



## Crime March 2010

The Verdadera staff encourages you to discuss and explore the issues and stories, as the publication aims not only to offer an outlet for expression, but to improve our lives. Keep in mind that the emotions that flow through the text and the feelings behind the words could be those of your child, your classmate, or your best friend.

*Things to consider while reading:*

- *Have you ever committed a crime?*
- *What is the definition of a crime?*
- *Are crimes you have committed justifiable because of their lack of severity?*

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### **Student Submission**

Crime? Where is the line drawn and who determines what is right or wrong? Is it the nifty little school handbook that was distributed at the start of the year whose pages end up being used to get rid of gum in the middle of class? Or is it whatever religion, or lack of religion thereof, that gives us an outline as to how we live? Or is it our nagging, demanding parents who fit us into their image for a perfect child?

Honestly, no one can follow that many rules and those who do will end up living a miserable life, until they realize the gravity of their stupidity. Well with annoyingly frustrating parents who expect close to perfection, and act asian but do not have the DNA to match, I have decided that most of what they say, I will make adjustments to. My motto of life has been "Live fast, die young". My goal has been to go to heaven one day (if i make it there) and say "Damn, my life was legit".

Crime seems to always make it slowly into my life, through myself or my friends, whether it is stealing a candy bar from the grocery store, to stolen car parts. When the assistant principals come into classes and talk about

sexual harassment they say that events that occur everyday is "illegal".

Personally, I walk around school with a tattoo under my jeans. Tattoos are legal, just not if you're 17 years old. Apparently as I was researching before I went to go get it done, the tattoo artist who did it can be arrested for several years and fined thousands of dollars and have their license revoked because i have a permanent engravement on my body before I am adult enough to make that kind of decision. . And here comes the catch, my tattoo artist didn't have an official license yet. The cherry on the sundae, my parents don't know and I cannot show them until I'm 18, in six months.

Sex between minors, 95% of Monta Vista, is supposedly against the law. For every party, every weekend, most of the alcohol is stolen and any drugs are definitely not lawful either. But if all of this occurs on a regular basis, is it a crime? "Crime" is what those seven time serial killers commit and get interviewed on Oprah for. "Crime" is what shames your family enough to remove you off of the family tree. Yes, if we think of it the "official, police way" i have committed crimes, hundreds of

times. Am I ashamed? No. Because I have more fun than most kids my age and if the law doesn't agree with me in what is "good, clean fun", then the entire legislative branch can suck it.

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*"Crime and fear of crime have permeated the fabric of America life."* - Warren E. Burger  
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I felt like I was in an Aladdin Bail Bonds Ad: "I never thought my own Brother would end up in jail." Well he did. I got The Call from my one of his close friends who said saying that he was contacted by my brother by his one phone call, and that he was in jail. Furthermore he didn't bother to remember the family's phone number so he called the only number he remembered, his friend's. Anyways I won't get into what he did or why, but I'll just say that it was stupid. We had to wait in the office of a shady bailbonds dude and get a lawyer for his court appearance on Christmas eve and pay bonds and ugh there goes my car. The worst part is that he continues to do stupid things, and it seems that my parents are working hard to pay the high bail, and he hasn't learned his lesson (and I'm not going to get my car for a while.). And that's how my brother became a felon

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*"Petty laws breed great crimes."*  
- Marie Louise De La Ramie  
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In third grade I decided that I would never steal again. Our school has a book fair and it had all of the usual paraphernalia that was always so much more intriguing than the books. I remember looking at the flower erasers and thinking that they were the coolest things in the world. I couldn't hold all of them in my hands so I remember putting in my bag with all intentions of paying for it. When the bell rang signaling the end of lunch I quickly got in line so that I would not be late for class. I of course, forgot to pay for the extra eraser. When I got home and dumped the contents of my bag on the floor I realized, to my horror that I hadn't paid for it. I felt terrible. I started worry that I would get in trouble and that my parents would somehow automatically know that I had been a bad kid. I was so embarrassed that I did not know what to do. Fortunately the fair was weeklong and then next day I went back. I was too chicken to explain what happened so I went back and put money in the donations jar at the counter (it was for people who were short a little bit of change on their purchase.) That one simple act, although unintentional, brought up uncomfortable feelings that I knew I would never be able to live down. Even that small taste has stayed with me and made me want to never steal.

