

# What we know and what we think we know about Jewish teenagers today.

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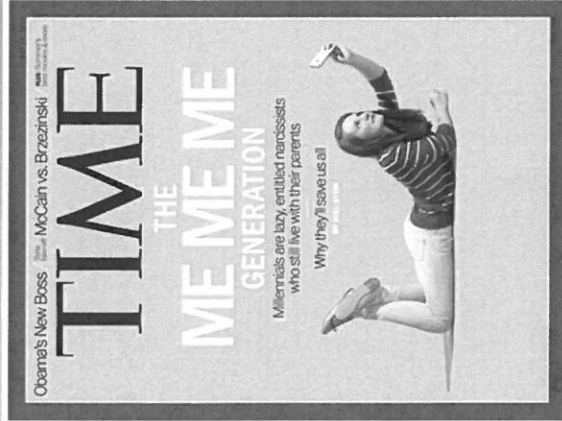
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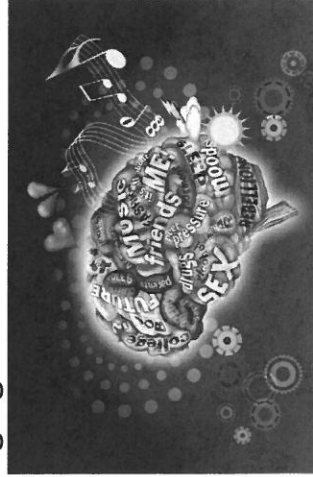
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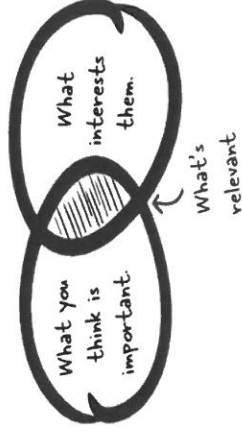
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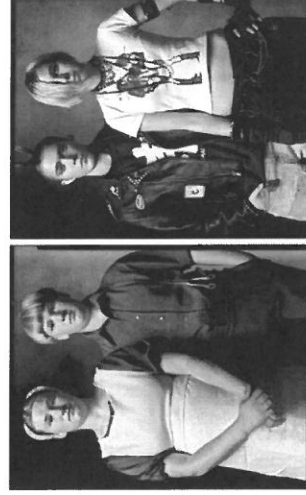
## THE JEWISH EDUCATION PROJECT The Biology of Adolescence and Emerging Adults



## Authenticity Versus Relevance



## THE JEWISH EDUCATION PROJECT The Sociology of Adolescence and Emerging Adults





# Adolescere

## What is adolescence?

- a) The period of physical and psychological development from the onset of puberty to maturity.
- b) A transitional period of development between youth and maturity: *the adolescence of a nation.*

	Puberty	Adulthood	Length
Pre 1900	14.5	16	1.5 years
1970	13	18	5 years
Present	11.7	26	15 years



# Spanning Adolescence

Middle Childhood – 8-11  
(Tweens)

Early Adolescence – 11-14

Middle Adolescence – 15 - 18

“Emerging Adulthood” from 18 – 26



# Emerging Adult Hallmarks

## Psychosocial Changes

- Becomes independent of parents
- Completes education
- Establishes a career
  - High levels of job stress
- Establishes an intimate relationship
- Decides whether to have children
- Friendships are important



# Five features of emerging adulthood

- The age of identity explorations
- The age of instability
- The self-focused age
- The age of feeling in-between
- The age of possibilities



# 3 Quests for Emerging Adults

Love – explore who they want to share their lives with

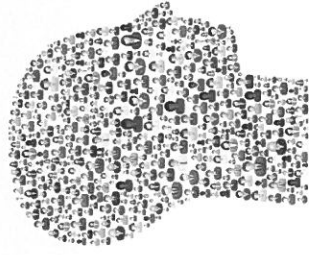
Work – explore what they can qualify for

