buzz's girlfriend, Judy (Natalie Wood), and they befriend a younger, lonely boy named Plato. Buzz's friends try to wreak havoc on Jim's life so Jim, Judy and Plato escape to an old abandoned mansion. For a short while they are able to have fun and act like the kids they never get to be—until Buzz's friends show up, and it becomes clear that things have gotten out of hand. This movie is the definition of a classic—it made both James Dean and the phrase “rebel without a cause” iconic.

Although the haircuts are different (think guys with slicked-back hair and girls with pinned-up curls), the themes of frustration, loneliness and the need for ac-

ceptance are feelings that teens today still understand. The film is a strange combination of the childlike innocence and surprising maturity that comes with being a teenager. Even though this movie is 50 years old, the teens in it are much more realistic than teens in movies today like *Mean Girls* (no offense at all to *Mean Girls*). Even if you don't like old films, this is one movie you should see.

BLACKBOARD JUNGLE (1955)

If you've ever loved movies like *Dead Poets Society*, *Freedom Writers* or *Take the Lead*, then you might like *Blackboard Jungle*, another story about a teacher inspiring disenfranchised students—this time in the 50s.

The movie is a little slow and repetitive—after a while I got tired of watching mean kids doing mean things while the determined teacher, Mr. Dadier (Glenn Ford), shows commitment and patience. However, I still found it interesting to see how the formula of unruly kids vs. inspired teacher was portrayed in 1955. Unlike *Take the Lead*, the kids in *Blackboard Jungle* don't learn how to salsa and tango; instead, by the end of the movie they turn from street kids to teenagers with morals and respect for authority—and of course, they've been that way the whole time, it's just that no one had faith in them.

In the beginning, the kids yell racist remarks during class, break a teacher's records and even corner a female teacher alone in the library. But over time, Mr. Dadier finds ways to get the kids to settle down and engages them in class. He gets the “ring-leader” of the group, Gregory Miller (Sidney Poitier), to show interest in learning, and the other students slowly follow his example. He also plays a short cartoon of Jack and the Beanstalk, and the kids are so excited talking about the themes that they begin to learn without even knowing it.



Blackboard Jungle was the first mainstream

movie to play a rock 'n' roll song (“Rock Around the Clock”). Teens were so excited about the music that violence and vandalism erupted at theatres.

Although I didn't love this movie, it was interesting to see what kids might have been like back in the 50s, and there's enough history in it that I would recommend it.

SPLENDOR IN THE GRASS (1961)

The title sounds like a movie about sunny picnics and people having fun. Fortunately, the movie is much more interesting than that—it deals with teen sexuality, which surprised me, since the movie was made in 1961.



Splendor in the Grass tells the story of Deanie (Natalie Wood) and Bud (Warren Beatty), two high school sweethearts who are the “perfect couple”—except that while Deanie is considered a “nice girl,” Bud wants something more. Although he and Deanie love each other, Bud decides to follow the advice of his father and finds a new, promiscuous girlfriend. Meanwhile, Deanie's mother urges her to remain a respectable

young girl and abstain from sex with Bud, believing that he might find her less desirable if she were so easily won.

The differing expectations of what a young woman should be literally drive Deanie insane. While Bud's off with his new girlfriend, Deanie is so conflicted about being a “good girl” versus being with Bud that she is eventually institutionalized. When Deanie has her breakdown, I hated all of the adults in the movie who tried to tell her exactly how to act—no opinion of theirs should cost a girl her sanity.

While she is in the institution, Bud and Deanie slowly grow apart. Bud is living his own life while Deanie is trying to take back her sanity.

Splendor in the Grass is a must-see for any teenager. The movie shows the pressure placed on teens, especially teenage girls, in the late 20s (when the movie takes place). Women were grouped into two categories (slut or prude), while people expected men—especially wealthy men, like Bud—to get what they wanted. After this movie, I promise you will be thankful to be living in the 21st century.



