

Forman, G. (2002, April). Street Story: How a Troubled Teenage Girl from Burlington, Vermont Wound up a Dead New York City Prostitute. Seventeen, p. 177.

OVERVIEW

In cities around the world, poor children hang out, begging, ready to do simple tasks, committing petty crimes...and often sniffing glue. They are called street children, parking boys, dump kids, and other local names. There are 1,500 children living on the streets of Comayaguela, Honduras, and an estimated 5,000 nationwide. This article describes three years in the life of one of them, Charlie Reyes, as "incredibly simple but dangerous."

Youth today, as always, long for acceptance. It drives many to join different groups or different activities to feel accepted.

According to Webster, acceptance means: "favorable reception; approval; favor." Teens today seek to find this in many ways, from the way they dress to the people they spend time with.

"What's cool" or "What's in" directly deals with acceptance. On high school campuses, this is always a subject that is out there, whether it is outright expressed or just assumed by the trend setters.

Studies have shown that the need to belong is directly correlated to depression, suicide, gang membership, and many other problematic issues.

Christal and Abby, were best friends since sixth grade, sharing much of the same interests. They are quoted as saying, " "We had a lot in common. We both like attention and we were both hardheaded." " Their views toward life eventually led them to numerous nights in jail, and ultimately to the death of one of them.

The girls were desperate for attention and acceptance, running away from home, moving from foster homes to detention centers. One man provided all the attention and acceptance Christal and Abby wanted, and this led them into a life of drugs, prostitution, and death.

One observation made: " "Christal was always-often recklessly-chasing the spotlight. After her murder, everyone from TV reporters to the governor of

Vermont wanted to know her story. In death, Christal Jones has finally gotten the attention she craved." "

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

- 1.What role do you see acceptance playing in your personal life? How does it directly affect your actions?
- 2.What is/was the cool thing in high school? Who dictates what is cool and why do we follow?
- 3.Where do you seek your acceptance? What makes you feel accepted?

IMPLICATIONS

- There is an obvious need for belonging and being accepted...and more so in the youth, because they are so concerned about what others think about them. If this issue of acceptance is not addressed, there can be some serious repercussions, ranging from depression to gangs and suicide.
- There needs to be more outreach into the lives of these young kids and a genuine care for them that really makes them feel loved and accepted. Programs that focus on providing a place for kids to come and feel accepted and important are healthy tools to address this problem.
- We as individuals have to look at our lives and be more aware of those who we may have passed by and realize that all long to belong. A simple conversation, smile, or invitation, could make the difference between life or death.

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