

A Teen-Ager Speaks

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I am a teen-ager. I am a confused individual. I don't know whether I am still a child or an adult. The people I know treat me as a child but they expect me to behave like an upright adult. When I behave like an adult my elders say that I am still a child. I feel that I am the most misunderstood person.

In whatever I do, I am not sure of myself. Often I am the laughing stock, an object of ridicule, because I am clumsy and awkward. I have grown so rapidly that my muscle coordination has gone out of bounds. My voice is unnatural and embarrassing. Because of this, I want to escape away from the people around me, which I can't do.

At my age, I feel that my craving for excitement has increased. I can't remain idle because I am overflowing with energy and this excess energy needs outlets. Either I indulge in strenuous games or seek exciting adventures. I find the latter more appeal-

ing. The temptation of joining a gang is irresistible because I can't be cooped in the four walls of my room.

Joining the gang is the answer to my desire for recognition and to be treated as an equal by my gang mates. We have an unwritten code in the gangland to fight for the gang, right or wrong. Our loyalty to the gang is placed above our loyalty to our home and to society. This blind loyalty is so intense that we are prepared to die for it if necessary. We have to fight other gangs that pose a threat to any member of our gang.

I crave for independence from my parents. I detest too much restriction and control. I want to choose the cut of my pants, the color and style of my T-shirts. I don't wish to be dictated to. To force me to conform to social standards that are in conflict with the standards of our gang is futile. The more reprimands, scoldings, and corporal punishment I am subjected to.

the more I feel bitter against those inflicting them. I am defiant and fearless of any consequence.

In moments of solitude, I worship my hero, real or imaginary. I picture myself as an image of my hero. If I can't be a hero, at least I can be a successful villain, a villain who can't be caught by the arms of the law, a villain who can't lose in a fight, a villain who can't die. I feel the urge to destroy things which are not mine, to inflict pain on anybody, and to extort money. These I do just to show to my buddies and other people that I am tough. I am not really tough. I can't fight my fights alone. I fight with my buddies. There is no fun in a square fight.

My indoctrination in this hectic life is gained through the movies, through the comics and through the radios. What techniques I see or read. I try to ape or experiment with them. The movies and cheap magazines are my mentors.

We who have chosen the exciting and adventurous path are not beyond redemption. We need love, sympathy and understanding. We need to be assured that we are wanted and that we have a place in society and that as we leave the teen-age stage.

we shall soon outgrow the evil tendencies of adolescence and that we are capable of leading a good life. Unless someone leads us on the right path, we may not be able to extricate ourselves from the legion of the lost souls.

Give us a chance to live a decent life. We ask the government, civic organizations and welfare agencies to give us the opportunity of wholesome recreation, the opportunity to gain a better education in order to be employed. We ask the church to give us moral and spiritual guidance. We ask the police not to treat us as hardened criminals but to consider us as erring brothers. Instead of taking us to jail, they should take us to our parents and talk with them about our cases.

We ask the teachers to believe that we have something good in us and that they should capitalize on our goodness by giving us the confidence to assume our responsibilities as worthy members of society. Above all, we ask our parents to be more patient, more understanding, more sympathetic and more loving and devoted. We are sure that with the pooling of the resources of persons and agencies interested in our welfare, we can not fail them.