

## DO YOU SUFFER FROM GAPOSIS?

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All of us who belong to a certain maligned generation remember the term "gaposis." We are reminded of it constantly by the press and TV, which insist that one of today's major problems is a "generation gap." The young we've raised have taken this popular catch phrase to heart and made it part of their mystique. It is as if no such phenomenon had occurred before. And probably, in truth, the gulf between generations has never been so well defined, although it has existed always. The difference today is mainly one of an overemphasis carried on by a hysterical mass communications industry, ever alert for opportunities to capitalize on sensationalism.

Although several generations have gone by the board, those of us in the age brackets of 40 to 60 or more recall vividly the days of Halitosis (Bad Breath). It was one of Madison Avenue's first major triumphs in advertising promotion, and sold a lot of Listerine mouthwash. In the 1920s and '30s, halitosis was a household word that intrigued a generation of youngsters and their amused parents. And not long after that, when the pre-shrunk fabric industry took advantage of the novelty, gaposis appeared on the scene.

In recent years we were introduced to gaposis when the cynical, hired writers who sold Jack Kennedy to the public as a President invented his "missile gap." This later evolved into a "credibility gap" when the same crew of hucksters attacked Lyndon Johnson and his administration. Now they have promoted the "generation gap" as part of the gaposis syndrome.

It is a peculiar and paradoxical thing for our generation of ancients to be accused of not understanding the young of today. All of us who grew up in the '20s and '30s were probably the most disillusioned and cynical young to ever struggle through their formative years. There was a generation gap in those days also, but with a reverse twist. We started off in innocent idealism, oversupplied with patriotism and an abiding belief in the Great American Dream. We pledged allegiance to the flag every morning and worshipped baseball heroes like old-timers Cobb, Dizzy, Vance, Big Train Johnson and a newcomer named Ruth. At the same time our liberated parents and their friends were making homebrew in the attics, gin in the bathtubs and defying law in the speakeasies. The ladies bobbed their hair, rolled their stockings, wore short dresses and danced on tabletops to wailing saxophones. Our elders studied astrology, burned incense, admired the Eastern mystics and spouted Theosophy. They advocated free love and talked trial and companionate marriage. Meanwhile we grew up with eyes that could see and ears that could hear.

The Depression of the '30s matured our parents and turned us into cynics. If you were young and intellectual in those college days you laughed at jingoism, debunked Americanism and scorned patriotism. You belonged to the Debating Society, the International Club, or the Young Communist League (shades of Che and Mao!). You were certain that the future lay with Socialism, and that there could not help but be universal peace and brotherhood because the wonder of radio transcended national barriers and would soon unite us all. Later, you became an "America Firster" and in those years prior to World War II, joined with Charles Lindbergh to champion isolationism and pacifisms. Along with Franklin and Eleanor you hated War. "I say to you," said FDR (again and again), "that no sons of yours will fight on foreign soils," and we elected him, again and again, in 1936 and 1940.

But things happened, and before you could give the Peace sign, we were all gone—the 18-year-olds and the 40-year-olds—with the younger and older standing by and wishing they could join us. And five or six years later most of us were back home, older, wiser and more experienced. But we had seen War, poverty and inequality, starvation and devastation in the rest of the world, and, even if we were still a bit uncertain, we at least knew we were fortunate to be able to return to a country like this one. We were annoyed at the complacency of some who hadn't been where the action was and who took their American way of life for granted, but we were almost mature enough then to understand and forget.

We returned to our schools and jobs and training. We married and picked up our lives. We supported the new United Nations hopefully (even though we remember the futility of Geneva and the League of Nations). We busied ourselves with work. We raised a bumper crop of children and became their buddies. And eventually we arrived, secure in spite of world tensions, believing once more in democracy and imbued with a stubborn patriotism.

So now we have come a full circle. We, the ex-radicals, socialists, pacifists and warriors, are the parents and grandparents. And the young—our young—tell us we're not with it. They have liberated themselves and have just invented free love. They talk of Aquarius, chant *Ooom* and quote Eastern mystics. They have discovered almost all the four-letter words we used in the Army. Their prophets wear beards: pot is their brew and acid their gin. Pacifisms are their bag and war is unthinkable. Through the magic of television, satellites and instant communication, national boundaries have disappeared and understanding is worldwide. Brotherhood and universal peace will be coming up next week as soon as they can arrange it.

The carrousel turns, and their gagnosis of tomorrow lies ahead. And we wonder how this new, *now* generation will handle it.

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