

Rites of Passage: Either AACI provides rites of passage, or youth will have their own

“Remember, adolescence is not for everyone.

~ John Harris Loflin

“Like its politicians and its wars, society has the teenagers it deserves.” ~ John Boynton Priestly

“Adolescence is a structurally induced period of enforced leisure.”

~ Sullivan, from “Getting Paid”: Youth Crime and Work in the Inner City

When American children reach a certain stage in life, especially around bodily changes resulting from puberty/menarche, they must show the world they are no longer children.

Society knows this. Eighth grade graduation, having to pay adult prices at the movies, baptism, getting a learners permit and drivers license, confirmation/first communion, quinceanera and bar mitzvah/bat mitzvah ceremonies or high schools proms are examples of pro-social rites of passage.

Nonetheless, some youth create their own rites to show they are no longer children. These are usually anti-social actions. Smoking tobacco, getting high, shoplifting and car theft, getting someone pregnant/getting pregnant, selling drugs, gang initiations, robbery or doing time are examples.

This inherent need of youth to prove they are no longer children has to be respected and validated by AACI. Youth must prove themselves; and, they will—one way or another.

What are rites of passage and why are they so important

Although not everyone is familiar with the term “rites of passage,” we all have experienced them at some point.

A rite of passage is defined as a ritual or experience that marks a major milestone or change in a person’s life, and they can be particularly important for children.

The term “rites of passage” was coined in 1909 by the French anthropologist Arnold van Gennep, who observed that these ceremonies are a way to help individuals go through the difficulties of a social transition. Nowadays, the term is in common use, since it represents a reality deeply ingrained in the human mind. Rites of Passage are vital to youth because:

- They provide a sense of renewal and belonging
- They place us in a sacred space
- They’re a connection with our past
- They help us make sense of change

<https://akomaunitycenter.org/what-are-rites-of-passage-and-why-are-they-so-important/>

Indy’s Mr. Clete Hassan Ladd has 3 books on the significance of rites of passage:

- *The Theology of Minister Malcolm X* (1993)
https://books.google.com/books/about/The_Theology_of_Minister_Malcolm_X.html?id=8nI8HAAACAAJ 1993
- *Rites of Passage: Theory and Practice*, (1995)
https://books.google.com/books/about/Rites_of_Passage.html?id=aEInGwAACAAJ
- *Afrikan American Rites of Passage: Reclaiming Our Sons, Volume III*
<https://www.amazon.ca/Afrikan-American-Rites-Passage-Reclaiming-ebook/dp/Bo7VZ9T61S>

Mr. Ladd’s books:

- point out comparisons, similarities (universal and culturally specific), and contrast differences between religions, religious behaviors, belief systems and rituals from the most primitive to modern practices;

- emphasize teen/youth gangs, their common and unique rituals as they relate with other mainstream/Western religions practices that celebrate human passages from one stage to another, or elevation in status, sacred or secular among the community or group within their religious and social dynamics;
- demonstrate how gangs share common beliefs, symbols, rituals and celebrations. He describes unique and some not so unique practices of specific groups of gangs and shows how their beliefs can influence the lives of its practitioners and society;
- discuss a solution on how we can endeavor to reconcile with our youth and reclaim them by promoting a prevention and intervention strategy known as “rites of passage into adulthood”; and
- illustrate how rites of passage is a vehicle we can invest in to bring our youth back into accordance with the G-D’s laws and principles of love, character, integrity, forgiveness and spirituality.

Proposed Action Item: An AACI Rites of Passage Program for Indianapolis

AACI will work with Clete Ladd to come up with an AACI Rites of Passage program to be used in schools, Boys/Girls Clubs, community centers, churches, and other appropriate settings. AACI will conduct a 6-year longitudinal study based on specific criteria. The research will see if there are any positive outcomes from rites of passage ceremonies in the lives of youth in the program.

Resources

- Reinvent Adolescence: Combine Rites of Passage and Citizenship Education
<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Reinvent-adolescence-Combine-rites-of-passage-and-citizenship-education.pdf>
- A Proposal to Reinvent Adolescence and Create a Community Youth Charter
<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/A-Proposal-to-Reinvent-Adolescence-and-Create-a-Community-Youth-Charter.pdf>
- Transform Rites of Passage: Combine the Australian Aboriginal Walkabout model and the Accelerated Learning Concept
<http://vorcreatex.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Transform-Rites-of-Passage-Combine-the-Walkabout-model-and-accelerated-learning-concept-1.pdf>
- *The End of Adolescence*, Oxford Medical Publications, 2004
- *The Case Against Adolescence: Rediscovering the Adult in Every Teen*, Robert Epstein, 2007
- *Escaping the Endless Adolescence: How We Can Help Our Teenagers Grow Up Before They Grow Old*, Allen & Allen, 2009

Videos

- *Inside a gang initiation with the Silent Murder Crips*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HoiSh9A7rLI>
- *Hoboken, NJ HS: African American Culture Club Rites of Passage Ceremony* Jun 22, 2019or
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MIdfvjr5kvk>
- *Black Boys Rites of Passage - Marlon Shackelford* Feb 24, 2017
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OXXTPO3F-WE>
- *Rites of Passage Keys to Black Adulthood Pt I Sep 11, 2014*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWMwIc5HwL8>
- *An Exploration of Coming of Age Rituals & Rites of Passage in a Modern Era* Ron Fritz, 2017
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Obta5WPfse4>
- *Girls rite of passage*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5B3AbpvOysM>