World view – exploring and evaluating values and beliefs

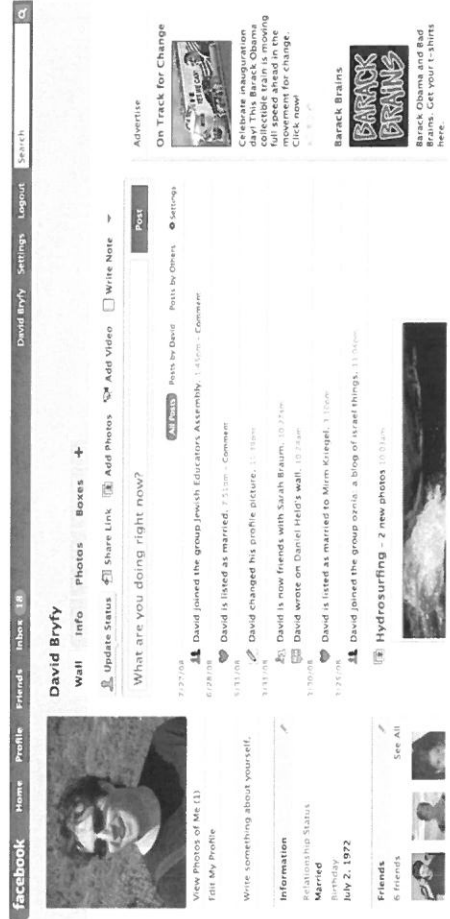
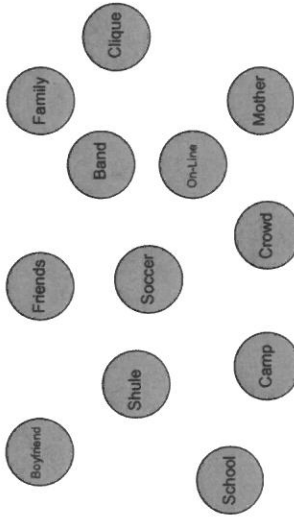
## From Attachment to Agency



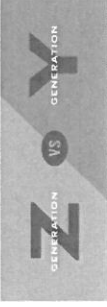
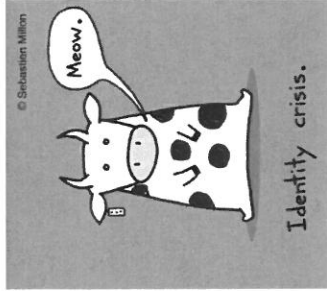
# How do we understand identity?



## Multiple Identities



# Identity Crisis



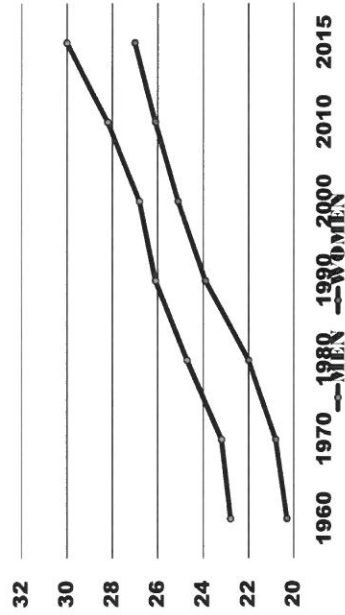
**Millennials (Generation Y, Peter Pan Generation, Boomerang Generation, Generation Me)**  
(birth years early 1982 - 2000)

Lazy, narcissistic, move from job to job  
Open-minded, confident, self-expressive, liberal, upbeat, do-gooders.

**Generation Z (iGen, Post-Millennials, or Plurals)**  
(birth years 2000 - )

Cynical, Private, Entrepreneurial, Multi-tasking, Hyper-aware, Technology-reliant.

Change in median marriage age, 1960-present



## Generational stereotypes

**Are they selfish “narcissists”?**

**NO: more likely to volunteer than previous generations**

**Are they lazy?**

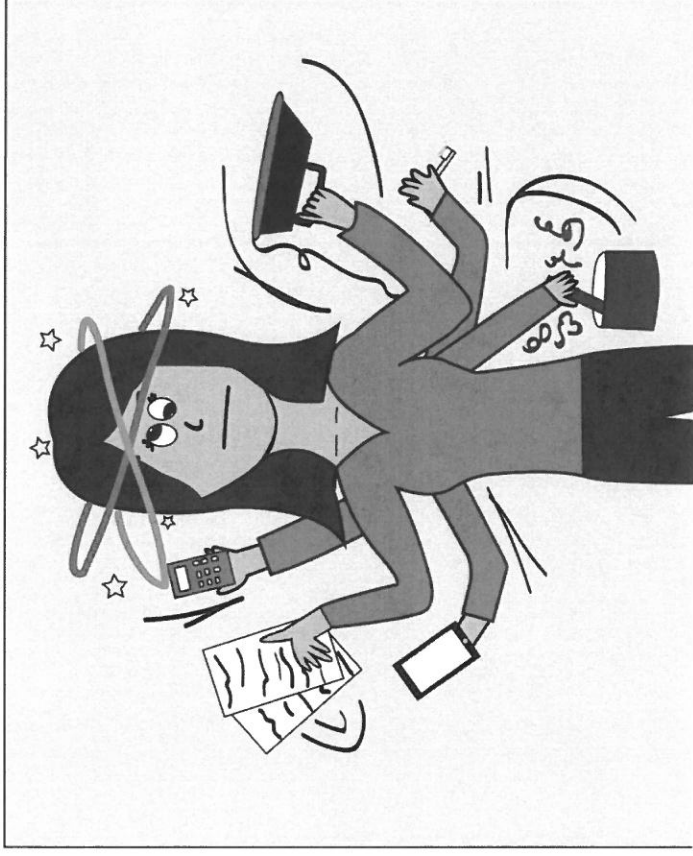
**NO: more likely to be both working and going to school**

