

# X-pressing Ourselves

Generation X. The Twentysomethings. The 13th Generation. Who are these people that sound like they come from another planet? And why are they so talked about these days? Watching and listening to mass media, particularly television, I get the impression that this generation, which has been put up for national consumption, is some monstrous group of young people who all think, dress, and act alike; who want to discard the "liberal" values of their predecessors (another strange monolith of people, called the Baby Boomers) and restore things to the way "they ought to be;" who spend all our time jamming to music with their girlfriends, boyfriends, or both; who whine constantly about societal problems but ultimately don't give a fuck about solving them.

Listening to myself and my friends, however, it dawns on me that this outerworldly mass of people that the media is talking about is none other than ourselves. Why do we, as youth between the ages of 18-30, feel so out of touch with this commodified "Twentysomething" crowd that's supposed to represent us? As with most questions, there isn't just one answer, but there are a number of possibilities. Maybe, just maybe, this very diverse group of young people cannot be so easily clumped together across race, gender, sexual practices, class, and, yes, even age. Maybe some of us actually disagree with both Rush Limbaugh and Bill Clinton. Maybe some of us avoid corporate goods that seek to uniformize us and choose, instead, products that enhance our statement of who we are, as unique individuals. Maybe some of us don't prioritize being able to buy our own three-car-garage homes in white suburban neighbourhoods for our families and material gadgets and widgets -- maybe some of us don't even buy into the traditional, western nuclear family (you mean, there are people who still believe in \*gasp\* FreeLove??) Maybe some of us care about other human beings, about the Earth that we tread on, about nonmaterialistic values -- and maybe we do have legitimate ideas about what to do about these, what to do to make society better.

Who are we? Where are we? Why hasn't mass media talked about "us"? In a capitalist world, the role of media is not to tell us about ourselves and about each other, but rather to sell mass audiences to client corporations. An idealistic and diverse audience that deeply cares about the Earth and its inhabitants (including the human kind) is a hard group to sell to businesses based fundamentally on growth, overconsumption, and "the bottom line," at the expense and misery of humans, animals, and the environment. On the other foot, it's much easier to sell an audience that is concerned with buying homes, buying cars, buying computers, buying TV's, buying music, buying clothes, buying images, and, ultimately, buying people. No matter that media has to first create this image, fictional as it is -- after all, in a self-fulfilling manner, they will eventually be able to sell this image to (i.e., force it on) the very group that the image is supposed to represent.

This universalization of our generation across racial, sexual, class, cultural lines -- lines that matter -- erases and marginalizes profound human differences. Some of us have resisted this lumping. Now we need to progress beyond that and, in the space of

resistance, create ourselves anew, define ourselves, in all our myriad and unique ways. If media cannot accept us in all of our glorious diversity, then we must leave it behind too, and create our own media, our own images -- images that truly reflect us...every single one of us.

Let us, not the television, decide who we are.

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