

Bikes or Hikes.

When I was 10, I would wake up to a neighborhood with millions of possibilities. I actually appreciated the birds outside my window waking me up for school. I loved being able to walk up the street to a park filled with the kids I grew up with or down to an ocean that was all my own. Bikes were like breathing to my friends and me. We wouldn't second guess what we wanted to do that day. I would get myself dressed, and set out on another adventure. Whether it was around my backyard or all the way to the Warwick Neck Lighthouse with my mom, it was enough for me. My bike was my trusty steed. My best friend when everyone else had to stay home. It never left me, even if the tires were flat. The handle bars led me in the direction they wanted me to go. Wherever that may have been, I was happy with it. Swinging on the park swings was as close to "high" as I got. War was my favorite card game. My only boy problems were which one stole my ball at recess. My skinned knees were battle wounds that proved I was a kid. But when I reached my teenage years, the birds weren't pleasant to listen to anymore. They were what woke me up for another six hour day at school. Race issues weren't who won the race, but who was against a race. No one could understand the choice a child is faced with when they make that transition. Drugs aren't just cough medicine anymore. But really, what does all of this have to do with riding bikes and walking instead of driving a car? Well when you have to choose between being a part of the "cool" crowd and the losers who didn't grow up yet, bikes are your worst enemy. They're symbolic of that bridge we've all stood on. This essay might be going in a completely wrong direction, but the reason I think most kids opt for driving rather than walking or cycling is that they're scared. They're scared to be defined as abnormal. When honestly, what is normal? Getting a ride with some older guy that will just use you, or riding a bike through the woods just because you feel like being outside. In my honest opinion, I don't think anyone in high school is confident in themselves. We're constantly critiqued. Our clothes, speech, family life and choices are being judged as we speak. So if riding a bike is viewed as "dorky" or "stupid", then call me the biggest nerd of them all. I actually enjoy getting away from the world sometimes, even if it means walking to the beach or maybe to the local store for a treat. Either way, choosing driving or walking and biking isn't about how the city can better their sidewalks. It is how society defines maturity and what is acceptable. Is it childish to want to ride a bike around? No. Is it foolish to want to fit in? No, it's human behavior to want to be liked. Without fixing the magazines, television shows and media, teenagers will never choose to take a route that may be a little bit harder. Be the odd one out, or the one that follows everyone else for four years of high school. I know I choose to be me, and if it means riding my bike when I want to, I'll risk my "social status". I'd rather be myself than follow another insecure person.

By: Shannon Flynn