**Are they immoral?**

**NO: Lower rates of sexual risk behavior, automobile risk behavior, and crime than previous generation; higher rates of volunteering.**

Technology is not what they do...  
It's who they are

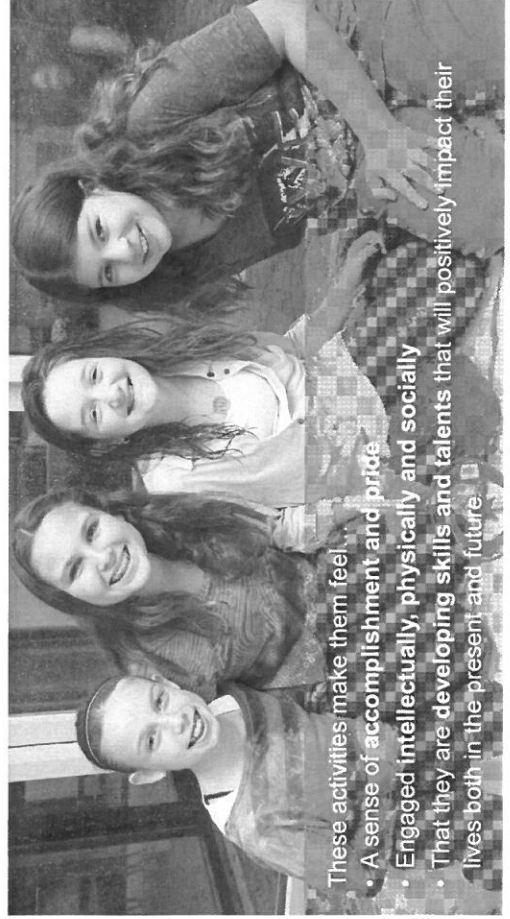
"I get up in the morning, I get dressed,  
eat breakfast, brush my teeth and check  
my iPhone...and not in that order"



WHO AM I? — SELF



## TEENS ARE INVOLVED IN A WIDE ARRAY OF ACTIVITIES THAT OFFER "REAL-LIFE" BENEFITS



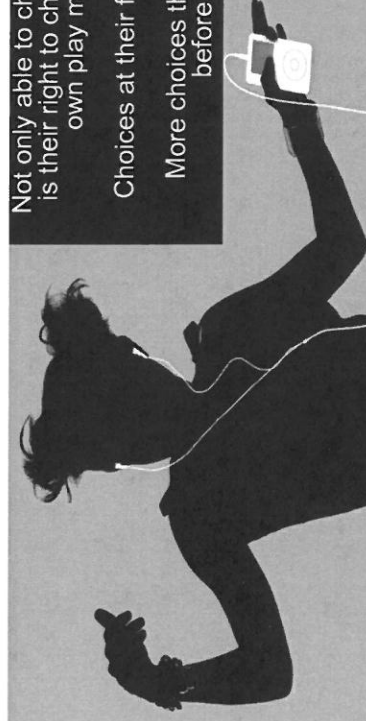
These activities make them feel...

