

Zane Bourdon

## Adolescence Essay

Adolescence is an important time in any person's life, one imperative in the growth and development required to transition from a child to a functioning adult. The physical and psychological changes allowing for new and previously unknown activities and outlooks. Furthermore the increased responsibilities and rights granted to someone as they enter their adolescence, can be a major impact on the results later in their life. Decisions made and unmade result in long reaching and longer lasting impacts. Morality and the decisions you make therein change as one leaves behind their dependencies on their parents and form their own ideals, independency being propelled forth through biological desire and general societal pressure. Adolescence is a period of great growth and a veritable crossroads in an individual's life where they design the next decades of their existence, independence comes into conflict with family and duty, friend groups alter and shift. Adolescence is an interesting time between the simple years of childhood and the tangled webs of maturity. One experience with this concept was held by Amy Glazer Bourdon, born in the lake-side hills of northern Michigan during the height of the cold war in a small and semi-isolated mountain town. Generously took the time to share her experience with striking out on her own in a time and racial tolerance, and her outlook on the ideals of the times past and those to come.

During the late 60's Northern Michigan was a cultural mixing ground of many different people of many different variant backgrounds, a predominantly Catholic community in the region named Petoskey being a perfect example of this. With communities of Latino, German, Polish, English, and Natives living and working within the town limits, it was an unusually integrated location for the time period. At the time Amy was born the town itself was populated with several thousand people living in the city limits, a bustling central town and firm backbone farming community, divided the population. Amy was born among the farming community a mere three miles out of downtown in a lightly wooded series of homesteads. When she was born she had six older siblings and a working mother and father. She often described her community as "mixed" stating that you had people "on or two generations off the boat" and mentions that she had friends whose grandparents could not even speak English. Several times during the duration of the interview she mentions the fact that had she not seen pictures of some people in recent years she would not even have remembered their race, due to the constant exposure to other people's she grew up into. She is of the opinion that her growing up in a community of great ethnic and ethnocultural diversity, comparative to

the rest of the country at the time has resulted in her being more accepting of people and less likely to judge upon visual inference.

Growing up on a farm at the time was a physically demanding job, as much as today. Amy herself being expected to work dozens of hours every week around the house and the fields to ensure a functioning stead. She holds this up as an example of the work ethic displayed at the time by her general community, and states that as a teenager she was expected to work several hours a day at her job with the local florist, as well as attend school, and help around the house. She simply states that “No one can outwork a farm kid” stating an opinion that the expectations placed upon her when she was an adolescent endured through the duration of her adult years to still be in practical effect today. She states that a founding facet of her teenage years was the principle of hard work ethic and personal responsibility and that both were an expected and imperative part of her adolescence. Social expectations placed upon her regarded absolute effort and self recognition of mistakes as positive aspects that should be sought after. She describes a period of self responsibility and summarizes with the statement of “if you jumped of a roof with an umbrella, your parents told you it was your fault for doing something stupid, instead of immediatly trying to sue the person whose roof it was...I think thats something we are missing today.” her adolescence was notably marked by this philosophical outlook, with her parents encouraging her to become employed at a young age, and applying pressure for her to become engaged around the house and community, school, and the Church.

The bourdon family was devout Catholic, and for eighteen years Amy was expected to attend church every Sunday morning, and to adhere to Catholic theology. The Catholic Church at that point still publicly condemned and persecuted against a multitude of groups, homosexuals being chief among them. Towards the middle point of her highschool years a close friend of Amy’s publicly came out as homosexual, despite the concurrent stigma that stood against him, he openly and publically stood for himself and his ideals. However, accordingly the church publicly condemned him and the local preacher of the chapel the bourdons attended sentenced him to an eternity of hell fire. Amy states that was a major turning point in her relationship with the church and that she at that moment felt that the church was no longer preached the will of god, rather the perception of man. She was of the opinion that god did not care who it was you loved as long as you loved them, and that this was an irreversible facet of the catholic faith. When she was old enough for her parents to allow she stopped attending the church and chose her friend over her family's god. This was an important moment in her life as she directly stresses. As in addition to removing the massive influence of the church from her life she set a moral standard for the reasoning she would make in the

future. She took a stand for something she believed in and allowing it to define the rest of her actions for years afterwards and for the duration of her adolescence. A turning point in her and her family's relationship with one another.

Adolescence is a turning point in most people's lives where they can define the starting conditions of the next decades of their moral decision making. Amy was no exception to this standard, her moral standing and developing as a child and a young adult defined her life ahead of her and the moral reasoning she determined her fate preemptively and set her path before herself. By splitting with the church and her compiled upbringing along with her later experiences she developed from her adolescence into the person she is today.