Genevieve says her favorite recent teen movie is *Ten Things I Hate About You*.

reviews: music



ARCTIC MONKEYS

CD: Favourite Worst Nightmare

By Leslie Centeno

17, BISHOP CONATY—OUR LADY OF LORETTO HS

Arctic Monkeys' second album, *Favourite Worst Nightmare*, is fierce, packed with foot-stomping tunes. It's fast and haunting and will pick you up—it's less of a nightmare, more of a dream.

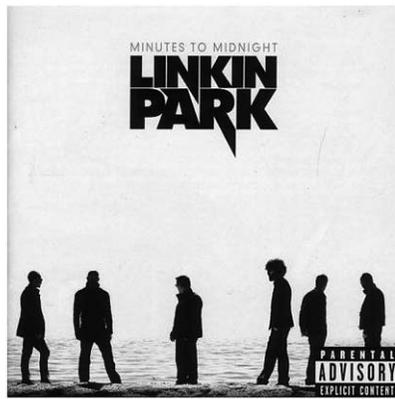
The opening song "Brianstorm" immediately launches into a thunderous breakdown with lashing riffs and galloping drums. Unlike last year's poppier debut, *Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not*, this album is more mature and complex—drummer Matt Helders even took boxing lessons to keep up with the new beats!

The lyrics are just as good as the music. Singer Alex Turner creates vivid images about everyday characters. In "This House Is A Circus," Turner sings about fame, "Wriggling around just so that you won't forget/ There's certainly some venom in the looks that you collect/ Aimlessly gazing at the blazers in the queue/ Struggling with the notion that it's life not film."

"Fluorescent Adolescent" is the song that sold me on this album. The lighter instrumentals give it a cheery mellowness that's refreshing after the faster-paced tracks. And I fell in love with the blend of solid beats, guitars and punchy bass lines on "Old Yellow Bricks." It's about wanting to get away, and the Houdini and Wizard of Oz references make this track even more of a stand-out.

Full of wit, charm and romance, *Favourite Worst Nightmare* has songs that swing from slow to explosive, and it holds your interest throughout. It's one of the few albums you can play without pressing skip. The Arctic Monkeys released a classic.

It's one of the few albums you can play without pressing skip.



LINKIN PARK

CD: Minutes to Midnight

By Victorino Martinez

18, DANIEL MURPHY CATHOLIC HS
(2007 GRADUATE)

Linkin Park's latest CD, *Minutes to Midnight*, is one of my favorite current albums. It features fresh ideas that not only touch upon Linkin Park specialties like fear, sadness and regret, but for the first time broader social commentary.

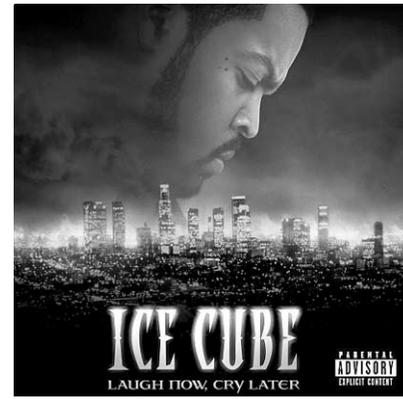
Linkin Park brings back its unique combination of rock and rap, but changes the tempos a lot more, avoiding the repetitive rhythms of the last album. The song "Given Up" has a much faster rhythm and the intro mixes in maracas with the electric guitars.

"What I've Done" brings back the band's old sound and lyrical themes. "I'll face myself/ To cross out what I've become/ Erase myself/ And let go of what I've done." I can relate because there are times when I want to erase my past.

What had much more of an impact on me was when Linkin Park went deeper in "Hands Held High," an honest song about the war in Iraq. "For a leader so nervous ... Stuttering and mumbling/ for nightly news to replay/ and the rest of the world/ watching at the end of the day/ in the living room laughing/ like what did he say? ... At times like this you pray/ But a bomb blew the mosque up yesterday." The band members take a direct approach to their feelings on the war. I liked this song because they were being direct and reflected my own feelings on the war.