- A sense of **accomplishment and pride**
- Engaged **intellectually, physically and socially**
- That they are **developing skills and talents** that will positively impact their lives both in the present and future

## Here's My Playlist

Not only able to choose — but  
is their right to choose their  
own play menu

Choices at their finger tips.  
More choices than ever  
before

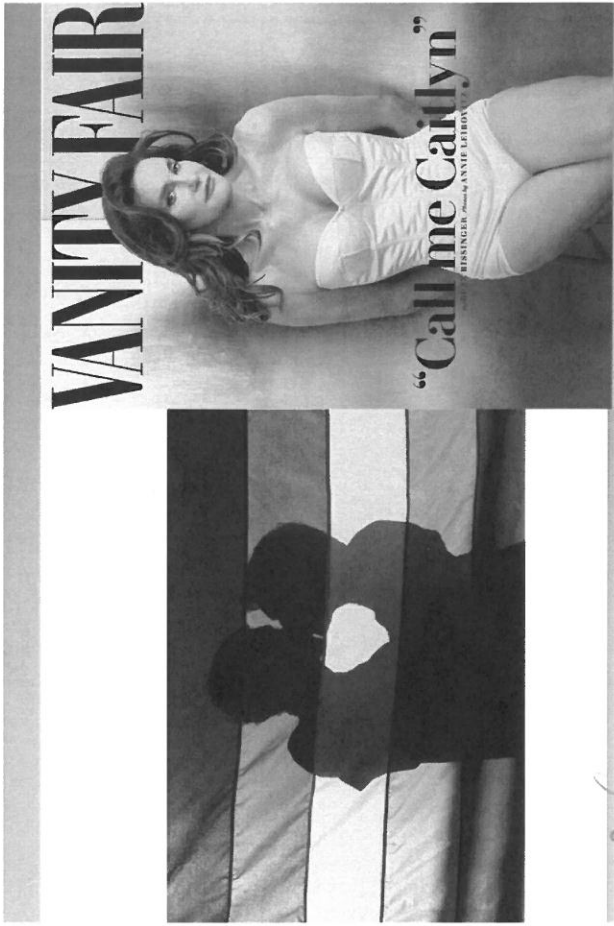


>Welcome to the digital music revolution. 10,000 songs in your pocket. Works with Mac or PC. Over a billion sold. The new iPod.

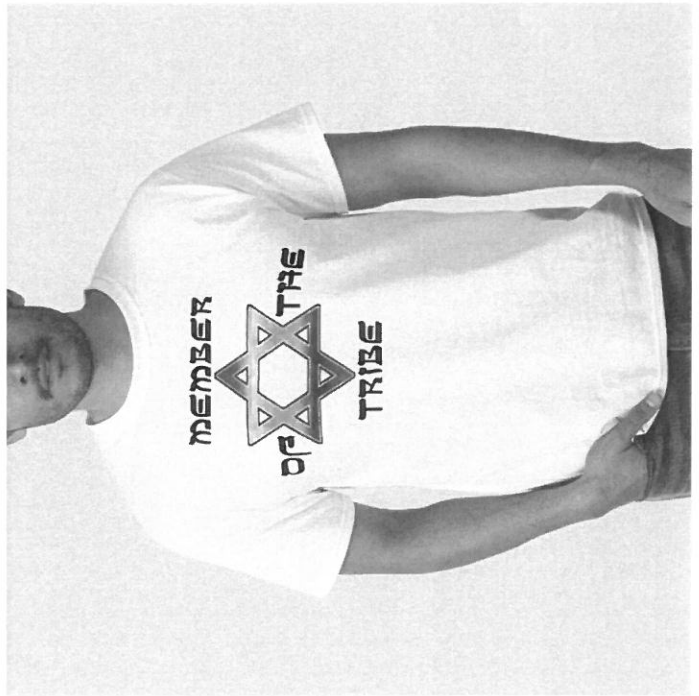
What do you think is on the  
playlists of Jewish teenagers in  
your community?



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*Good together.*



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WHO AM I RESPONSIBLE IN THIS WORLD? — JEWISH PEOPLE  
**DIFFERENT MINDSETS EMERGED  
AMONG TEENS**

Some higher connected teens had  
a **particularist mindset:**

“

Even if I dislike some of my fellow Jews, I feel like I have to stand up for them if people are treating them in a mean way. Because we're the same. We're connected.

YOUNGER, HIGH-CONNECTED BOSTON TEEN

Many lower connected teens had a  
**universalist mindset:**

“

Obviously I'm horrified at what happened, but I don't know if I necessarily like feel worse because they were Jewish. I feel like all human life should be valued as the same. Because the loss of any life is awful, regardless of whether or not they're Jewish.

OLDER, LOWER-CONNECTED ATLANTA TEEN

These two mindsets are not always mutually exclusive. Most articulated feelings of both particularism and universalism, flowing between the two mindsets often.



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Who were your Jewish heroes when you were growing up?

Who do you think that teenagers today think of as their Jewish heroes?