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*"Crime has always been a regrettably consistent element of the human experience."* - Mark Frost  
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Crime is a vague topic. We are all criminals. But the question is what type of criminals we are. I can admit to breaking the law once or twice from staying out pass Cupertino's curfew to illegally downloading music online. But I think the real issue is how far we go in our criminal activities. I believe that certain rules are allowed to be broken, but there is a fine line of what is "right" and "wrong". For example if a friend shoplifts, and if I am with them, I make them return it. Because karma is a bitch. If you do bad things, bad things will happen to you.

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*"What is crime amongst the multitude, is only vice among the few."* - Benjamin Disraeli  
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I've heard some pretty bad-ass stories about Monta Vista, you know nerds dealing drugs, people bringing knives to school and fighting eighth graders...and stealing Chem textbooks. At MV the only experience with crime I've had was people stealing my stuff. And that whole Freshman fight debacle. Anyways, my iPod got stolen from my PE locker once, along with my phone, and jeans. Then another day my backpack got ransacked and some loser stole my Chem textbook. I mean you know you're at MV when people steal Chem textbooks. I think petty theft and crime flourishes at MV because the admin doesn't do anything; I mean everytime I went and asked them for help I felt like I was just filling out papers helplessly. And I definitely did not want to be one of those people who posted "STOLEN (fill in the blank)" on schoolloop discussions.

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*"A first impulse was never a crime."* - Pierre Corneille  
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I dont really know what the definition of a crime is. Crime is something that negatively affects another person. I can say that yes I've committed crimes but I wouldn't call myself a criminal. A criminal hurts others and does no good to society and others. I get decent grades, overall a good daughter and a true friend. I've broken laws but I am not a criminal. I know taking illegal substances is a crime. I know that underaged drinking is a crime. But just because I'm a reckless teenager, doesn't make me a criminal.

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*"Fear follows crime and its punishment"* - Voltaire  
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So my friends and I were hanging out at the mall, just another friday night. Our plan was to watch a movie, maybe hit on some girls at the ice skating rink, and just get some food after that to celebrate another week finished. We had just watched the movie, when one of my friends said, "hey i stole some spray paint, you guys wanna make some art?". I guess it sounded stupid to begin with, but at the time it sounded like a good idea since we were tired of the same routine all the time. We got to his house, smoked some weed, and we got his stash of spray paint and just went out to the railroad tracks to paint. It was probably around 10 by then. We were cautious at first, setting people up as watchdogs and stuff, but soon everyone got bored and just started spray painting together. I guess somebody saw us and the cops came, and it wasnt just a little writing on the wall, it was a full on mural. I dont have to go into further detail than that, you guys know the drill. Now ive got a minor record, lost my parent's trust, can't go out with my friends anymore, and shit like that. If you ask me, that definitely wasn't worth it. I could be watching a movie right now.

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*"All crime is a kind of disease and should be treated as such."* - Gandhi  
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Crime. What is crime? Sure, it's the typical, shoplifting, stealing. That's what first comes to mind when you think of crime. But crime can also be other things. It can be child abuse. I'm sure that happens alot, especially here at Monta Vista, where it's common for students to hear "oh no, i got a C! My parents are going to KILL me for that!" This breaks my heart. Child neglect is pretty bad too. I work with children, and when their parents don't pick them up, they fall to pieces. They cry and cry. I try to soothe them by picking them up and saying "Don't worry, your mommy or daddy's coming." But the thing is, they don't always come. Another crime that we see alot is internet abuse. People think that they're safe, that they can say whatever shit they want about other people. But NEWSFLASH people, facebook, myspace, etc-- everyone can see what you say. I've definitely seen many facebook groups that are anti- \_\_\_\_\_. I don't know why. They've never done anything wrong. Sure, they aren't friends with everyone. Maybe they don't wear the "right" clothes. But who does? i feel so bad for them, but, what do I do? Nothing. What can I do? I don't know. I'll probably never know. But I do know that crime hurts. The closest thing I've done to crime, the kind that everyone thinks of right away, is taking two toys from the dentist's office when I was little. But if I really think about it, I've made fun of people over the internet. I guess I am a criminal.

