

Zuzana Jelínková (3. prize)

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My name is Zuzana Jelinkova. I was born in Humenne, where I have been living for 19 years. I attend a first-rate grammar school, General Ludvik Svoboda in Humenne. I am taking A levels for math and physics because I want to study "general physics" at Charles University in Prague, and later I want to specialize in nuclear, quantum, or theoretical physics. Perhaps it is unusual for a girl, but I am the kind of person who is interested in understanding how the world works on a deeper level. On the other hand, however, I have an artistic spirit. Photography, writing and playing electric guitar (I am a future rock star) are my hobbies.

Just because I do not have wrinkles, it doesn't mean you can treat me with disrespect.

I always had the feeling that there was an endless number of topics that I could discuss immediately and at length. Provided the opportunity, I would bestow my opinions upon adults, granted they actually listened. I would debate so logically that their jaws would drop; leaving them to wonder where in the world that young mind gets it all from. I always felt cheated with the scarce space I was provided to share my opinions, which in my view were invulnerable and innovative. Yet, there was one fundamental flaw in my perfect plan, which destroyed all my hopes that young people will one day be heard. This being that adults are generally not interested in hearing our opinions. At first, it didn't make any sense to me. After all, who wouldn't want to know the opinion of an

unbiased observer? Who wouldn't want to know the opinion of a generation that moves around in the modern world like a fish in water, a generation that is used to fast progress, a generation that has a completely different opinion about the world, which could help adults broaden their perception and embrace unconventional ideas for making the world a better place?

For a long time I couldn't see the reason, thanks to my idealistic naivety. Today I already have a few theories, which can explain this phenomenon.

The first is that adults are a bit too aware of the fact that they are adults. In general, they tell themselves that since they are adults, they must now conform to their perception of what an adult should act like. They "*shut up and march,*" and hope

that they will manage to be happy. Therein lies the major problem. Instead of evolving and attempting to make the world a better place, they conform, which is in my opinion the easy, conservative, and boring road.

The second is that they are afraid of change. Why should we attempt to change something and try something new if the current system is somewhat functional? We might have just as well used candles up to the present. Of course, not every experiment will be successful. However, isn't it true that people learn from their own mistakes? Everyone complains about wanting something better, but no one is willing to do something for it. It is enough to see the voter turnouts at elections. Changing the world isn't as complicated as people make it out to be. It starts with the individual and his ideas.

Another brick in the wall separating us and adults is their fear of us and our thoughts. According to the old truth, "*I judge you relative to myself*," they try to fit us into nice little drawers in which we just don't seem to fit. The whole problem consists in the fact that they were not allowed to wear jeans to school and for us there is nothing unusual about having, for example, streaks in your hair. For this, I would blame the time and the system in which they grew up. It tried to make them into a conservative mass without distinctions. However, nature is uncompromising; one cannot alter the progress of nature.

Our perception of happiness has changed. Not too long ago people were happy if they had work, an apartment and a family, period. Wanting something more out of life was considered a sin, I suppose. Of course, I am not claiming that today

these wants are irrelevant, that they are not important, quite the contrary. But I cannot stand the feeling that this is everything I was born for and what I should die for. The appetite for life gives me hope that I have a chance to contribute in making the world a better place and I have a conception of how to accomplish this. More than anything else, I am incredibly motivated to do so and I am waiting for my opportunity.

Another reason why adults do not want to listen to us is of course because they are somewhat conceited. It is obvious that because they have been around a few years longer, they have more experience, knowledge and proficiency. However, that does not excuse them from thinking that we are automatically inferior and our ideas cannot bring about practical results. I confess our naivety is sometimes even laughable (which leads to a traumatic experience among weaker characters, an experience which, in turn, leads to conformity), but this naivety gives us freedom. We are not confined to any rules, we take everything naturally. Our point of view is not yet devious, it is a beautiful utopia for which, let's be honest, everyone longs. This naivety also gives freedom to our imagination, absolutely without limits or borders.

After all, what makes a person human is their creative capacity. So why should we marginalize these capacities? ... And you know what the problem with the youth is? They are incapable of listening to what the adults tell them because they think they know everything and because they fear that their opinions will be shattered. They think they have to rebel because it is in fashion and because they simply cannot acknowledge that adults could be right...

