



JUNE 12, 2009

HOME	POLITICS	MEDIA	BUSINESS	ENTERTAINMENT	LIVING	STYLE	GREEN	WORLD	CHICAGO
COMEDY 23/6	VIDEO	BLOGGER INDEX	ARCHIVE	Twitter: Follow Us			Get Email Alerts		Make HuffPost Your HomePage



## Tracey Jackson

Posted: June 2, 2009 03:02 PM

- BIO
- Get Email Alerts
- Become a Fan
- Bloggers' Index

# America Idolizes the Prom



Read More: [American Idol](#), [High School](#), [Prom](#), [Susan Boyle](#), [Teens](#), [Entertainment News](#)

**Buzz up!** Be the First to Submit This Story to Digg

Get Breaking News Alerts

never spam

Share Print Comments

Recession and swine flu outbreaks be damned: that most insipid of American traditions, The Prom, shall go on. In our city schools have closed, exams have been canceled yet not one prom even postponed. While they may be fun for some they encapsulate everything that is wrong with high school: inclusion and thus rejection; the pretty and popular are glorified while the rest stand on the sidelines trying to cover their humiliation with a stiff upper lip and phony smiles. If you've

been popular you're going out in a blaze of fireworks, if like me you were unpopular you shuffle off with a whimper looking forward to a world without football captains and cheerleaders to validate and judge your worth.

I was trying to explain to my own daughter, whose prom plans are turning out to be less glorious than she had hoped, that it's one night and as of Friday she will be out in the world where the hideous rules of high school no longer apply. Who's in and who's out, who's popular and who's not will be replaced by what you're good at. And you will pick your friends and mates from the world at large and not from the motley crew you've been stuck with for ten years.

Grown-ups don't crow and clap at unhappiness in the same way teens do. We don't enhance our self-esteem by belittling others and basking in and often times causing their misfortune.

Then I read a piece about Susan Boyle and her apparent meltdown and it suddenly dawned on me we have turned into a society that sits night after night glued to the TV to find out who's going to the prom and who's not. Yet instead of gossiping the next day at recess we can now tweet, Facebook and blog, making the humiliation instantaneous and permanent.

Even the titles and slogans of the TV Shows are yanked straight from high school vernacular. "Worlds Biggest Loser," "The Bachelor: who will he pick, who will not get to go to the prom?" "My BFF," "are you cool enough to be my friend?" "America's Top Model" "just not thin or pretty enough to cut it." And what are the Real Houswives if not mean girls grown up, with big houses where they can backstab, judge and exclude while America cheers them on and gives them book

**People.com**

It's Jon & Kate's 10th Anniversary!  
[READ MORE](#)

Shania Twain's Letter to Fans: 'I'm Enjoying Life'  
[READ MORE](#)

PHOTO: A Nose Piercing for Miley Cyrus?  
[READ MORE](#)

[More Celebrity News at People.com](#)

**Don't Miss HuffPost Bloggers**

**Alec Baldwin**  
In Memory of My Friend, Kenny Rankin

**Hillary Clinton**  
Attacking Hunger at Its Roots

**Popular Stories on HuffPost**

Megan Fox Dons Sheer Dress In South Korea (PHOTO)

deals to boot.

And the grand pooh-ba of all high school TV -- "American Idol." There sits Simon Cowell, the cad we all handed our self-esteem to despite the fact we knew we would never measure up and he would smash our dreams. And Paula the eternal cheerleader who was nice because she could afford to be, but made you feel like you were never quite enough.

These are America's idols and the sad part is we don't tune in to see who wins as much to see who will eat a dozen donuts and get sent home the real loser. Who will do something awkward, lame or just plain human and get tossed off whatever island they happen to be on. Night after night we tune in to experience public humiliation in every situation imaginable and relive high school at its very worst.

The other day I found a DVD of *That Girl*, my favorite show as a kid. I excitedly called in my nine year old who after ten minutes said, "nothings happening." "What do you mean? Donald loves Ann and Ann loves Donald and she's buying him a desk and they're eating spaghetti, it's adorable," I responded. My American Idolholic returned to her TV where real things happen to real to real people and boy is it cool. Yet I sat thrilled 40 years later to watch Anne Marie get her ring despite the fact she even hadn't slept with Donald. I realized it was too simple and benign a show to capture Lucy's attention. No one was being rejected or humiliated, Ann wasn't pretending to be a star part of the time thus lying to her friends. There wasn't a mean girl in sight.

Which brings me back to Susan Boyle: Aside from her mind boggling talent she was the poster child for every girl who has stood on the sidelines quietly waiting to be noticed. Someday, someone would see past the frumpy clothes and lumpy body, some day she would be out of high school. She was 47, had never even hooked up and was finally on her way to the prom. And the way Simon looked at her the first time she sang one actually thought fairy tales come true and he would ask her. The captain of the football team was ready to move on, grow up and look beneath the surface.

And I believe in another time when we were entertained by kinder gentler things he might have. But in the new big wide world of never ending high school the rules are the rules; so the younger, hipper, cuter dancing group Diversity won. And the girl most people were rooting for stood on the sideline yet again, well rehearsed stiff-upper-lip in place. Of course she would melt down; who wouldn't? She probably stayed in her house with her cat all these decades because of high school and here she was right back in the thick of it.

But instead of calling her up the next day and being her BFF we talk about how she's loony and unstable. We gossip about her rejection and justify her misfortune saying she was crazy all along Let's face it: if we picked our stars based on their emotional stability our entertainment skies would be pretty darned dark.

Just like in high school, her pain became many people's entertainment.

Shame on us.

Have fun at the prom.

More in Entertainment...

'Housewife' Bethenny Frankel's Wardrobe Malfunction (NSFW)

Shia LaBeouf: I Watched My Parents Have...

Jamie Czerniawski: 'Wife Swap' Mom Accused Of...

Miss California Was "Combative" And "Really Difficult"...

digg™ HuffPost Stories Surging Right Now

Coal Ash Spills Too Dangerous To Reveal To Public, Says DHS (VIDEO)

DHS Urged To Expedite Updated Report On Right Wing Extremism

Not to disappoint her Asian fans after appearing in a purple thigh-baring number...

Letterman Responds To Palin Over Jokes (VIDEO) David Letterman responded to Sarah Palin on his show Wednesday night...

Contessa Brewer Steamed By Palin Defender: You're Insulting Me, "Cut His Mic" MSNBC's Contessa Brewer on Wednesday hosted John...

Michael Rowe Death at the Holocaust Museum and the Degradation of the American Dialogue Ann Coulter, the self-described "conservative

Greg Mitchell What White Supremacists Are Saying Today About Holocaust Museum Gunman To find out the answer to that question,...

Joseph A. Palermo Glenn Beck Spins the Holocaust Museum Shooting Yesterday afternoon Glenn Beck and two of his guests argued...

Shepard Smith Says His Email Is Becoming "More And More Frightening" (VIDEO) UPDATE 6/11: Rush Limbaugh responded to Fox News'...

Barney Frank Pulls Plug On CNBC: "This Interview Is Over!" Barney Frank, the chairman of the House Financial Services Committee and a...

'Housewife' Bethenny Frankel's Wardrobe Malfunction (NSFW PHOTOS) Her show may be off the air till next year, but the "Real Housewives...

James W. Von Brunn: Holocaust Museum Shooting Suspect Is White Supremacist Investigators found a notebook in the car believed to belong...

Michelle Obama's Flamboyant London Fashion: Love It Or Lose It? (PHOTOS, POLL) Michelle Obama layered it on in London Tuesday, wearing...

Colbert Debates Don't