

# Eye on Our Generation

## He Said — The Facebook Face-Off — She Said

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Facebook is ruining our children! They don't play outside anymore, they don't do their homework anymore, and all those fan pages that they follow—what's up with that? Facebook is **ruining** our children... isn't it?

In a more distant time Facebook would've been bad news. I'm talking about back when people walked to their neighbors' houses for a chat, spent social time on porches, and wrote thoughtful letters to those from whom they were separated. In a time like that, things would've been different. Facebook would've been responsible for the breakdown of those meaningful exchanges in a serious way.

Of course some will scream, "That's what it's doing to us right now," and it's true that we zone out on pixelated Farmville pigs and peruse the pictures of long-forgotten high school English classmates, while the hours tick, tick, and tick away. Unfortunately, though, we can't blame Facebook for our current state.

Facebook, for some, represents the degradation of society, particularly in regard to interpersonal relationships and communication. Even long Facebook posts rarely, I find,

exceed fifteen or twenty words—they are momentary, spur-of-the-moment, fleeting forms of communication, and so I can see why those worried about the hypnotic lure of the internet are showing concern. I must ask, however, is it the fault of Facebook that we can spend two hours sticking our noses into a virtual fish tank and only ten minutes reading a book?

My answer—the answer—is a strong no! Let's not fall into the trap of blaming a blue-and-white communication platform for the issues befalling mankind. Let's blame only ourselves. After all, we've been this way for quite a while, haven't we? I'd reckon it's the minority of us who can remember family (even as late as one generation ago) penning letters. Granted, face-to-face communication isn't completely dead, but still it is foolish to conjure up the notion that Facebook is even partially to blame. We must be sure to get one thing straight: we did *not* adapt ourselves to fit the evil applications of Facebook; rather, we created it **to fit us**. If Facebook is bad, then we're worse for populating it with millions of our "likes" and gripes.

Is Facebook hurting our generation? It's not exactly helping our generation. Facebook is just another avenue for Middle School, High School, and College Students to get into trouble. This is the problem with every social networking site that is the "latest and greatest." Remember Myspace? Yeah, that's still around, but now Facebook is "IN." Forget about it, if you don't have Facebook than you are living under a rock.

But why is Facebook so necessary if it is necessary at all? There are people that see it both ways. Like Diana P, "Facebook is necessary if you don't get to see people far away as often as you'd like," but on the flip side she says, "It's not because people get stupid on here with spam and other things that I don't have interest in." Diana makes a good point, and some those of an older generation feel this way about Facebook. It's just a means of communication on one side, and for others it's a gaming site and spamming site. Now even corporations such as Tide Laundry Detergent are on Facebook now.

Michael James Hart, of PSU Altoona says, "Facebook is a necessary evil because almost everybody has one. For some people it's an addiction, sooner or later there is going to be a 'Facebook Anonymous.' Myspace was just as bad, but with Facebook you can get a lot more personal. It also hinders people's 'people skills' because you can meet people on Facebook, rather than meeting them in person."

Hart is right in many ways, but he is leaving some things out. Prob-

ably the biggest problem with Facebook is the fact that people are getting into trouble without even realizing it. For example, in 2008 Conestoga High School's Cheerleading squad decided to have a party in which much underage drinking went on. One of the cheerleaders had a camera, so in a matter of days, pictures from the party, along with the alcohol, ended up on Facebook. Well wouldn't you know that a mom of one of the cheerleaders got a hold of these digital documents and reported them to the school. The result? The cheerleading squad was replaced with back ups, and all the girls in the pictures were suspended from cheerleading for several weeks.

Not only can schools look at Facebook, as most college students know, but potential employers have access to the information that people post online, not just Facebook. And believe it or not, once you "delete" a picture that is "incriminating," it is not actually gone. It can still be found using certain websites that keep track of web postings dating back to the late 90's. So even though you can't find that picture of you at that party with a red cup in your hand when you were 19 online, that doesn't mean someone else can't find it, and chances are they can, and they will. Facebook is a dangerous "tool" that our generation uses way too casually and without any consideration for the damage that it can do to one's reputation and career.

14<sup>th</sup> Penn State Brandywine

# LiTapaLooZa

LITERARY FESTIVAL

Tuesday, April 6, 2010

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FEATURING POET

## Daisy Fried

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DAISY FRIED is the author of two books of poetry, *My Brother is Getting Arrested Again*, a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award, and *She Didn't Mean to Do It*, which won the Agnes Lynch Starrett Prize. She has received Guggenheim, Hodder and Pew Fellowships, a Pushcart Prize, the Cohen Award from *Ploughshares*, and the Editor's Prize for a Feature Article from *Poetry* magazine, for her essay "Sing God-Awful Muse," about reading *Paradise Lost* and breastfeeding. Her poems have been published recently in *The Nation*, *New Republic*, *Ploughshares*, *American Poetry Review*, *Poetry* and *The Threepenny Review*. She reviews poetry for *The New York Times*

and *Poetry*, teaches creative writing at Villanova University, and lives in Philadelphia.



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