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*"Obviously crime pays, or there'd be no crime."*

- G. Gordon Liddy  
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I've had a lot of first hand experience with crime, mostly petty theft though. Me and a lot of my friends would jack stuff from convenience stores – candy, snacks, other small things. Now that I think about it, we really did it for no reason – mostly for the thrill I guess. We even stole an umbrella once from 7-11, which I thought was pretty funny. My stealing habits have since stopped and thankfully I feel like it was just a phase not any indication of future serious crime – I'm no serious killer, I'm just hungry sometimes without money.

What probably most inspired me to stop was my friend getting caught trying to steal some shoes and jeans at Valley Fair, we wore the jeans under his pants and the shoes right out. Surprisingly, they caught him because of the jeans under his pants and not the shoes – and to this day I still don't really know how. I wasn't actually there so maybe that's why, as my friend doesn't really like to talk about it. Either way, I know crime is wrong, but I guess it still occurs in the world either from boredom or from true evilness.

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*"If you share your friend's crime, you make it your own."*

- Latin Proverb  
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i was just out with some friends and they decided to drink a little  
so i did too  
but then they pulled out some weed and shit  
and then i thought that was a little but much  
so i left and went to bjs with some friends and got a pizookie  
and then when i went to see what the druggie friends were up to  
i went back to their spot  
and saw the cops  
the got into major shit and i got lucky and was freeeeeeee

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*"Many commit the same crimes with a very different result. One bears a cross for his crime; another a crown."*

- Juvenal  
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I used to think crime and Cupertino don't really match. I guess we do have our citation for riding bikes on the sidewalk, or minor arrests for excessive stealing from 7-11. But I didn't think we really had any serious crime, like constant muggings, or murder. But crime is crime, regardless of what the offense is. recently, my friends house got broken into. the robber didn't even need to "break" in. they just unlatched the window and hopped

inside. But they took a lot of stuff, like their jewelry and laptops. Ive always imagined their house as a very secure place, since it was located in a very safe neighborhood. I guess the break-in really opened my eyes on more serious forms of crime.

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*"The punishment can be remitted. The crime is everlasting."* - Ovid  
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I'm pretty sure I've broken laws. Not the drug dealing, home robbing kind. Mine are more normal. It's all the usual stuff like biking without a helmet, illegal downloading, driving people around – that kind of stuff. They are small things that don't really bother me your conscience and don't really feel wrong. I don't feel like I'm harming anyone by clicking download on that song or that album. Surely those multi-millionaire singers can do without my meager contribution? The only bad thing that happens is that I get viruses on my computer. I think that's punishment enough without people telling me I'm going to get arrested someday just because I download stuff. I know I might be harming myself, but it's my choice after all.

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*"Crime is naught but misdirected energy."*  
- Emma Goldman  
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I really dislike it when people bash on the police or firefighters. They aren't the one's committing crimes – sure there are a few who make a bad name for the rest of them, as the media just blows up over bad things, but overall, they are there to protect us. My uncle is in law enforcement and I have a couple of friends who want to go too, and they are willing to put their lives on the line and work weird hours and deal with the shadiest of situations just to help people out and save people. One stray bullet from a psycho deranged person and they could be crippled for the rest of their lives, or even dead. People are so quick to point fingers at "incompetency" but they're doing the best they can do, and that's a fact.

