

Narrator: Abnormalities in Society

Narrator: A hole in the tongue, a bar of metal shoved through it. The same with ears, nose, eyebrows and various other body parts. Thousands of people get body modifications every year. It's just something that is seen as freaky and abnormal.

I have been a part of this body modification community for some time and some people just don't understand why anyone would get them. We are just attention seekers.

Venesa Bombard, a dear friend of mine has many piercings and tattoos.

Venesa B.: When I was 15 years old I got a tattoo on my lower stomach by my pelvic bone and it's a butterfly with three 3's. When I was 16 I got my belly button pierced and then when I was 17 I got my tongue pierced. But when I was like three days old my grandmother pierced my ears, so that was my first piercing. The tattoo on my back it says Karma on my lower back and then it has, well right now it's not finished, but it only has three butterflies: one's purple,

one's pink, and one's green the purple. I have a tattoo on my left upper arm it's a of a skull and cross bones. It's a girl, her name is Stella and it says 324 and 344, which are my basic training and tech school squadrons.

Narrator: Joe Nilmeyer is a over six foot tall teenager, he is still a minor, but never looks it. His parents forbid him to get body modifications, even though he wants them badly.

Joe N: . I'm willing to do almost anything but I know I really want to get facial piercings and probably some tattoos. Probably some type of tribal symbol on my upper arm. I have considered scarification.

Narrator: The art of tattooing began over 2,000 years ago in the Polynesian islands. Their tattoos are unique and have a deep societal meaning. Many tattoo ceremonies were a right of passage into adulthood. Each tattoo was unique and helped with individual identity. The age limit for getting a tattoo in the United States is eighteen, I know many people who, shortly after their eighteenth birthday, have raced to a tattoo artist to get marked. A westernized version of a

passage into adulthood.

Often people with body modifications are called attention seekers, people who have no other reason to get body modifications except to be the center of attention. Either that or they are just being ridiculous. There are deeper meanings to each and every tattoo, each and every hole.

Venesa B: The tattoo on my back it says Karma on my lower back and then it has, well right now it's not finished, but it only has three butterflies: one's purple, one's pink, and one's green the purple; one represents my mom, the pink one's my sister, and the green one's me; and then I got Karma 'cause I really believe in Karma and I got that right coming out of High School and like coming out of High School like I learned that you know definitely don't be vengeful or jealous or anything like that 'cause anything anybody does to you they're just gonna get it back, that's all Karma. The butterfly actually represents when I lost my virginity so that was a big important date for me and so I got a tattoo of it, and the threes kind of represent the date and the butterfly itself is just like, it's an innocent insect so

that's kind of why I got it and plus my name means butterfly in Greek so that's what inspired that. . I feel kind of like normal and like if I was in a crowd you wouldn't see me and it's not that I want to stand out or anything like that it's just I don't wanna be the next person standing next to me. And I'm an artist and so just the fact that I have so much blank space I just wanna fill it up with artwork and that's really what it is to me it's not like "oh it' just a tattoo". No it's artwork, like when I get my back done I'mma have Hector sign it for me as if it was a canvas, it's not just gonna be like any artwork where they just do it and you know people are like "oh who's that done by" like I want it to be like a painting 'cause it's artwork and I see that it's basically what it is. Like when anybody does any type of tattoo or anything like that that's an artist who's doing that to you, it's not just some average person off the street so I mean. Mainly my sister's a huge role model for me. She had three kids between the ages of 18 and 22 and she's on her third degree right now for, she got her dental assistant license, her dental hygienist license and now she's going for her third, not degree; license she's getting a degree and a

license for criminal justice and she's gonna work in forensics for police department. So she's a huge inspiration for me, she shows me that like no matter what happens like you just gotta keep going. And like she has some crazy artwork on her she has like her kids footprints on her back, that's frickin' awesome, so she's probably a big influence on what got me into getting more tattoos than just the my first original one. And then you know her fiancé is covered in tattoos and so is my boyfriend so all three of them together kind of they showed me more and more artwork and I was like “aww man yea” so they're all kind of influencing me and being inspirations to me so.

Narrator: Some people write poetry, some write music. Then there are those who mark their bodies with designs, made with ink and/or scalpels. The intent is the same. It helps to show life's experiences and people. It's not about being a freak. Perhaps one day it will be seen as completely acceptable, and not something that's on the fringes of society.

Venesa B.: Hopefully over the summer I'll be moving to San Diego with a certain somebody if not then I'll have to go solo. I'd much rather go with certain somebody 'cause she's so cool. And then I'm planning on going to school down there for fashion design and yea I'm just kinda gonna like live down there with somebody cool and so we can be close to my other somebody cool and we're all gonna go to school and be happy and dandy and dainty. It's gonna be awesome. Well I wanna open up a shop clothing shop I wanna open up a shop for my own clothing line and I'd like to open down there and then if that all goes we'll open another one in San Francisco off of Haight and Ashbury, 'cause that's a cool district. I think I can get a lot of recognition there, I guess you could say so. I love the bay area but it's so much nicer down there so I kinda be back and forth.

Narrator: Perhaps it is attention seeking, but often it's paying attention to oneself and seeing what lies beneath and just expressing it in a different way.

Venesa B.: It's just like such a passion, such a drive to be able to like. I can't wait to show my whole life on my body and be like everything I've been through. Artwork; it's like a painting that you just get to keep forever and ever and ever and ever.