SKATERS IN THE SUBURBS AND THE CITY

They would push, till they couldn't skate no more
Office building lobbies wasn't safe no more
And it wasn't like they wasn't getting chased no more
Just the freedom was better than breathing they said
And the skate route they used to escape out
When things got crazy they needed to break out

They'd head to any place with stairs
Any good grinds, the world was theirs,
And they four wheels would take them there
Till the cops came and said, "There's no skating here"

And so they kick push, kick push
Kick push, kick push, coast
And away they roll
Just rebels without a cause with no place to go

– excerpt from "Kick, Push" by Lupe Fiasco

"You see a lot of people who want to do it but are afraid to because of their ethnicity."

– A.J., from "The State of Black Skate"

Skateboarding, originally called "sidewalk surfing," was invented back in the 1950s by California surfers. They put wheels onto surfboard-shaped planks so they could practice surfing even when there were no good waves. Since that time, most people think of skateboarding as something that kids in the suburbs do, not kids in the city. For example, two recent TV shows, *The Life of Ryan* and *Rob & Big*, focus on the lives of wealthy skaters who live in mansions. This is the stereotype that many people think of when they think of skaters.

As a **result**, kids who live in the city and like to skateboard are often made fun of and rejected by their peers. They often feel pressure to play sports that are more accepted in big cities, like football or basketball. Should kids have to give up something they love to fit in because their friends **interpret** skateboarding as a sport for kids in the suburbs? Is there even any **evidence** to support this interpretation, or is this just an unfair stereotype?

Skateboarding is one of the fastest growing sports in the country. Some people **claim** that skateboarding is growing the fastest among kids living in big cities. They see a **pattern** of new skate parks being built in big cities like Los Angeles, Kansas City, and New York City over the past few years. Professional skateboarders like Rob Dyrdek and Tony Hawk are raising money to build more than 300 new skate parks in cities around the country. It is **plausible** that many more kids from the inner city will skate as a **result** of these new parks being built.

Hip-hop artists like Lupe Fiasco and Pharrell Williams skateboard, write songs about skateboarding, and design shoes and clothing for skateboarders. Many people **claim** that Lupe and Pharrell have made it cool for kids in the city to get into skateboarding. However, many of these kids say that people give them strange looks or rag on them because they enjoy a sport that only kids in the suburbs are supposed to like. For example, teenager Elijah from Brooklyn, NY, says: "My own flesh and blood called me a sellout because I skateboard." As a **result**, kids like Elijah often feel pressure to give up skateboarding.

What do you think? Should teens like Elijah quit skateboarding to be more like their friends? Or should they do what they love even if their friends see it as selling out?

Mini-Glossary

Stereotype – widely held belief about an entire group, which is often untrue or unfair

My own flesh and blood – people who are part of your family

Sellout – a person who isn't loyal to his or her roots or values