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*"No crime is so great as daring to excel."*  
- Winston Churchill  
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I hate the police so much. I ran a stupid stop sign once, and I got pulled over by some fat cop who was waiting hidden. Honestly it was the dumbest thing ever. Don't cops have better things to do than wait for somebody to make a careless mistake like running a dumb stop sign? It's barley even a crime. I didn't hurt anyone by running that stop sign, I don't think anyone could ever get hurt by a guy running a stop sign. It's just so damn pointless for cops

to go after people like me who are still safe even if we break a stupid rule. I got slammed with a huge bill not to mention the yellings of my parents.

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*"Let the punishment fit the crime."* - Anonymous  
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So for crime, I haven't really had any real personal experiences. The most crime-y things ive done are staying out past curfew, not wearing my seatbelt, and Tping. Is Tping even illegal? I guess its considered vandalism. Well anyways, I guess I just havent been badass enough.

I have definitely heard many stories of my classmates stealing scooters they just find or ipods they see laying around. Or ive heard of several kids walking in to sev and just taking a bag of chips.

I kinda wish I had some badass story to tell. My friend tried stealing beer from the grocery store, got caught, and had to be interrogated. He was pretty much effed, so when the guy turned, he just sprinted and spent the next hour trying to hide in the neighborhood.

I want a badass story like that.

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*"If moderation is a fault, then indifference is a crime."*  
- Jack Kerouac  
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I commit petty crimes, am I a criminal? No, I have never killed anyone or stolen. But I have jaywalked, drank, and ridden in cars with underage drivers. To me, crime is a very subjective word. I mean, I have done things that are illegal but I would not consider myself a criminal. I have my own moral code and sometimes the government and I don't always agree. Sure, some of the things that I have done are dangerous but still, I am not sure that they should be considered crimes. I would never do any of the outrageous things like joyriding or murder, but it really doesn't bother me if I Jay walk every once in a while.

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*Commit a crime, and the earth is made of glass."*  
- Ralph Waldo Emerson  
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I am a criminal. At least I was when I stole from 7-11 for a period of 2 months. My friend got me into. One day, he was like "Dude, why do we pay for our stuff when we can just steal it?" So we went into 7-11 to the candy aisle. We made sure the Indian guy was busy with something else before we stuck the merchandise into our pockets. We tried to act as casual as possible, of course as we slipped out of 7-11 unnoticed. It was exhilarating. Sure it has economical benefits, but stealing gave me the rush that I came back for. I was always careful never to get caught, but one day my friend was careless and he got

caught as well as owned by his parents for doing so. I knew my parents would act similarly if I got caught stealing so I decided to stop.

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*"Crime takes but a moment but justice an eternity."*

- Anonymous

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I've had one legit run in with the police. It was a year ago, I was at the mall with a couple of friends for one of my friends birthdays. We all went to a store where beforehand two of the girls there decided to "take" something from the store as a birthday present. So they did. They took like a mascara or eyeshadow or something small like that. I didn't really know what was going on until we walked outside the store and two workers followed us and asked one of the girls to come back with them. Turns out that the security cameras caught them. The manager and this guy made them go through all their stuff and asked for their receipts for other stuff that wasn't even from the store that they stole stuff from. The whole time me and this guy that was hanging out with us but I didn't really know were just waiting outside awkwardly. We weren't sure if we wanted to stay and be asked inside possibly or just leave and not get involved. We just stayed but it was especially scary when the guys from the store came back out and asked for the other girl to come in. They never ended up asking for us but that girl who was caught was always stealing stuff. I know, because we're friends. She always would just put on bracelets and walk out of stores. "It's so easy!" she would always say. And how everything was so expensive. But it's not like she was poor. She is rich. She lives in a gated neighborhood and in a nice house and her family is well off. But she steals and I don't really understand her drive but sometimes I understand the temptation.

