

Claire Nader celebrates, encourages tweens stepping forward

 rep-am.com/featured/2022/08/22/claire-nader-celebrates-encourages-tweens-stepping-forward

BY DOROTHEA V. DICECCO Republican-American

August 22, 2022

As I began to read Claire Nader's new book, "You Are Your Own Best Teacher," I found it so engaging that I was unable to put it down.

This surprised me, as the introduction stressed that it was a book aimed at "tweens" – children between 9 and 12. Indeed she does focus on young people but as I became involved with its subject matter, it became clear that she also meant to appeal to readers of all ages.

There is no doubt that she succeeded.

Praise for the book is provided in its opening pages from 13 prominent Americans, each of whom expresses the reasons for their enthusiasm. Among them are Jonathan Kozol, author of "Death at An Early Age" and "Savage Inequalities: Children in American Schools"; Amy Goodman, host of the "Democracy Now!" TV and radio news program; and Katrina Vanden Heuval, publisher and former editor of The Nation.

Nader was fortunate to live with parents who knew how to stimulate their children's curiosity, imagination and intellect – the three characteristics she features on the cover of her book. She was aware that her peers had minds of their own, and like her, were influenced by their family as well as their experiences with friends and classmates. Her book acknowledges that differences in income, family situation, safe neighborhoods and health influence young lives; but they do not diminish tweens' innate curiosity, imagination and intellect.

A graduate of Smith College, Nader holds a Ph.D. from Columbia University in public law and government. As an author and political scientist, she has filled her life with interactions with adults and young people, and she has observed the similarities and differences between the age groups.

In this book, she points out that in schools, the curriculum has become less connected to the reality of life. As budgets are cut, many offerings such as sports, art, music, literature, health, science, history and politics are reduced or eliminated.

The growing impact of media has reached tweens who now, like adults, are a focus of the corporate world. Through their cell phones and computers, tweens are treated as a product, bombarded with tempting ads on how to improve their looks. Junk-foods and sugar-laden drinks are promoted as a dominant source of nutrition; at the same time causing childhood

obesity, diabetes and heart disease – all while raising corporate profits.

In this book, Claire Nader raises us above this dark side of reality and concludes that tweens have not succumbed to it as we might have believed. On the contrary, she provides the reader with positive news and optimism derived from her experience as an advocate for numerous causes at the local, national and international level. Tweens are never afraid to ask questions.

Written simply, and often with humor, the book reveals why she admires tweens. She presents a large range of subjects that inspire them to become active, and through self-education, bring about change. Among them are how they pressed their parents to stop smoking, or wear seatbelts, once they learned that such actions saved lives. Others attended town meetings and vigorously expressed their opinions on social topics that negatively affected their lives locally and nationally.



Claire Nader

One group of fifth-graders influenced their town to clean up a dump that was near their school. Others who were attending a run-down school in a poor neighborhood successfully agitated for a new school building. Planting a community garden was a meaningful experience. To add impact to a specific presentation, Nader often

colors her point with thoughts like this one, from an ancient Chinese proverb: “To know and not to act is not to know.”

Rarely discussed in the media are the effects some tweens suffer as the result of their IQ and other standardized tests given in schools. Many accept the fact that a poor performance suggests less success in future educational opportunities and jobs. Nader writes, “It has been found that standardized multiple-choice questions do not measure the most important talents for success in life. They cannot test your judgement, experience, wisdom, imagination, idealism, diligence, stamina, and resilience.” This frank discussion provides tweens and their parents with a new look at themselves.

She clarifies myths about famous people in history and gives us a surprising and entertaining look at the dictionary as a door to meaning, understanding and enchantment. With the use of facts, she promotes natural foods for healthy bodies and provides an understanding of economic security. She believes that tweens are never too young to be active citizens. Nader’s facts back her writings that if given the opportunity, tweens would be more than happy to join in the conversations.

One parent who read the book wished it were available when his children were young so they could read it and learn together. Others say that this book should be in every library and school, so teachers can use it as a reference and read it to kids. And, of course, kids should read it.

Using a unique approach, Nader has moved beyond stimulating the curiosity, imagination and intellect of tweens. Her book is a testament to her ability to reach the minds of all readers who will benefit from her insight and understanding.

Claire Nader, 94, is consumer advocate Ralph Nader’s sister. She grew up in Winsted and still lives in the area. Reviewer Dorothea V. Dicecco is a Republican-American reader who lives in Litchfield.

