

## untitled

**By Ruth Ostrow**

Driving along at 100km/h on a stretch of highway the other night, my friends and I suddenly had to screech on the brakes to avoid smashing headlong into a van that was sitting at right angles across the highway, taking up both inbound and outbound lanes.

Cruising slowly up to what we thought must have been an accident, we were horrified to see 10 drunken male schoolies crammed into the vehicle, attempting to use any cognitive function they had left after days of drinking to do a U-turn.

Given it was 2am, there was not much traffic on the highway or else the incident would have caused a head-on collision, a mass pile-up of cars, and many dead. Not two minutes later, as we were driving into Byron Bay, we almost bowled over two teenage boys who were standing, swaying, in the centre of the road. They forced the car to stop and then started banging on the hood until we managed to tear away.

"How many do you think get run over during Schoolies Week?" asked someone in the back of our car. "Not enough," someone else retorted.

Given we were ourselves coming back from a night of fun, I am hardly playing the killjoy when I say I'm truly appalled at what has been happening during Schoolies Week.

The amount of litter and rubbish these out-of-control kids leave around the streets, the road accidents, the stories of rape, violence and sexual abuse just make us all squirm.

During my end-of-exam period, I went to Europe. While others were drinking and pillaging, I was looking at the works of Michelangelo and Leonardo Da Vinci; I had lots of fun too, including an Italian love affair to remember.

Coming from an immigrant background, I wasn't privileged. I'd worked nights and weekends for five years to get the money together. But I had attended a school which had so imbued students (including the boys) with a love of art, culture and history that few of us could wait to travel.

What's the education system doing that leaves young people thinking that "having a great time" is getting pissed, taking drugs, getting laid by faceless strangers, or getting killed?

We need to consider what we are doing wrong as teachers and parents that allows for base, Neanderthal behaviour. For if Schoolies Week is an example of the human beings we are breeding, then the school system is failing at a fundamental level.

[www.ruthostrow.com](http://www.ruthostrow.com)

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