

Slacker phenomenon explains election results

President-elect uses MTV to reverse youths' apathy

By Mark Baldridge
Diversions Editor

What is a slacker?
A slacker is a person in economic or social free fall. Someone — usually a young person — who would rather sit around and listen to her Sonic Youth CD's than go to work nine to five at a job she hates.

They are often artists or wannabee artists, and they spend a large percentage of their often tiny incomes on beer or expensive coffee in coffeehouses. There they talk about anything outrageous. They have a penchant for conspiracy theories and the para-normal. There is almost nothing so outrageous that a slacker somewhere does not claim to believe in it.

A slacker may have no money — or he may have a great deal. Most sponge off their parents. But it is almost impossible to tell a poor slacker from a rich one. The same thrift store attire marks them all. Often a slacker will wear the same pair of bright orange polyester stretch pants until they serve as a kind of personal trademark.

There are tricks to being a slacker — a successful one anyway — and you may find some helpful ones scattered throughout this issue. But don't hope for a definitive picture of the slack life; slackers are notoriously individualistic, and in identical tones of voice they all claim to be.

Slacking off is a time-honored tradition.

It amounts to a form of depression — a "what's the use" attitude that leads a person to stop trying and form a rock n' roll band.

Why the gloom about the future? The cold war is over, the Berlin wall has crumbled, and there are more stations than ever before on T.V.

The average slacker remains unconvinced.

They see their older siblings, and even their parents, jump through the hoops of college degrees and career tracks only to wind up without the wherewithal to buy into the American dream and work below their skills at a job they hate.

What's to appeal about that pattern?

You can drop out of college right now and have all that. Why bother?

Why bother, indeed. Why care? Why try to alter the inevitable? Why vote?

Our new president is something of a slacker phenomenon. A record number of young people, generally the poorest voters, turned out to usher him in. Without their support the race might have run differently.

Clinton has figured out how to capture the attention of this large sluggish constituency. His sax swinging appearances on the Arsenio Hall show and MTV put him in the hazy eye of his public. The effect of the "Rock the Vote" campaign on MTV has yet to be calculated.

Future entertainers/politicians should take note.

But they should also beware.

The slacker population is notoriously fickle.

And maybe that's the most promising thing about the slack generation: It has a low tolerance for rhetoric, for dogma and mindless jingoism.

In an endless quest to be entertained, it has become jaded to the point that the ordinary methods of mind control are of no use. The music industry has had to learn this

lesson: The current generation is hard to predict and cannot be told what to like. As soon as it has tried, whole new subcultural resonances arise. It becomes impossible to keep up.

So watch out. We are becoming a new kind of America. The slackers out there are bored — which makes them dangerous — and they are a legion.

FASHION

Deciding what to wear can be a problem at the best of times. When you're down and out it can be a question of keeping yourself clothed at all.

Thrift stores are a good place to look, but even there things can be priced beyond one's reach.

Try the dumpsters out back of Goodwill etc. for the latest in bumwear. (See Also: Dumpster Diving)

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