



Source: Kevin Chang, Daily Pilot

A Teenager's Opinion

The value of a teenager's opinion is questioned almost daily. Oftentimes, it's value matters most when it aligns with the opinions of the majority, or the person in power. However, if said opinion goes against the major opinion, it's often criticized alongside a teenager's lack of "a true understanding of how the world works" and "ignorance." It's reactions like this that lead to the overall belittling of a teenager, and increases the stigma that a teenager's opinion is nothing more than clay ready to be remolded and fixed.

Something a lot of people have a hard time grasping is that the thoughts of minors are much more complex than having fun, sleeping, and eating. They often think that, until someone turns 18, they have no other thoughts other than living life carelessly and indulging themselves. Less 'real world' experience, for some people, translates into ignorance and wishfulness. Thus teenagers are often belittled or seen as less intelligent than those older than them. But what does belittlement do to someone's psyche? According to Asa Don Brown of the Canadian Counseling and Psychotherapy Association, "belittling another often creates a personal emptiness and void... when someone is belittling another he/she are often trivializing, minimizing, downgrading, running or playing down the personhood of another." While a bit extreme, the constant degrading of teenagers and even plain children can lead to lifelong questioning of their self worth and value. Even when only scarcely done, those few moments of trivialization can be carried with someone well into adulthood.

Everyone in life is entitled to their own opinion, but why are those of the younger generations scrutinized so harshly against those of older ones? As previously stated, this has much to do with preconceived notions of immaturity and ignorance due to a lack of experience, but why are people just so quick to gang up on opinions of those younger than them? Oftentimes, even opinions backed up by legitimate evidence and recurring events are dismissed. Even in my own home, my voice has been shut down with someone either just talking louder than me, over me, and even threatening me for supposed insolence. There is no way for me to define everyone's reasoning behind their bias against teenagers, as the unique experiences of every individual can change their opinions in unimaginable ways. However, it's important to recognize that this has been a trend throughout history. Inside every generation, fights for change have sparked within the young, and time and time again, their voice was met with unwarranted scrutiny. Scrutiny that questioned the mental capacity of teenagers, scrutiny that turned passionate fighters into the very people that questioned their worth, scrutiny that only held truth in the minds of those insecure enough to crush a person's individuality.

There is nothing to gain from shaming and scrutinizing the younger generations. As time moves on, opinions change as the world does, and to shut the free-thinkers of tomorrow down before they even have a chance is ignorant and damaging. Hopefully, things will change with newer generations, and those that chose to listen and understand. As we grow, we will remember not to underestimate the power of a teenager's opinion.

Sources:

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