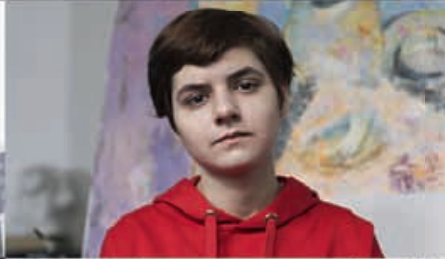


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GENERATION P

a lifetime under Vladimir Putin



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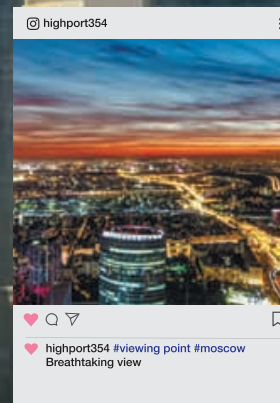
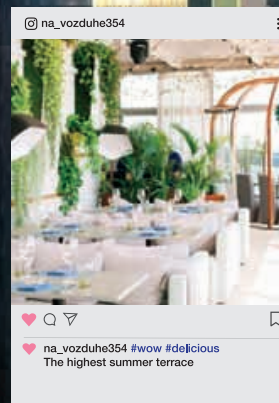
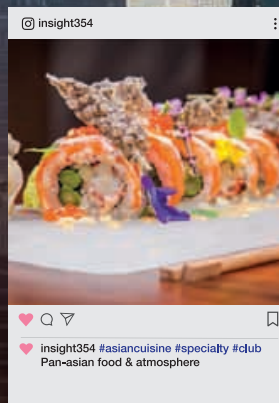
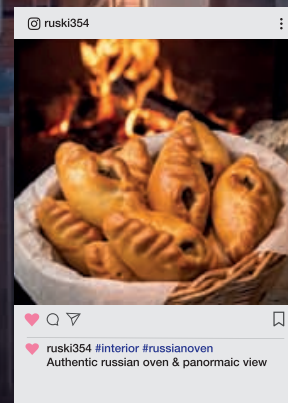
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He's All They Know

By **Eva Hartog** | @EvaHartog

In 2000, the year that Vladimir Putin first became president, 1.3 million children were born in Russia.

This year, as that generation turns 18, Putin won a fourth term in office. Barring a major surprise, Generation P, as we call those who have lived their entire lives under Putin, will be 24 by the time the next presidential election rolls around.

For this special issue, we asked 18 young Russians to tell their stories. They come from places as far apart as Kaliningrad on the Baltic Sea and Vladivostok, a stone's throw from China, and from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds.

Some support the Kremlin, others are opposition-minded. Some are students, while others have already entered the workforce. Putin might be the only thing they have in common.

Political analysts and recent studies say these young Russians belong to a generation more concerned with getting ahead than changing their country. As a recent report by state lender Sberbank put it, they are driven by "easy success" and "hedonism."

When the Russian social network Vkontakte this year asked 14- to 25-year-olds to name their role models, they listed their parents, nobody, Putin, Jesus and Elon Musk — in that order. We could call them "Putin's self-satisfied and smug youth," one researcher told The Moscow Times for a feature in this issue.



Posad, put it: "Putin is our role model, basically because he's our president."

And why wouldn't he be? Raised on stories and propaganda of turbulence after the collapse of the Soviet Union, young Russians are the first to recognize the economic benefits of Putin's rule. In a study by the Higher School of Economics, 80 percent of students said they have better opportunities than their parents had at their age.

Tellingly, however, only 65 percent thought the same would apply to their own children. As the country's economic outlook has stagnated, so has that of Generation P.

Many spoke of a lack of prospects in their hometowns, voicing plans to move to Moscow or St. Petersburg, where salaries are double, sometimes triple, those in the regions. Some spoke of jumping ship altogether and moving abroad, in a sign that Russia's infamous brain drain is likely to continue.

Unfazed by state television and glued to the internet, their portal to the world, young Russians will need more than saber-rattling patriotism if Putin wants to keep a generation from emigrating.

As Said, an American football fanatic from Kazan, told The Moscow Times: "I'm fine here, for now. But I know where it could be better." **TMT**

At the same time, they have been among the most visible participants in opposition leader Alexei Navalny's anti-government protests over the last year. How to reconcile these two seemingly opposed trends?

Most of the young Russians profiled by The Moscow Times recognized there is a need for political and social reform, but nonetheless said they backed the establishment. Not necessarily because they support Putin, but because they lack confidence in the political system or a sense of what the alternative could be.

