New Definition of a "Young Mother"

by Mia H.

What are the lives of girls who sit in front of the television, but are experiencing the same situation as those glorified teens? No, not MTV's *MTV Cribs,* but other MTV shows. The infamous *16 and Pregnant,* and the spin-off, *Teen Mom*.

Young girls all over the country, and the world, ages thirteen through nineteen, are facing the arduous reality that they are pregnant. Whether unexpected or planned, it's happening to youths everywhere, especially in our neighborhoods.

Teen pregnancy is an urgent topic that should be talked about in our communities. Studies from the Disease Control and Prevention website (cdc.gov) show that, "In 2013, non-Hispanic blacks and Hispanic teens birth rates were still more than two times higher than the rate for non-Hispanic white teens...." Although these statistics correlate with the whole country, our city is part of the reason why. Information from chicagonow.com say that although Illinois is significatly below the national rate for teen pregnancy, Chicago is one of the top ten for black and Latino teen pregnancies. This is crucial information to our Logan Square neighborhood, as well as our schools, because the community has a majority of Latinos, (according to chicagohistory.org, as of 2000, 65.1%) which means that our neighborhood has more risk for teen pregnancy. These circumstances and harsh realities can greatly affect our children today.

Teen pregnancies, although not commonly talked about, are a very common issue in reality. A student conducted study at Goethe Elementary School in Logan Square revealed that seventy percent of participants have a close relative that is or was pregnant between the ages of 13-19 years old. Of those seventy percent, forty percent knew two or more ladies who are or were pregnant at that young age. These statistics are significant because it brings realization that teen pregnancy is a much more redundant event then noticed; some of the participants noted that their sisters, mothers, grandmothers, great-grandmothers and so forth have gotten pregnant in their teens. One study contributor even gave her personal account of how a teen pregnancy has affected her and her life.

"....and give care to a child from teen pregnancy that I did not give birth to. My whole life revolves around a child from teen pregnancy." That is what eighth grade student Julissa Rosario said when asked how teen pregnancy has personally affected her. Because of teen pregnancy, her life has drastically changed. Although this child has brought her happiness, she believes that teen pregnancy is not a positive experience for teens and, "...teens should live their teen lives with fun experiences and finish high school and move on to what they pick, either college and or the work field, and with a child, as a teen that will hold you back from it all." Her personal experience has let Julissa realize that teens should be more aware of the aftermath and how pregnancy will affect all future decisions.

And so what underlies these facts and personal accounts is that teen pregnancy is a much more momentous issue than acknowledged. This can change. The simple act of talking to children about how teen pregnancy can affect them during and after, and how pregnancy will alter their future choices. Taking the time to educate teens on how to protect themselves and stay safe. Even if a conversation is uncomfortable, referring adolescents to an expert website such as stayteen.org can make a difference. So take the time to make a change. Be the change.