

Food for Thought

"Nobody will examine the normative psychic violence of the American school. Kids get the message early on that pretty girls, strong boys, the white, thin, rich and the college-bound will prevail. They're worth more and treated better. Everyone else is expendable.

Those who are different may be ignored, ridiculed, beaten, spat upon or vilified. For some kids, this process is soul killing, and school is a deeply wounding experience. . ."

Newsday editorial, April 25, 1999 "How Schools Teach Our Kids to Hate" by Donna Gaines (Ms. Gaines authored the book Teenage Wasteland: Suburbia's Dead-end Kids)

"A clear picture of adolescents, of even our own children, eludes us—not necessarily because they are rebelling, or avoiding or evading us. **It is because we aren't there.** Not just parents, but any adults. American society has left its children behind at the cost of progress in the workplace. This isn't about working parents, right or wrong, but an issue for society to set its priorities and to pay attention to its young in the same way it pays attention to its income."

"The most stunning change for adolescents today is their aloneness. The adolescents of the nineties are more isolated and more unsupervised than other generations."

"But kids and grown-ups do not have to be strangers. Aloneness makes adolescents a tribe apart."

A Tribe Apart: A Journey into the Heart of American Adolescence by Patricia Hersch

"Who imagines the world for the young and who tells them the stories? How is that world imagined and what is that story? These are two significant questions for those concerned with the human possibilities of the young."

"There are no youth problems that are not in fact human problems found among all age groups but now come to roost among the young."

Chapter 13: "Culture, Religion, and Youth" of Youth, Gospel, Liberation by Michael Warren

"Fundamentally, our society needs a moral revolution to replace a culture of violence with a renewed ethic of justice, responsibility, and community. New policies and programs, while necessary, cannot substitute for a recovery of the old values of right and wrong, respect and responsibility, love and justice. God's wisdom, love, and commandments can show us the way to live, heal, and reconcile. 'Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal' are more than words to be recited; they are imperatives for the common good. Our faith challenges each of us to examine how we can contribute to an ethic which cherishes life, puts people before things, and values kindness and compassion over anger and vengeance. A growing sense of national fear and failure must be replaced by a new commitment to solidarity and the common good.

"Confronting a Culture of Violence: A Catholic Framework for Action" (A Pastoral Message of the U.S. Catholic Bishops - to order this publication, call 1-800-235-USCC)

