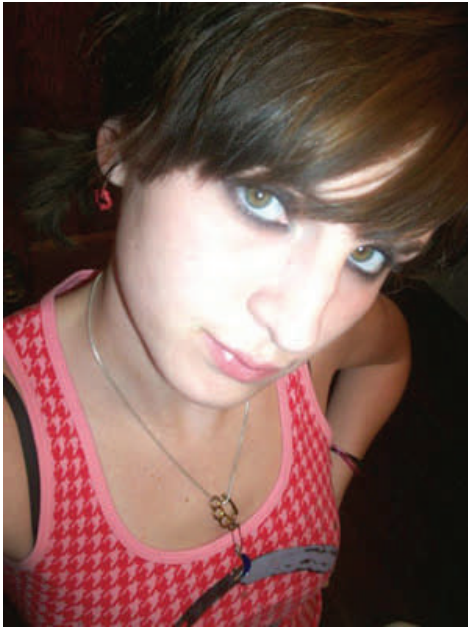


There are a thousand ways to start any conversation, such as the basics people tend to ask upon first meeting a someone. "Hey, nice to meet you too. So, you from around here? Really? Well where is that? Ohhh...close to Cleveland? Cincinnati? Ummm Columbus?? Oh, ok, never heard of that. No, not that ether." Yeah, that's about how it goes, a five minute conversation made into a twenty minute explanation.



Any teenager growing up in a small village of people can attest to the fact that, in a close nit rural community, things aren't always laughter and sunshine. Especially when your interests are so different from the popular or common trends, including the basic culture of the area itself. Even more so, when you're a punk.

I enjoy a good challenge, and don't get me wrong, a good confrontation can always make my adrenaline pump, and teach me quick and witty comebacks faster than just about anything else I know. But facing hurling insults, detesting stares, and gapes of horror on a daily basis eventually gets quite tiring. When walking through town, or in the local Wal-Mart I constantly get stared down like the devil himself just shit me out his asshole. Some people make crude or bashing remarks, like (but not limited to) "Hey Thar! What's wrong with yew?? Whys yer har like dat? Halloween wuz free months ago!" You may have read that and thought wow, she is really exaggerating the local dialect there, I wish I could say I am joking, but I'm not.

Judgment is bad, since I don't speak cow, drive a tractor or wear pastels this means I'm automatically one of the towns designated freaks. Even worse so because I'm a girl. Its also kind of frustrating to feel really left out of conversations about music, and being unable to talk about what bands and movies you may like to hardly anyone. Most people here view the music I like as noise. Only a few others I know can share that feeling, so when it comes to musical preference they are the only few I can turn to in my area, to discuss anything with.

But, by far, the hardest thing about being trapped in a rural community is when that community is encircled by more and more rural communities. So bad, that normally you have to drive forty five minutes to an hour just to go see a decent punk or other alternative show. Of course I don't particularly blame bands for not putting this shit hole on their tour date list, but hey, you never know what a good show could bring to a group of kids, or who is waiting on you to play. Thank God for having my license and knowing others who do, or I would never get to see and hear anyone play, unless it was on a cd.

I guess I can't completely bash where I live , it made me who I am, and has taught me things. Things you wouldn't expect a punk chick to know. Like, when you drive down the highway, it takes about three minutes to get the smell of cow shit out of your car after passing a field. Or, never underestimate the speed of turkeys when they are flying toward your car, no, you cannot get by them faster than they can hit your windshield. Most important never, never, mention the song "Save A Horse Ride A Cowboy", anywhere, ever.

But it has also taught me how hard it is to be someone different, and how important punk rock really is to me. Living here has made me become great friends with people who are totally different than me, and to make the most fun out of what little you may have in a situation. It has given me drive and helped me to accept myself as I am. Also, as strange as it may seem, it let me see nature in its fullest and helped to make me appreciate all the living things in nature.

So I guess my point in the end is this, just because its hard, don't give in and don't give up. It's important to just be who you are, and not let the fact that you stand alone get under your skin. Because hey, if everyone did that and gave in so easily, you wouldn't have any of the great bands you love listening to, or any punk scene anywhere, at all. You wouldn't have all the good times, the stories or the memories. So don't waste the hard work of the bands who did and do what they love, be true to your scene and make the best of what you have. Do it for everyone, but especially do it for punk rock.

--Merri Collins