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*"Society prepares the crime. Criminals commit it."*

- Henry Thomas Buckle

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A few friends and i were at my house at like 4 am. And we saw this car pull up to the park outside my house and that it filled up with smoke. We could smell the weed coming from it and decided that it would be fun to call the cops on them, so we did. and they came and pulled up to the peoples car and brought them out.

it was hella funny cause tehre were three cop cars and the people came out and looked scared shitless and then the cops talked to them for like 30minutes. they tried flirting with the cops and that didnt work their other friends or parents or somebody came and picked them up later thats bout all

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*"He who does not prevent a crime when he can, encourages it."* - Seneca

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Wow well what can I say about crime? Other than the fact that me and my friends do it sometimes. So we go into drug stores or other stores at the mall and take things without paying but is it that big of a deal? I only choose to take the small things that don't matter, even when my friends try to take the more expensive things like I don't know dvds or clothes or other stuff. I guess it kinda is bad. But I think its kinda stupid how ppl care about crimes teenagers do or whatever, when there are worse shit out there. Like murders and abusive people, I don't know. This is getting to be rambly now. I don't know what the big deal with crime is anyway, I know I'm not ever gonna kill anyone. What is crime anyway? Crime is just something that the man says we can't do, but who says that we gotta listen to him? You can try to f\*\*\*in psychoanalyse me and figure out if I come from an abusive home or crappy life sure go ahead. I won't stop you, so I have parents who don't give a s\*\*\*. But does that really matter? I just see what I like and I take it. And since I like it, shouldn't it be mine? Rich spoiled kids who just steal for the high, what the fuck they're stupid. I'm not poor or that bad off, but I take what I need at the moment. There's a f\*\*\*in purpose for what I steal. My friends too. But I can't understand those rich kids. Whatever, u can tell me all u want that stealin is bad. Maybe if u keep tellin me for a hundred years, I'll learn to stop one day. Or maybe I wont.

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*"Make crime pay. Become a lawyer."* - Will Rogers

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I used to steal a LOT. Especially from 711. It was some form of addiction to me, and I couldn't really stop. I did it with friends, like usually a whole bunch of them. We would just walk in after school and take small stuff that's easy to hide, like gum and candy. I guess this is cupertino's form of serious crime, because I knew a lot of people who did it. But as I got older, I realized that what I was doing was really dumb. I don't know, but suddenly everything clicked, and stealing seemed stupid. I guess what based on personal experience, stealing seems to be the biggest form of crime in Cupertino.

## Crime

By Barbara Nichols, LMFT

crime (krm)

n.

1. An act committed or omitted in violation of a law forbidding or commanding it and for which punishment is imposed upon conviction.
2. Unlawful activity: statistics relating to violent crime.
3. A serious offense, especially one in violation of morality.
4. An unjust, senseless, or disgraceful act or condition: It's a crime to squander our country's natural resources. [Middle English, from Old French, from Latin *crimen*; see *krei-* in Indo-European roots.]

From the readings this month, you'll see that some teens question whether or not they should abide by the law if they feel the crime is "petty", or they view it as unfair, stupid or that it isn't harming anyone else.

If we take the first definition of crime, the following all fit the category:

- shoplifting from a department store
- stealing from school lockers
- stealing from 7-11
- cyber-bullying
- drinking before age 21
- smoking marijuana
- using illegal drugs
- vandalism
  - graffiti
  - tp'ing a house
  - egging
- getting a tattoo before age 18
- driving friends in your car before your year probation is up
- being out after curfew

Why do teens commit these offenses? The answers are as varied as the people and the crimes. In the cases of vandalism and cyber-bullying, it can be revenge, anger or a need for dominance and control. Some offenses occur due to peer pressure and teens wanting to look "cool". Other crimes, such as shoplifting, can produce a rush, or high. These feelings of "getting away with it" can be powerful, and can temporarily mask feelings of unhappiness – boredom, frustration, anger, depression.