Doesn't that subliminally click?

So where do we go with this exhausting reflection? You have nothing to regret. Both of our generations have made the same mistakes, that we do not respect each other and we do not allow ourselves to acknowledge each other's opinion. That is why what I wish to get across to the adults I would also like to get across to the youth. There is nothing worse than living with a patch on the ears and a patch on the head. Mutual understanding can bring about unexpected results. All it takes is making the first step – getting rid of the roadblock in our minds.

Epilogue: After an auditory reading I realized that it's all a bit too scholastic and “grown up.” During the writing process I was trying to be a bit too objective and explicit. Yet, I have the feeling that all I accomplished was serious boredom. That is why I am adding an extension that reflects my subjective message for adults, which should be easier to read.

Dear adults, I am happily interpreting numerous thoughts, which will form my message for your generation.

Please, try not to let your opinion confront my thoughts, especially in the form of conceited looks. I had the feeling that I was born in a free country and if I want red-blue hair, that is my business. I don't forbid you from wearing hand-me-down dresses and blouses. Believe me, it doesn't look so good.

I would also like to add that you shouldn't judge me based on my style of dress. Maybe one day you will find out that all that glitters is not gold, and not all young people who dress according to your standards are celestial. From my experience, I would

say it is the complete opposite. Just visit a club on a random Friday, and you will see what goes on there. I prefer not to illustrate in detail.

I would like to thank you ahead of time for not trying to change me in accordance with your image. I have my own portrait, which I have been painting for years. Let everyone be their own artist. If history doesn't interest me, then intellectual blackmail will simply not suffice. Bad can bring about only bad. Blackmail can only bring about opposition. Don't worry, I will choose my own road. And surely it will be the right one for me.

I am confident that you respect even my world view. If I have the feeling that anarchy is fine, then leave it so. I will eventually find out that the ideal lifestyle is somewhere else. Even if it will not coincide with your lifestyle, maybe it is actually you who should reflect on what would make you happier.

What really upsets me about adults is that I have the feeling that you take pleasure out of being able to inflict pain, especially when the one you are hurting is a young person. Just because I do not have wrinkles, it doesn't mean you can treat me with disrespect. That is why I kindly ask you, in case you happen to be a salesperson, don't act like it's such a hassle to answer the question, “Where do you have a book about rock'n'roll?” Or just because you are a teacher, it doesn't mean I cannot find a mistake in one of your statements. Just because I point out a mistake, it definitely doesn't mean that I am trying to be rude or go against authority. Here is some news: you are just people, like us. Another request that I would like to get across is that you should try to listen to us.

If you have the feeling that it is troublesome to communicate with us, you need to ask ["If you have the feeling that you have failed to communicate with us, you need only ask"?]. We are, after all, the ones who swallowed all the worlds' knowledge and we know the answer to every question.

I would also appreciate it if you would leave the remarks about the real world to yourselves sometimes. Just because it consumed you doesn't mean we want to be consumed by it as well. If we have dreams, no matter how naïve they may be, don't destroy them. They give us the motivation to live and to strive for something. It's not for nothing that the saying goes, the journey is the destination.

To my message also belongs a plea, please be patient. If I promise that I will clean the mess in my room once a month, then one day I will clean it, but at the moment I have other important commitments that do not allow me to focus on trivial matters like a messy room. The same goes for taking out the garbage, washing the dishes, and vacuuming.

I should remind you of a very current problem, the internet is here to be used.

Just because we sit behind it eight or more hours a day, it does not mean we are addicted. We just can't seem to finish a virtual conversation sometimes. And it definitely will not please us if you secretly read our history. I warn you that it will not please you either.

From this follows the theme of restrictions. If you believe that by placing restrictions on us you will achieve a positive result, you are fatally mistaken. You will simply lose our friendship and our trust.

I would also like to suggest that you not meddle in our privacy. That which you need to know about us, you already know. Controlling our rooms, reading our diaries, that is not the right approach to achieving a great relationship. Additionally, try to give us more room to express our opinions and show that you are willing to understand them. You will be surprised by all the interesting things in our heads.

Most importantly, before you criticize the youth, look at yourselves first. I am grateful for your attention and I am confident that my message will broaden your horizons and positively influence our future relations.