As Ilya, a factory worker from Sergiyev



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The city's name in Bashkir

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ethnicities including Russian, Bashkir, Tatar, Chuvash, Ukrainian and Belarussian



Arina Bikbulatova

Born Aug. 23, 1999, in Ufa



PERSONAL ARCHIVE

Lives in Ufa | Works as a model

For most of my childhood, I was very closed to the outside world; I was a sort of shy mouse who was too terrified to approach anyone at school. I had very big ears and freckles all over my face that people would bully me for. I hated myself. Then one day in seventh grade I decided to dye my hair a bright color and give myself bangs, and for the first time I felt, well, beautiful. At that time I also began taking our dog to dog shows. My mother is a vet, so she began entering dogs into competitions as a hobby.

I was 12 when I took my wire-haired fox terrier Bill to a dog show for the first time. I had no idea what I was doing: how to walk the dog properly, how to make him sit. But we still came in second place. It was my first time in the spotlight.

I continued going to dog shows for about three years. Bill had a defect that should have disqualified him: he was too big. But he is a beautiful purebred, and with our combined charisma and stubbornness, we made it to the Russian national championships, where Bill won first place. I guess you can draw a certain parallel between Bill's victory and my later success in the modeling industry. We both had our respective "defects": I had my ears, he had his size.

When I was 13, I had my first photoshoot and my photos caught the eye of a Moscow-based photographer. I met him at my second shoot, and he has been photographing me ever since. He is 31, and I recently bought a one-way ticket on a whim to go and live with him in Moscow.

My father is against it and my whole modeling escapade in general. He works in the oil industry and keeps telling me



that I need to finish university before I do anything else. He has even threatened to disown me. But if I do what he wants, I'll just end up going to work for his company, and my life will be pretty much set in stone. My youth and beauty aren't eternal. I need to commit to this while I still can.

Last spring I was asked to participate in a fashion show in Japan. So the choice fell between signing a modeling contract or applying to university. To the dismay of my parents, I signed the contract.

In Japan I immediately felt intimidated by the height of the other models. I am only 1.68 meters tall and most models there were at least 5 to 10 centimeters taller. I tried everything, and even searched online to get leg-extension surgery.

Most of the other models were very judgmental except for one, who eventually became my closest friend there. She was also from Russia, and we spent every minute we had together. We'd stay out until dawn, then come home and sit in her bathtub, drinking wine until the afternoon.

It was so intimate: to touch hands, open your soul to someone. Once, she asked me if I could ever love a girl, and I said I could. Then she asked if I loved her. I responded "yes, as a person." I immediately regretted it, because she was very hurt afterward.

I totally support same-sex marriage. If two people love each other enough, why shouldn't they be allowed to marry?

My experience in Japan, where people go as far as bowing upon greeting you, made me realize that in Russia, people have a complete lack of respect for each other.

You know when you walk into a public bathroom with freshly cleaned floors, and the janitor starts yelling at you? Or you take someone's seat on a plane and when they notice you offer to switch, but they say, "It's fine, just sit there." They sit next to you, angrily muttering swear words at you. The mentality here is not so great.

Putin or no Putin, nothing is going to change in this country. I certainly don't want to stay in Ufa; there are just no opportunities here whatsoever. But my career is on the rise, and it allows me to travel.

In six years I'll be living abroad and I will continue to do so for as long as my beauty allows it. **TMF**



“Once, she asked me if I could ever love a girl, and I said I could. Then she asked me if I loved her. I responded, ‘Yes, as a person.’ I immediately regretted it.



Tatarstan is one of the most economically successful regions in Russia due to its developed oil industry

57 meters

height of the minarets on Kazan's iconic Kul Sharif Mosque

1844

the year Leo Tolstoy enrolls at Kazan State University



I

started playing sports when I was eight. First hockey and then, after an injury, football. When I realized I had no future in football, I started playing baseball.

The city I live in is commonly referred to as the sports capital of Russia. Since 2013, Kazan has hosted the Universiade, the World Aquatics Championships, the Confederations Cup and, soon, the 2018 World Cup. These competitions have completely changed the city, with new sports venues and roads.

My high school baseball team won the national youth championships, but I didn't like playing with them. There was no team spirit; those guys were just playing for academic credits. Then I decided to join our local Kazan American football team, the Kazan Motors. Everyone there actually has each other's backs.

American football is underdeveloped in Russia. The sport is funded by the players themselves and we usually play at night. It's cheaper to book a field then, and it means that people who work during the day can come to practice.

I'm a quarterback and I've dreamed of working in the sports industry my entire life. If I don't become a professional athlete, I'd even work as a water boy for an NFL team. That would be perfect!

My hero is Tom Brady from the NFL. He's won five Super Bowls — he's the most legendary quarterback in the history of the game. He makes me feel like my whole life is still ahead of me, and that you can go far if you dedicate yourself to the sport, even from as far away as Russia.

