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## Pro America Iuvenis

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### **Abstract**

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"I recently heard on the national news, the report: a higher incidence of driving deaths, among teens."

### **Cover Page Footnote**

"First Prize Winner" Appeared in the issue: Volume 6, Issue 4, 2006.

# ANDY BRUNTON

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## PRO AMERICA IUVENIS

I recently heard on the national news, the report: a higher incidence of driving deaths, among teens.

I immediately thought of the parking lot at my high school overflowing down the street, blocking the views of passers-by and the constant need of teenagers to announce their power with their car horns like a constant, sorry fanfare, out of tune, and so the dissonance echoing.

I wondered how young Columbus was, when he drove his ships across the ocean, carrying ancient invisible maladies, like pox and testosterone.

How easily these young brothers cut down the wise old man that lived on this land and how swiftly and blindly they sailed.

I thought of McCauley Culkin, who divorced his parents while, far away, his father sat in a golden chair, proud of his boy's power, through clenched fists.

I thought of how the boy's changing voice affected his booming infant career while his thoughts were in their '60's and drove him for ages to avoid the blinding light of his adoring fans.

I thought of a teenage girl's bedroom where she sleeps among posters of her tiny heroes, each wall an altar to a brand new, shiny false-idol, clad in the fad of hot-pink.

I thought of myself as a teen: the incurable temper and the ferociousness of my friendships. I thought of the debauchery of my senior year, driving drunk to the schedule of the school day, and on Graduation day trying coke for the first time.

I thought of milestones, like manifest destiny, or oil like ink spilled from a half-full glass, spreading on the cement of the garage floor and settling into the cracks and craters, the powerful odor rising out and spinning hard like the torque of wheels turning on a car.

I remembered milestones measured in teeth and then in steps and then in words and then in hair and then in years and then ceremonies and then in jobs.

Numbers like 16, 18, 21 marking the adolescent calendar unfolded under pictures of busty blonds.

And I realized how, collectively, our numbers are much larger, but mark the same growth: First to drive, then to vote, then to forget. And who is it that has invested in us this power to drive ships, and tanks, and choppers, and planes strapped with fire through borders like two yellow lines between two white ones? It is no wonder that teenagers die in such large numbers in ditches, and trenches, and against telephone poles, and often past our bedtimes.

And where were the parents in all of this? And why have their hands relaxed around our necks and shoulders? We have learned to differentiate their cars from their children's by the conspicuous yellow ribbons on their trunks, but where are they going, these parents, and why do we follow their kids? Where were the wise elders to drive us to school where, together we can grow and mature into strong, noble leaders with sturdy backs, and straight enough to see over the steering wheel? Have they already succumbed to that genetic contagion, testosterone, coursing rudely in their systems? Please, someone take control until we are old enough to know that we can die!

Finally, in a fever of reverie and fear for my children, I thought of my high school Latin class and every day the back-of-room conversations with another student about drugs and the crazy things we'd done when high. I thought about my children, and about how important it was to learn the vocabulary of a dead language.