The Linkin Park fans I know love the change on this album—the deeper lyrics that still have the same melody and energy that fans have come to expect.

Linkin Park went deeper in 'Hands Held High,' an honest song about the war in Iraq.



ICE CUBE

CD: Laugh Now, Cry Later

By Ronald Hoch

16, SOUTH EAST HS (SOUTH GATE)

Ice Cube is one of my favorite rappers. His rap gets in your face and goes straight to the point. His 2006 album *Laugh Now, Cry Later* is amazing.

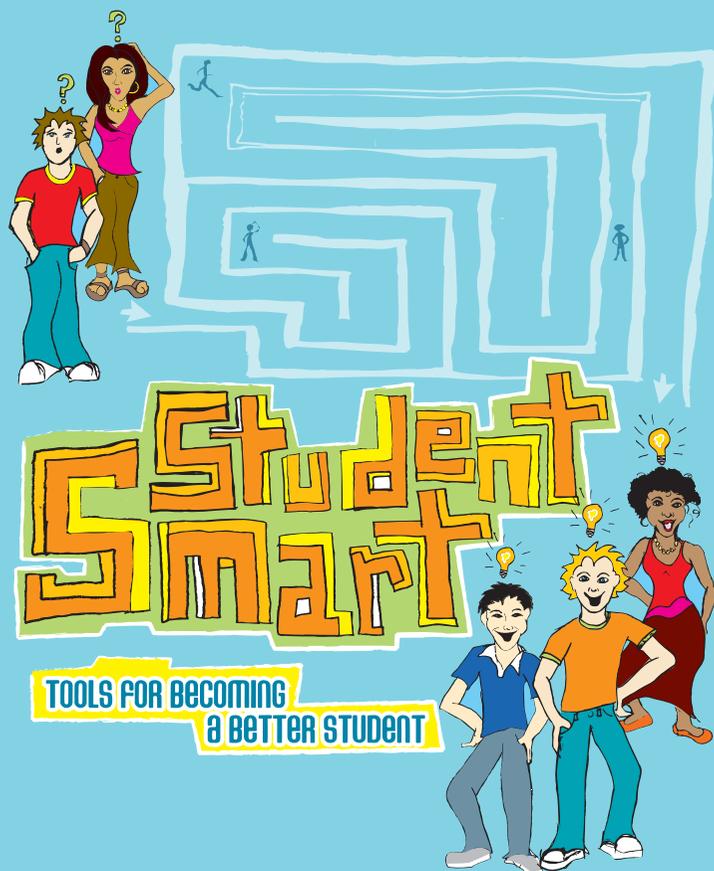
Laugh Now, Cry Later was Ice Cube's first solo album in six years, since as he says in his lyrics, he "went to Hollywood" to act. Ice Cube's music has not changed; it's just gotten better. Most people like songs that are about women, money and cars, but Ice Cube's music is about what people go through every day. It's original, the way rap is supposed to be.

The song "Laugh Now, Cry Later" caught my attention because the chorus goes "F--- it homey, I'm a laugh now and cry later/ Get your paper we can laugh now and cry later." The phrase "laugh now, cry later" refers to when a person is in trouble and laughs at what he or she did, but cries later when he or she has to face the consequences. Lots of teens say this. I know I do, like when I walked out of school in May 2006 because of the immigration protests.

The song "Growin' Up" is one of my favorites. He talks about growing up and meeting rappers like Dr. Dre and Eazy E. The chorus goes "Where am I (growin' up in da hood)/ Back down memory lane." I like the chorus because I grew up in South Gate around gang violence, which is similar to where he grew up.

I give this album thumbs up for people who love hardcore and gangster rap.

Ice Cube's music is about what people go through every day. It's original, the way rap is supposed to be.



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