Of the above offenses, shoplifting came up most in the stories. To understand more about "why", social psychologist Jonathan Haidt explains that shoplifting emerges in a developmental stage when teens try to gain the admiration of peers in order to secure their place in the social pecking order. Typically, at some point teens mature and the combination of societal pressure, shame, and fear of being caught and an internal sense of morality kicks in. Most stop shoplifting, and start condemning it.

Parents, authority figures, and peers alike may be alarmed when teens rationalize breaking the law. Commonly, rationalization is thought of as a justification for poor behavior, or a way to refuse to take responsibility for one's actions.

In psychological history, Sigmund Freud proposed that rationalization is one of the defense mechanisms. According to Freud, defense mechanisms are unconscious psychological strategies used to cope with reality and maintain self image. The current DSM IV refers to defense mechanisms as coping skills. These skills protect the person against anxiety and awareness of internal or external dangers or stressors. Rationalization falls under a category called the "disavowal level". This level is characterized by keeping unpleasant or unacceptable impulses, ideas, or responsibility out of awareness, sometimes by incorrectly attributing them to external causes.

What are the costs or consequences for committing a crime? If caught, the obvious are the legal consequences and getting in trouble with parents/guardians. As a therapist, I am concerned with emotional consequences. How will committing a crime affect the teen's view of her/himself? If the act is in violation of the teen's personal and familial values and morals, there may be feelings of guilt, regret, and self loathing. This may lead to anxiety, depression and low self-esteem.

**For Parents:**

An authoritative style has been shown to be the most effective way to parent effectively. Authoritative parents are warm, but firm. They have high expectations that are consistent with their child's abilities, and deal with the child in a rational, issue-oriented manner. They frequently engage their children in discussions over matters of discipline, but assume the responsibility of the final decision. Have a discussion with your teens about crime. Be sure they know your beliefs, morals and values. Set up rules and consequences beforehand for possible offenses. Enforce limits, and always be consistent. If you continue to have concerns about your teen or questions about parenting, seek professional guidance.

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## Resources from the Verdadera Staff and Professional

- Haidt, Jonathan. The Infinite Mind, Series on Shoplifting, January 16, 2008, <http://www.lcmedia.com/mind514.htm>
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defense\\_mechanisms](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Defense_mechanisms)
- Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition, American Psychiatric Association, 2000.
- Why Juveniles Commit Crimes - <http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/2000/2/00.02.07.x.html>
- Committing Crimes - <http://library.adoption.com/articles/committing-crimes.html>
- [http://www.megaessays.com/essay\\_search/committing\\_crime.html](http://www.megaessays.com/essay_search/committing_crime.html)
- Why Do Teens Commit Crimes? - [http://www.ehow.com/about\\_4597407\\_why-do-teens-commit-crimes.html](http://www.ehow.com/about_4597407_why-do-teens-commit-crimes.html)
- Why Do Kids Commit Crimes? – [http://wiki.answers.com/Q/Why\\_do\\_kids\\_commit\\_crimes](http://wiki.answers.com/Q/Why_do_kids_commit_crimes)

## Upcoming Issues and Submission Deadlines

| <u>Issue</u>                   | <u>Deadline</u>        |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| April – Fears about the Future | 6pm, Saturday, March 6 |
| May – Sex and Aftereffects     | 6pm, Saturday, April 3 |
| June – Parties                 | 6pm, Saturday, May 8   |

## Ways to Submit

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2. Stories can be turned in to **any staff member** – hardcopies or emails, anything is welcomed. Staff members are also there to help answer your questions about issues, topics, anything.
3. Email it to [verdadera.entries@gmail.com](mailto:verdadera.entries@gmail.com)

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**Crime**  
**March 2010**

*Verdadera is a publication created by and for Monta Vista students for the purpose of instigating communication concerning the reality of high school within the community. Each month, an issue on a topic relevant to the lives of our students is sent home for reading by both parents and students. While we do not edit submissions, we aim to publish personal experiences, not opinion articles. Please utilize all the resources present and feel free to email comments and feedback.*

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