The highest tier of American football in Russia is the Russian American Football Championship. Everybody knows the league, but nobody likes it because of how corrupt it is. Last season, there were 12 teams. This season there's only one. Most teams are boycotting the league over corruption allegations. We'll see what happens.

Every day I'm confronted with the issue of U.S.-Russian relations. I can't watch television and stay calm. State channels keep pushing the narrative that Russia is "good" and America is "bad." I recently flipped to one of the few channels that I had always thought was reliable, but they were showing a story about how an American family kept their nine children locked in their basement. That was the last time I turned on the television. Now I only get news from social media.

I don't believe you can ever understand a place until you've seen it for yourself. I don't care about the politics. I'll visit America one day, I'm sure. I play sports that are popular there, and I'd love to visit the country they're from.

I don't have any desire to change Russia. When I see how people live in other countries, I realize that it would just be easier for me to move rather than waste my time and energy pointlessly trying to change things here.

Take a regular visit to the doctor. People standing in line scowl at you, and you can't trust the doctors to do their jobs. That's true at the highest levels, too. If I were to become a government official, would the system allow me to work in a way that wouldn't force me to take bribes or steal? I don't see my future in Russia. I won't be here in five or 10 years.



Said Grishin

Born Oct. 8, 1999, in Kazan



PERSONAL ARCHIVE

Lives in Kazan | Studies foreign languages



“They were showing a story about how an American family kept their nine children locked in their basement. That was the last time I turned on the television.”



When I was a kid I stumbled upon an issue of Maxim magazine with photos of Ksenia Sobchak in these ripped knee-high stockings. You know what I mean. At the time, she was hosting the reality show “Dom 2.” Now she’s a politician. I support her. I want someone as president who knows how to use Instagram.

Putin is an awesome guy and everything, but enough is enough. It’s difficult for me to say anything about him — he’s been in power my whole life.

They say Russia has three main problems: idiots, roads and money. I always thought Kazan had bad roads, but then I went to Kirov and saw the infrastructure there. Our roads are incredible by comparison. That’s why it feels wrong to complain about my city. It’s awesome.

I’m fine staying in Russia for now. But I know where it could be better. **STAT**



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station

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hours ahead of
Moscow



Nikita Fuga

Born Jan. 3, 2000, in Krasnoturansk



PERSONAL ARCHIVE

Lives in Krasnoyarsk | High-school student

I was born in a village on the shore of the Krasnoyarsk Sea, an artificial body of water. When I was five, I moved to Krasnoyarsk with my parents, but I come back every summer. I love the village; it's where my roots are. I have a romantic idea of going back and spending a few years there sometime.

When I was in the eighth grade, my mother accidentally fed me poisonous mushrooms which triggered botulism. Immediately after I ate them, I began to lose consciousness and I was hospitalized. I woke up four days later. It felt like someone had turned me off and then turned me back on again.

I began to see everything differently after the coma. Because I had convulsions, the doctors pumped loads of drugs into my body. When I began to come off them, I felt different. It's strange: I was ready to die, but here I am, speaking to you. I still have flashbacks — I'll be walking down the street and suddenly feel terrified and very happy, both at the same time.

I didn't have a computer, a smartphone or internet access until I was in the third grade. I never really played video games or watched television; the only screen time I had was watching movies with my parents on Sundays. So I read a lot and played. My little sister, who is 10 years younger than me, spends all her free time in front of screens.

Most kids my age read less than I do, but I don't feel that my generation is in any way less intelligent than our parents. We are all constantly absorbing all kinds of information, whether it's memes or online articles.

When I was 17, I read a bunch of the Beatnik writers: Kerouac, Ginsberg, Bukowski. Their stories made me go out, work, gain real-life experience and take up a sort of standard,



blue-collar job. Bukowski always argued that those guys sitting in coffee shops and talking about philosophy or analyzing literature have nothing to write about or talk about if they haven't lived a real life. I've always wanted to write about something, and talk about something.

So I ended up working in a butcher shop at our local market. For about three weeks I chopped meat, until we were taken to a farm and told to kill pigs. It was terrifying to watch myself turn from someone whose hands were shaking to performing the actions as a sort of routine. Like when you've washed a pile of dishes and you're just waiting for another pile to reappear in the sink. It was a kind of conveyor belt.

That line of work just completely numbs you. You're killing live animals, but all you feel is tired and the desire to get it over with. After I realized this, I quit.

Later that year I read Dostoevsky's "Notes From Underground" and began to see myself in the main character. I started to look at myself with disgust, because I began looking for ulterior motives behind my actions. Every time I'm about to say or do something, a little Dostoevsky voice pops into my head and says, "The Underground Man would do the same thing. You don't want to be that guy, do you?" That book has definitely made life more difficult.

