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The Secret Life Of Teenagers

The Secret Life of Teenagers is an incisive and candid illumination of teenagers and their complex lives. It is a critical reflection of how schools fail to address the emotional and educational needs of teenagers. This book is intended to provoke discussion and debate in schools, university education faculties, and within all agencies which work with teenagers. Moreover, it will help parents be better, more aware parents.

The book speaks to teenagers and validates their experiences and thus offers a form of liberation. The Author Calvin White has been a counselor and educator for thirty years. Everything in the book is true except names and location or occupation details, which have been altered in order to protect privacy.

What essentially is unique, new or different or better about the book than any other book on the subject currently in the market, is the use of case studies. The book is filled with actual student writings and art pieces which give the book an immediacy and authenticity. This book is an expose` which compels the reader's attention through its brutal honesty and insightful, inside perspective.

The Secret Life of Teenagers is a book that does not pretend to have all the answers. However, it poses questions that should be considered by any one interested in the well being of teenagers. This is a valuable reference to parents, teachers, social workers, counselors, and university faculties which train the fore mentioned professionals.

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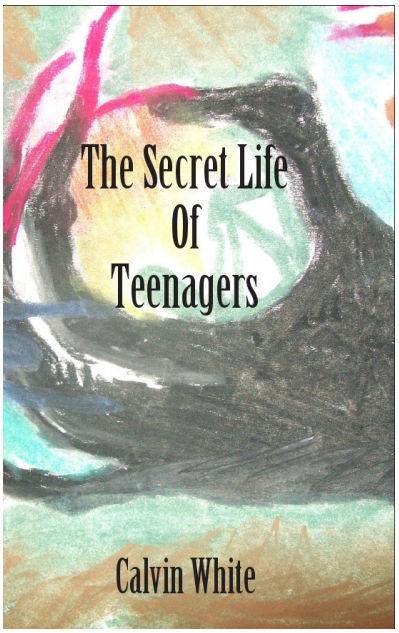

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Synopsis: Most of us live double lives. There is the part we show in public, the person we want others to see, maybe even who we want to be, and there is the person on the inside, that private individual with the proclivities, stresses, dreams and behaviours that we hide from prying eyes. The teen years are the perfect storm when truth is lived more rawly than at any other stage of life. Vulnerability and need combine in such a way as to allow that truth to emerge, as long as there is a trusted person to listen. In *THE SECRET LIFE OF TEENAGERS*, Calvin White, a high school counselor of over twenty years shares those inner, hidden lives. Accompanied by powerful artifact writings and artwork, this is a time capsule for all of us - who we were and in a deep sense who we still are. Access to these truths is both illuminating and liberating.

Aside from being of compelling interest to the general public, it is recommended reading for parents, teachers, counselors, and all who work with youth. All the challenges teenagers face are opened up as they are experienced - loneliness, sexual abuse, alcoholism, drug abusing parents, peer pressure, identity crises, suicide, and bullying. As well, White incisively examines the public school system, its searing flaws which encumber teens with drudgery, and its potential to uplift and to counteract the negative forces of the day. This a book that gives hope by understanding the reality that we live and the courage and stamina that we have to live it.

About the Author: Calvin White, M.Ed. in counseling psychology, has been a counselor and educator for thirty years. He has written counseling-related curricula for the British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, delivered workshops and training throughout British Columbia, and had many essays on education or psychology published in Canada's major newspapers. In 2010, he spent a year in Uzbekistan as a mental health specialist with the Nobel Prize-winning humanitarian organization Doctors Without Borders.

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Author's Q & A

Q. What inspired you to write *The Secret Life of Teenagers*?

A. The deep intimacy and trust afforded me by hundreds of teenagers charged me with a responsibility to tell their story in order for other teenagers to know they aren't alone and for parents to reflect more deeply on their parenting. Their trust motivated me to press for changes in schools and other institutions that service teenagers.

Q. What surprised you most while writing this book?

A. Doing the research, it became clear that there were too many stories to tell. In order not to overwhelm the reader, many deeply moving case studies were not shared, each of which would have powerfully affected the reader and added to the overall awareness.

Q. What were the challenges in bringing this book to life?

A. I was working for a year as a mental health specialist with Doctors Without Borders in Uzbekistan. The intensity of this work in an epidemic in which I led a team of counselors trying to save patients' lives interrupted my emotional concentration on the book. Thus, it took longer to finish.

Q. What are the most important points that you would like readers to have gained and appreciate after reading your book?

A. I want readers to understand teenagers as the complex, whole beings they are and to feel more respect for them and the challenges they face. I'd like there to be much debate on how teachers and schools can more effectively engage and prepare teenagers for the real life they will live. I hope parents will feel more informed.

Q. What advice would you offer your readers so they can make the most out of the book?

A. Use it as a discussion base. Parents do their own research by talking to kids and other parents. Teenagers talk to other teens about what the book evokes in them. Educators and mental health practitioners go at it in debate.

Q. What is your response to those who are surprised by your findings about teenagers at this time and age?

A. Of course, they would be surprised. Most of us put on a public self, live by a script to some extent. This book pushes through all the scripts, all the illusions that make us feel comfortable.

Q. What are the most controversial issues in relation to teenagers in Canada and how do they compare to issues facing teenagers around the world?

A. There are three: Sexuality and teaching it fully and directly rather than leaving it to the internet's market focus. Sexual abuse and the prevalence of other traumas suffered by our kids and how we fail to treat them. And the bankruptcy of schools in engaging our students and preparing them for the warp speed reality we live in. The same issues face teenagers everywhere.

Q. What are your suggestions to parents, teachers, policy makers and the general public when dealing with teenagers?

A. Clue in. Get to know the real person. Respond to that real person with respect so that whatever influence or power you have reflects the real ways and needs of the teenager.