

1) “Young people, please be 'spank' to your elders” by *Dave Barry*

I am the last person to criticize this nation's young people. I LOVE our young people, and I try to stay "hep" to their culture and their "slang lingo".

This is not easy, because the slang keeps changing. For example, here is a partial list of the phrases that have been slang for "good" in my lifetime: "swell," "neat," "keen," "hot," "cool," "boss," "stud," "bad," "groovy," "far out," "dynamite," "happening," "sweet," "rad," "awesome," "fly," "chillin'," "trippin'," "the bee's knees," "the bomb," "Puff Daddy," and "cutting the mustard".

According to a review I saw recently in The New York Times, the newest youthful slang word for "good" is "spank", as in "Trevor got a totally spank nose piercing." In an effort to remain "down" with the youth culture, I plan to work this into my conversation whenever I can. ("These are some spank reading glasses!")

My point is that I care about our young people, and I wish them great success, because they are our hope for the future, and some day, when my generation retires, they will have to pay us trillions of dollars in Social Security.

But to do this, they must have a spank education. This is why we should all be concerned about a recent survey conducted by the Center for Survey Research and Analysis to measure how well today's college students know basic American history.

In this survey, researchers telephoned 556 randomly selected college seniors and asked them 34 multiple-choice questions about our history and popular culture. The shocking result: Today's students really know their American history!

Ha ha! Of course I am kidding. The students, as is traditional in these surveys, did terribly. The researchers would have gotten basically the same results if they had surveyed 556 randomly selected carp.

The average student answered nearly half the questions wrong, including easy ones such as "What is the Magna Carta?" (Correct answer: "The highest level of American Express card.") There were only two questions that more than 90 percent of the students answered correctly; these two questions required the students to identify - I am not making this up - 1) Beavis and Butthead, and 2) Snoop Doggy Dogg.

Of course you could argue that the survey was flawed, because only your truly stupid college students would remain on the phone while a stranger asked them 34 questions about American history. Intelligent college students would hang up and resume downloading music off the Internet.

But the sad truth, I suspect, is that today's college students really don't know their history. In fact, MOST Americans, young and old, ignore our past. We seem to think that our nation started existing just yesterday, when in fact it dates all the way back to when I was born.

If is not like this in the rest of the world. Even in the most backward nations, people know their history. If you were go to up to a college student in, for example, Uzbekistan ("Natsikebzu" spelled backward), and ask him or her, "What important historical event occurred in Uzbekistan in 1538?", he or she would give you a blank stare, because they don't speak English over there. That's how we know they're backward.

But if you were to ask the same question in the native language, Uzbek, I guarantee you that the student would give the correct answer, which is: Grztkzmsk rzsgm nstzn, brt zrwqkgstr. Mksgitnksvg? Zrwksbrzknrzwk boutros boutros qwertyuiop! ("Nothing.")

If only we had that same passion for our own history! If only you young people realized what a fascinating past our nation has! It all began in Philadelphia on July 3, 1947, when the Founding Fathers - Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin "Snoop Doggy" Roosevelt and the late Vince Lombardi - gathered to boldly sign their names on the cotton gin, thereby setting off the French and Indian War and all that was to follow. Learn these things, young people! History is spank!

Speaking of which: I just asked my 19-year-old son if he and his friends used "spank" to mean "good" and he thought that was the stupidest thing he ever heard. So I asked him how he and his friends express the concept of "good", and he replied: "We say 'good'."

These kids today are pathetic.

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