

The college of eternal high schoolers

Business



In my world, college is a concrete paradise consisted of scribbled on notes, blue-ink pens, and shiny expensive textbooks occupied by those who value education above everything. College is a place where people are independent and free to do as they please, but know how to handle themselves within the streets of the surrounding city. There is no hierarchical system among peers as everyone is striving for more knowledge and the students are there because they want to be, not because the government or their parents are forcing them.

Sadly, this is only wishful thinking and not the reality of college at all. Last semester, while also attending high school as a senior at Estancia High, I enrolled in an institution called Central New Mexico Community College (CNM) through the dual credit program. I had initially decided to take World Religion and Intro to Theatre in order to fill out my elective-deprived high school schedule, but I soon became intrigued more by my peers rather than the work. The first day of class at CNM Montoya Campus was strange only because it reminded me of the first day of school in Estancia. The campus clustered with wandering souls guided only by their paper maps and friendly encounters with veteran students. Most stayed to themselves though, headphones plugging up their ears and cell phones a necessity for surviving in a singular society where everybody communicates through a machine or fails to communicate at all.

It took me a while to find a place where people converse verbally, but finally I found one: The Smokers Territory, a place where smoking is permitted and outside seating is readily available. As happy as I was to have a conversation with my peers, I slowly began to notice that the institution itself was

breeding the cliques I tried so hard to avoid. Out of the entire campus, “ The Smokers Territory” was the only place besides the cafeteria that encourages verbal communication and that alone divides the smoker’s from the non-smokers. Class proved to be even more interesting. At first, the class was quiet because no one really knew each other.

As the semester rolled on, the class made friends with each other, establishing what could be considered small groups within a larger conglomerate of minds. On one occasion, a group of girls in my religion class ruthlessly tried to destroy the beliefs of a devout Christian woman because they didn’t agree with her. What it reminded me of was high school.

Everywhere I looked, it seemed like the face of high school was glancing back at me. The dirty judgmental looks, the people there that didn’t want to be, and the way nobody respected anybody else was driving me nuts. I began to ask myself why people were behaving like teenagers when they should be acting like adults.

Then it came to me: The words teenager and adult were labels just like jock, prep, rocker, or weirdo. I was assuming that since my peers were older, they would be more “ adult like”. What seemed like a logical assumption quickly turned into a joke. With the average age of a community college student at 29, it seems that even at that age, people are having trouble relating to people that are different. However, is it the school that makes us believe we need to be sorted into various assemblies or is it just human nature to assert ourselves into them? I personally have no problem being friends with a bunch of people who have similar interests. In fact, I think it’s healthy.

It's when the level of acceptance becomes too exclusive that a problem forms. We need to open our eyes and see more than what's looking back in the mirror in order to accept differences and make the world a happier place to live in.