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*Grow Together\**



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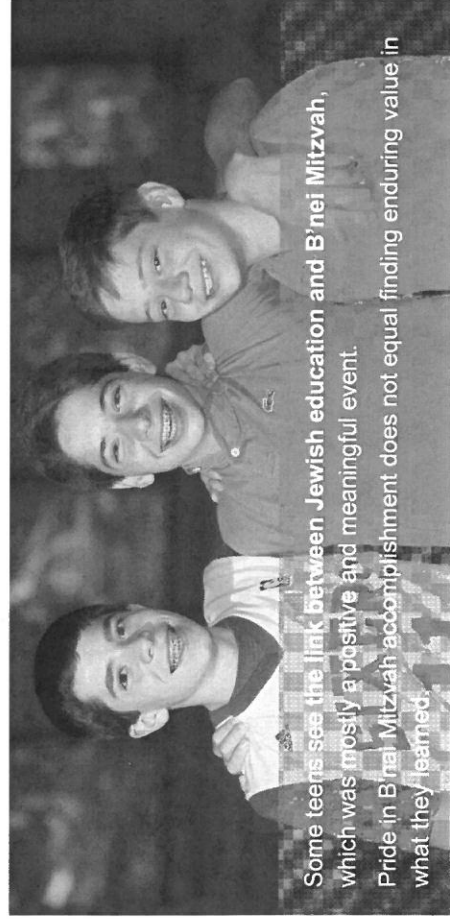
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WHO AM I? — KNOWLEDGE

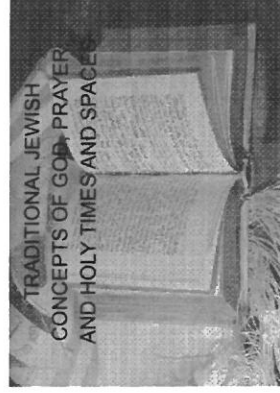
**WHILE SOME TEENS ARE JEWISHLY  
KNOWLEDGEABLE, JEWISH WISDOM RARELY  
INFORMS THEIR LIFE CHOICES**



Some teens see the link between Jewish education and B'nei Mitzvah, which was mostly a positive and meaningful event. Pride in B'nei Mitzvah accomplishment does not equal finding enduring value in what they learned.

WITH WHOM AND WHAT AM I CONNECTED? — SPIRITUAL  
SPIRITUALITY IS A FOREIGN TERM FOR TEENS...

- The term "spirituality" did not resonate with most.
- Yet some articulated their ideas with depth.
- Most teens agreed that you can be spiritual without being "religious"



TRADITIONAL JEWISH  
CONCEPTS OF GOD, PRAYER  
AND HOLY TIMES AND SPACE



TO NATURE OR MEDITATION —  
INFLUENCED MORE BY SECULAR  
AMERICAN CULTURE

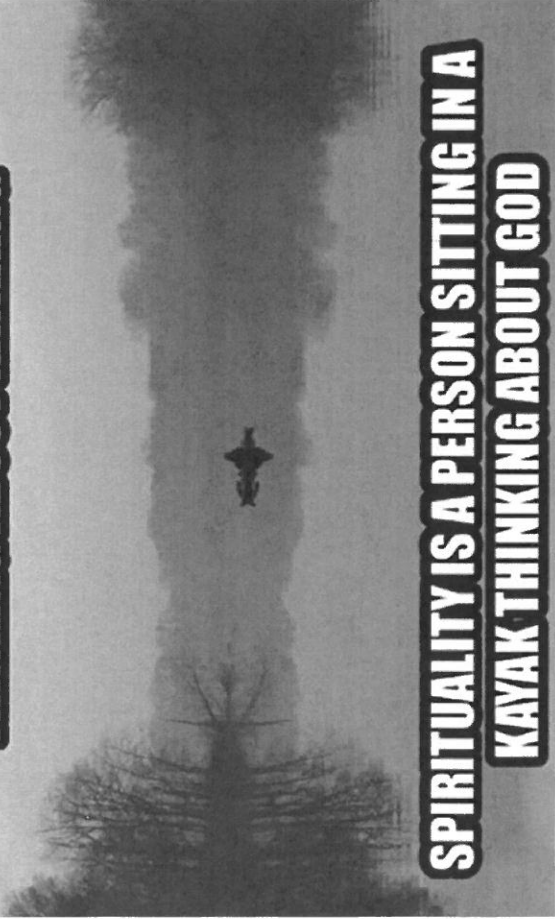


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**RELIGION IS A PERSON SITTING IN CHURCH  
THINKING ABOUT KAYAKING**



