

## **Don't call us alternative**

Don't call us alternative,  
that's just a label.  
You can bus that stuff  
right off the lunch room table.

We're not alternative,  
that's just a stigma--  
a principal's threat  
to solve the enigma  
of why we were expelled  
or hate schools,  
don't respect our teachers or  
won't follow the rules.

Don't call us alternative  
that's about music and fuels,  
alternative medicine,  
lifestyles, and rules.

Don't call us alternative,  
who wants labeled--  
called bad, dumb, or  
mentally disabled?

Yes we've got problems,  
but who ain't?  
You don't know us  
from a can of paint!

We're the e-Generation  
and that needs no explanation  
or a college degree to see  
we out perform our parents  
'n teachers  
in computer proficiency.

We're building a revolution  
in technology.  
It's in our language,  
in everything we do;  
it's our ideology.

Or, let's put it this way:  
Like dry leaves  
belong in a mulcher,  
technology is youth culture.

Or don't call us the Violent Generation  
That's just media sensation.

Let's look at the yearly facts:  
24 students are killed in attacks  
in the schoolhouse and  
yet each year parents murder 3,000.

Though juvenile crime has fallen  
and drug use is lower,  
teen pregnancy is declining  
and we volunteer more.  
And we're healthier and stronger  
than any generation,  
yet we are called  
the Scapegoat Generation.

Why. . . ?

We're no longer seen as  
a child of a sick society;  
now we're the root cause.  
We were at-risk of anxiety,  
now we're the risk to the laws.

The media paints us as lowbrow, rude,  
blasé, materialistic, and silent.  
And all young Black men are hostile,  
athletic, criminal, and violent.

The truth however is...

We enjoy discussing our music,  
clothes and other features,  
still we're most sincere  
when we talk about our teachers.

Though in school we feel fewer rights,  
less freedom and respect is the trend,  
teachers are the best when they treat you  
like a person—  
when they become your friend.

Education isn't numbers and facts,  
how you teach or seat us.  
We want to be individuals,  
it's the human connection,  
it's simply how you treat us.

You see...

The older generation is  
half the problem by far.  
It's their inability to grow up—  
they're still trying to figure out,  
who they really are!

The other half is our loneliness,  
it's our growing alienation.  
Teens today spend more time alone  
than any other generation.

So we all must work together,  
both the kids and adults.  
If we keep separated,  
it will be all our faults.

Don't worry. We have a few ideas  
to stop the separations,  
to improve the world for children  
and all future generations.

First...

Don't call us alternative.  
In fact, show some prudence,  
It's the school and the way they teach  
that's alternative...  
never the students.

Then, just think about it...  
We're no fools.  
We're more likely to obey them  
when you let us  
help you make the rules.

And sometimes school's not easy,  
good grades are hard to earn  
If we can't learn the way you teach,  
then teach us the way we learn.

We know with written tests,  
On average we're below.  
So, gives us different ways  
to show what we know.

Next...

We need our own space in school  
for self-expression  
and the exploration  
of our own values and concerns--  
a place where a young person  
tries and fails and learns,

a place of resistance left for us to define and  
be ourselves,  
to communicate freely with our friends  
or when youth rebels.

And last...

We just want to be  
taken seriously,  
to feel connected to  
the larger community.

We want a say  
in what we all become  
and help solve a world  
or neighborhood problem.

Our generation is hopeful  
so pay close attention  
to the most important thing  
that we will mention.  
In fact, it's the only  
piece that's missin'--  
in one simple word...  
listen.

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Connecting with Today's Youth" by Carol Tell in  
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