



Stay Solid!: A Radical Handbook for Youth

Matt Hern (Editor), Eli Clare (Contributor)

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“*Stay Solid!* is essential reading! A beacon of light for youth around the world. This unique collage of voices helps inform, inspire, and uplift the next generation.”— MK Asante, author of *It’s Bigger Than Hip Hop*
It ain’t easy being a kid these days. For the first time in generations, today’s teens have worse prospects ahead of them than their parents did, and the pressure to toe the line and be a success is heavier than ever . . . and so is the temptation to just give up. But there are things in the world worth fighting for!

This scrapbook-style collection of essays, excerpts, explanations, and images pushes back against a culture that relentlessly demands that kids give up their best ideals, abandon their hopes, forget their ethical objections to dominant life, soothe their rage, and accept their fates. From dealing with the cops to dealing with your peers, from school and community to drugs and sex, from race and class to money and mental health, *Stay Solid!* provides essential support for radically inclined teens who believe that it’s possible for all of us to hang on to our values and build a life we believe in.

Compiled and edited by radical urbanist and educator Matt Hern, with the assistance of the youth community at Vancouver’s Purple Thistle Center, *Stay Solid!* is for kids everywhere, and for anyone who considers themselves an ally—parents, teachers, neighbors, friends, relatives, and beyond.

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Review by Steff Pinch

Though there are many things I wish I could have said to my 14-year-old self, I now realize I could boil it all down to one phrase: "read this book."

Stay Solid!: A Radical Guide for Youth is a beautifully chaotic scrapbook-style tome that gets across nearly everything a burgeoning activist would reasonably be looking to read more about.

Organized by topics like Sex, Media and Community, and interspersed with poetry, photography, comics, doodles and personal essays, it's easy to devour in one sitting or flit around to the topics that strike a particular cord. Woven into these contributions are critiques of much larger institutions, topics such as the Legal System, Science and Gender.

The book is edited by Matt Hern and The Purple Thistle Centre, a youth-run resource centre in Vancouver.

Like the centre itself, the book stays true to the principles of horizontal organizing. Rather than creating a hierarchy where a few authors are the authority of topics, contributors are all given the same weight, regardless of their age or education.

Read more here: <http://rabble.ca/books/reviews/2013/0...>

Shay Gabriel says

Good - I would give this to teenagers I know.

I'm not really a "youth" anymore, but I think my 15-year-old self would've loved this. And, as a crotchety old man (note: I'm not actually that old years-wise, but I no longer lead the lifestyle of a high school/college kid), I was pleasantly surprised that this did not include the unhealthy attitudes I see in some of the radical scene. There are a variety of perspectives in this, which gives young people room to agree with some and disagree with others; to relate to some and to be alienated by others. That's OK; hell, that's good. I also liked that the contributors included a variety of different voices, and centered the experiences of indigenous youth and youth of color. There was great representation in the sections, and it's been a long time since I've seen a section on disability in a general youth handbook!

That said, it would have been nice if there had been some pieces that spoke to religion. although more and more people are atheist, young people do struggle with identifying or not identifying with the faiths of their parents, especially immigrant youth and indigenous youth. there's a tendency to downplay/dissmiss religion in radical circles, which is limiting and ignorant.

Also, while there were a number of very practical pieces, it would've been nice to have more resources that dealt with the nuts and bolts - here's how to recognize abusive relationships, here's where you can go for help, here's what a healthy relationship with food looks like, here's information on eating right and proper nutrition, here's information on veganism, here's information on STIs, here's information on coming out... a book like this is important, because it speaks to experiences and alleviates loneliness, but it'd pair nicely with practical resources that were in line with this kind of politics.

Wayne Ross says

Excellent book for youth and adults who live or work with them. Covers the waterfront of issues from sex/body/gender/relationships to work/class/education/skills and much more. Short articles, poetry, artwork are very accessible and make the book a breeze to just dive into, which is perfect for the target audience.

Sam (Sarah) says

I lent this book to a 14 year old friend who is struggling with a great number of things. His review, "It wasn't that great; but it helped me realize I have a lot more control over my life than I thought I did" My response: This makes this a great book. I am so glad I had it to lend, and look forward to lending it many times. For this young person, it changed their path. Thank you.

Jimmy says

this is a GREAT resource, whether or not you identify yourself as a "radical," or whatever. it helps to provide perspectives on issues that almost all teens/people will at some point struggle with. this is absolutely a great read for teens and adults alike, or to just pick up and read a section of when you're struggling. stay solid! gives me hope for the world!

Kate says

Cool selections for instructors teaching non-dominant/non-mainstream/against-the-grain modes of thought. Reaches far and wide for new and underprivileged points of view.

Danni Green says

This book was so good, I forgot to get off the train on which I was reading it! Amazingly, this is the first time that has ever happened to me, so that's gotta be worth something. Indeed, a powerful collection of writings. The ones by younger and recently-younger, and/or otherwised marginalized people speaking from their personal experience, were the most interesting and seemed to fit best. There were a few which just seemed out of place, older adults taking a "this is what you should do" tone that just stood out as odd amidst the other overwhelmingly compelling work in this book. I anticipate reading this again in the future.

Lance says

Let me start off by saying that this book seems to be written by youth, for youth. That, on its own, makes me love it way more. On top of that, it's got some great resources, for sure. At the same time, I don't think I'd give it to the youth in my life.

That's by no means because it's not valuable, or because it's not (in so many ways) beautiful! The book uses a lot of insider language that many youth just becoming politicized may be unfamiliar with. With terms and concepts regularly referenced but not often explained, many of the pieces can come off as pretentious.

Pieces throughout the book like a poem about one student's experience being dehumanized in school, and several works about love, relationships, and consent are definitely gold. Still, they are countered by the number of pieces that reference the problems with capitalism. Don't get me wrong -- I'm an anti-capitalist, through and through, and I fully support anyone who inspires young folks along those lines. At the same time, the youth in my life are mostly poor people of color, living in struggling communities, being raised by low-income families. A book for youth that assumes all young people are disillusioned with capitalism, and fails to acknowledge that real and significant benefits of having money in a capitalist society seems poised to shame every poor youth of color who ever dreamed of financial success -- probably because those pieces were not written with these youth in mind.

Still, I give the book four stars because there is so much wisdom spread throughout. In between things that are offensive, that over-simplify, or that come off as pretentious, there are great and beautiful gifts. Pieces that inspire youth to think for themselves, believe in themselves, and honor their rights and their power. On the whole, I think this book has much more good than bad. I think I'll be sharing excerpts with the youth in my life, so that I can curate their reading experience. I'd be a bit afraid that giving them the whole book could do more harm than good.