**SPIRITUALITY IS A PERSON SITTING IN A  
KAYAK THINKING ABOUT GOD**



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**What are your favorite  
Jewish holidays?**

WITH WHOM AND WHAT AM I CONNECTED? — TIME

**JEWISH HOLIDAYS — FAMILY AND FOOD**

- Holidays are a source of connection
- Bond with **immediate family**, visit **extended family**, and enjoy **family traditions**
- **Hanukkah, Passover, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur** are mostly part of teens' experience

Some teens (mostly higher connected) found other levels of meaning in the history behind holidays, connections to a larger community, and the feeling that holiday celebration lifts one above daily routines

**I ♥ Jewish Food!**



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HOW CAN I BRING ABOUT CHANGE IN THIS WORLD? — GLOBAL

**“DOING GOOD” IS AN IMPORTANT VALUE,  
BUT SELDOM A JEWISH VALUE**

- Almost all of the teens contribute to society and effect positive change.
- **These experiences are meaningful**, even if done to fulfill requirements.
  - Some familiarity with “mitzvah” and “tzedakah,” a few with Tikkun Olam.
- Some teens strongly rejected the idea that doing good is linked specifically with Judaism.
- **Uncomfortable with the particularism** that implies.
  - Instead they had a **more universalist mindset** - either that all religions are committed to improving the world, or that doing good is a personal choice not dependent on religion.



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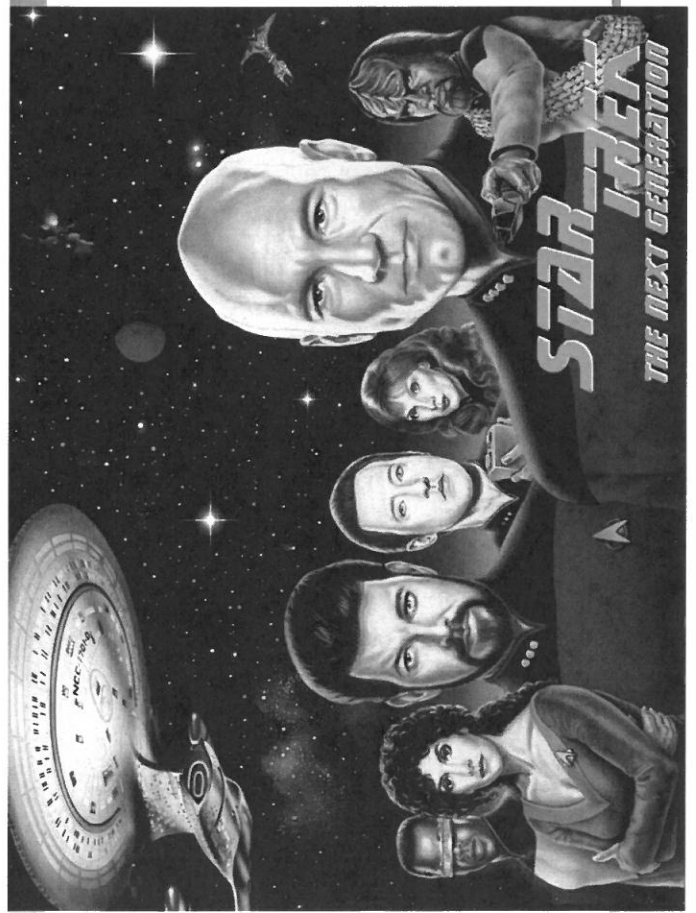
What resonates with your  
community, and what is very  
different?



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*How wonderful it is that  
nobody need wait  
a single moment  
before starting to  
improve the world.*

-Anne Frank

Learn more at  
[SpiritualCleaning.org](http://SpiritualCleaning.org)



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**ONE CHILD,  
ONE TEACHER,  
ONE BOOK & ONE PEN  
CAN CHANGE  
THE WORLD.**

MALALA YOUSAFZAI

PHOTO: ANTHONY BLUMES



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**Person of the Year**

**TIME**



Facebook's  
Mark  
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MALALA YOUSAFZAI

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JAZZ JENNINGS

**BEING  
JAZZ**

*My Life as a (Transgender) Teen*



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ONE TEACHER,  
ONE BOOK & ONE PEN  
CAN CHANGE  
THE WORLD.**

MALALA YOUSAFZAI

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**Janusz  
Korczak**

**1878- 1942**

*Children are not the people of tomorrow, but are people of today. They have a right to be taken seriously, and to be treated with tenderness and respect. They should be allowed to grow into whoever they were meant to be. 'The unknown person' inside each of them is our hope for the future.*