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## TEEN SCENE

### Betty Has a Beamer, I've Got A Bike

Three teens weigh in on monetary inequality

#### It's Just Not Fair!

By Morgan Hunter

Sometimes, as a teenager, it's *easy* to feel like material possessions are the center of our world, especially in high-income towns like Moraga, Lafayette, and Orinda. It's *easy* to feel left out when you don't have the newest phone or the nicest clothes. It's especially *easy* to forget that not everyone is on a level playing field in terms of wealth. And it's *easy* to feel that life is unfair.

For my senior year in high school, I will share a single, rented room with my mother. It's not what I would choose, but I don't have an option. "What a lot of people don't understand," says Campolindo student, Suzie (not her real name), "is that not everyone in our community is from a high-income family. A lot of kids don't have the money for fancy cars and other expensive things, and it really bugs me when people aren't considerate of that." While monetary status appears to dominate lives in this community, for teens, it is critical to remember that a parent's bank balance does not determine what our individual future will be.

John, a Lamorinda student states that "sometimes I look at other kids and think to myself: 'Why can't I have that? Why does life have to be so hard for me?'" I know so many kids who have a license and a car that was given to them 'just because.' I have a job and I still can't afford a car."

Although Lamorinda is considered a wealthy area,

there are low-income families living here as well. Not everyone is fortunate enough to drive a BMW and in fact, some people may not be able to even afford a bike. Having money is great, yet many of us go without. Fair or not fair, this is life.



Morgan is a Campolindo senior with a passion for art, writing, and birds. She enjoys long walks on the beach, obscure Internet jokes, and red pandas.

#### Feeling Inferior?

By Robbie Sadre

At some point in life everyone feels inadequate.

When I joined my school track team I was tremendously excited to finally be a part of a sports squad. I was disappointed on the first day of practice to witness that I was light years behind my fellow teammates during the running exercises. It dawned on me that I would never be a star athlete. I am five foot four inches at 17 years old and run an eight minute 43 second mile! Instead of quitting, I challenged myself to improve. With hard work and dedication I managed to stay on the team.

High school is a time of comparing ourselves to others. Peer pressure is fierce and questioning our personal worth is standard. Some things we can control, but many things we cannot.

For example, many of the students at my school arrive in brand new BMW and Mercedes Benz automobiles. My parents *drive* me to school but in my senior year, I will borrow my father's Corolla for the commute. Some people would be ashamed to drive an old car. Instead of feeling inadequate, I take the words of Henry David Thoreau to heart: "It is not what you look at, but what you see." I don't look at a car as a means of expressing a lavish and extravagant lifestyle provided to me by my parents. I see the used Toyota as a means of pragmatic transportation. When I consider the high maintenance fees of a BMW or Mer-

cedes, my father's Corolla is cooler.

Often students feel judged based on the wealth and prominence of their parents. Most teens have felt insufficient for something—being too tall, too short, too skinny, too fat, too poor, and even too rich. I won't deny that there are indeed those who criticize others based on these factors. Rather than blame yourself for what you can't control, spend more time improving in areas that you can.

It is only normal, and perhaps healthy to feel inadequate at times as long as we don't allow a car to define who we are or will be. If I don't enjoy driving, I can always run.

Senior Robbie Sadre is the co-creator of the *Be the Star You Are!*® Clubs at local high schools. He plays guitar in his free time.



#### Dealing with Lifestyle Inequality

By Caie Kelley

While grabbing coffee or arriving at a friend's house in Lamorinda, it's normal to park my family's beige, 14-year-old Toyota Sienna van next to BMWs, Mercedes, and other luxury vehicles.

Don't get me wrong. I love my car, however, it is not exactly a Sweet 16 dream car.

Affluence abounds in Lamorinda. As teenagers living here, we receive a great education as well as many opportunities not afforded to those who live nearby. But even in our sheltered area, inequality exists. Not every family indulges in elaborate European vacations or drives new cars – and even those who do splurge are not necessarily wealthier than those who don't.

People who live in Lafayette, Moraga, or Orinda are not financially 'equal.' One family buys their daughter a customized Volkswagen Bug for her 16th birthday, while another girl walks to school.

How do teenagers around the area view these inequities?

Hannah Li, a junior at Miramonte High School, explains, "We are fortunate enough to live in an area where the majority of the population is well off. There aren't huge disparities, but examples of inequality can be found. This goes from the nonchalant purchasing of pricey cafeteria food to the new BMW 6 series rolling into the parking lot. It's unavoidable."

Another teen, Ben Chiu, agreed, "Everyone who lives here knows that they're in the 'upper end' in terms of class status and economic stability. We don't

have to go out of our way to deal with it."

As lucky as we are, lifestyle inequalities exist. Having a nicer car or bigger home isn't something that causes huge problems. We value our economic situation, acknowledge the disparity, and accept it for what it is.

Betty may have a beamer while I've got an old van, and that's okay!



Caie Kelley is an 11th grader at Miramonte High School. She enjoys swimming, playing piano, and participating in public speaking as well as tutoring elementary school kids.

Teen Scene is YOUR voice. If you have something to say or have writing skills and want to be part of our Teen Scene team, email our Teen Coach, Cynthia Brian, Cynthia@CynthiaBrian.com.

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