I'm planning on studying philology or dramaturgy because I want to write. I'll likely move to St. Petersburg or Moscow for university. It's not that I want to leave Krasnoyarsk — I love it too, especially its gray skies.

I probably won't come back, though. All my older friends who have moved to St. Petersburg keep saying that Krasnoyarsk is a swamp. But I don't know. Siberians have a purity to them that sets them apart from other people across the country. And I do feel like this region will show its potential in the near future.

I like Russians, and I like the Russian mentality. I don't care about voting or who is president.

In six years, Putin will still be in power and all of our money will go into strengthening the military. But whatever, that doesn't concern me. As long as I can do what I want, it's fine. And in 10 years, something will definitely have changed. **TIME**



“A little Dostoevsky voice pops into my head and says, ‘The Underground Man would do the same thing. You don’t want to be that guy, do you?’”



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Ulan-Ude was closed to foreigners during the Soviet Union and did not become accessible until 1991

~200 km

distance to Mongolian border

7.7 meters

height of the city's Lenin statue, one of the largest in the world



Elvira Ochirova

Born May 20, 1999, in Ulan-Ude



PERSONAL ARCHIVE

Lives in St. Petersburg | Works as a credit specialist

My mother is Chinese and my father is half Russian and half Buryat. They met on a holiday and my mother learned Russian just so she could send my father letters.

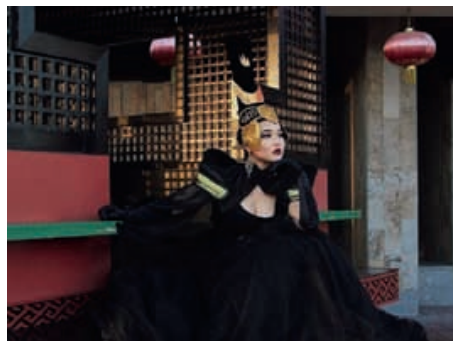
My first two languages were Shanghaiese and Buryat. I learned Russian at school and now speak it fluently, but for several years the accent still lingered and I got teased for it. I dreaded going to school.

My father is a high-ranking military officer, so my upbringing was really strict. When he was around, he would yell at me for not cleaning something properly. I would find myself wishing he would be called up for duty because I just couldn't take it.

In 2014, 10 officers from Buryatia were called up to fight. My father was among them and we wouldn't hear from him for weeks at a time. Every month, a truck full of caskets would arrive at the local military base. My mother and I would go every time. She never explained why, but I guess it was to make sure our father wasn't in one of them.

My parents still uphold their traditions. For example, in both Buryat and Chinese cultures, it is customary to use the formal mode of address with your elders, even if they're your closest relatives or friends. I remember being shocked to hear how kids address their parents informally, or see a child holding her mother by the hand instead of by the elbow. Even my younger sister addresses me formally outside the house.

Dinner can only start once the head of the family allows it. So when my father was in town, we'd always wait for him to get home from work before eating. I'd often get very hungry waiting for him.



Like most Buryats, my father is a devout Buddhist. Every member of the family had a little shrine with sweets and beverages under it.

The month of New Year's Day, which can be any time between the end of January and the middle of March, is called the White Month. During that time you're only allowed to eat white foods: dairy products, cheese curds, and so on. It is always a problematic time for me, because I'm lactose intolerant.

Every White Month we also make a Buddhist pilgrimage to the Ivolginsky Datsan, the largest Buddhist Temple in Buryatia, which also attracts Buddhists from Mongolia, China and Korea.

Last summer I started a three-month internship with a large state-owned bank. I hated working there because it was very strict and formal – I'd have to go to the bathroom every hour just to straighten out my suit because my superiors would give me judgmental looks. I left after a month and began looking for other jobs. But I kept getting rejected and I couldn't figure out why. Eventually, I was told at one of my interviews that I had been blacklisted.

Now I work as a credit specialist at a different bank. People are shocked when they find out I'm only 18.

I'm also a casting director at Miss Asia St. Petersburg, a beauty pageant for Asians across Russia: Kazakhs, Tatars, Mongols, Buryats and Yakuts.

I find it offensive when people say: "You're Kazakh, aren't you? Or Mongol?" Yes, many Asians across Russia have Mongol roots, but we still have our own cultural traditions.

I like being Asian – it's totally fashionable right now, with the whole K-Pop craze. I really want to move to Asia after I finish college. I'm learning Korean, and South Korea is definitely my first choice. Otherwise I'll go to China.

I hope this doesn't sound racist, but I would never date a non-Asian guy. It's just never worked out for me, I don't know why.

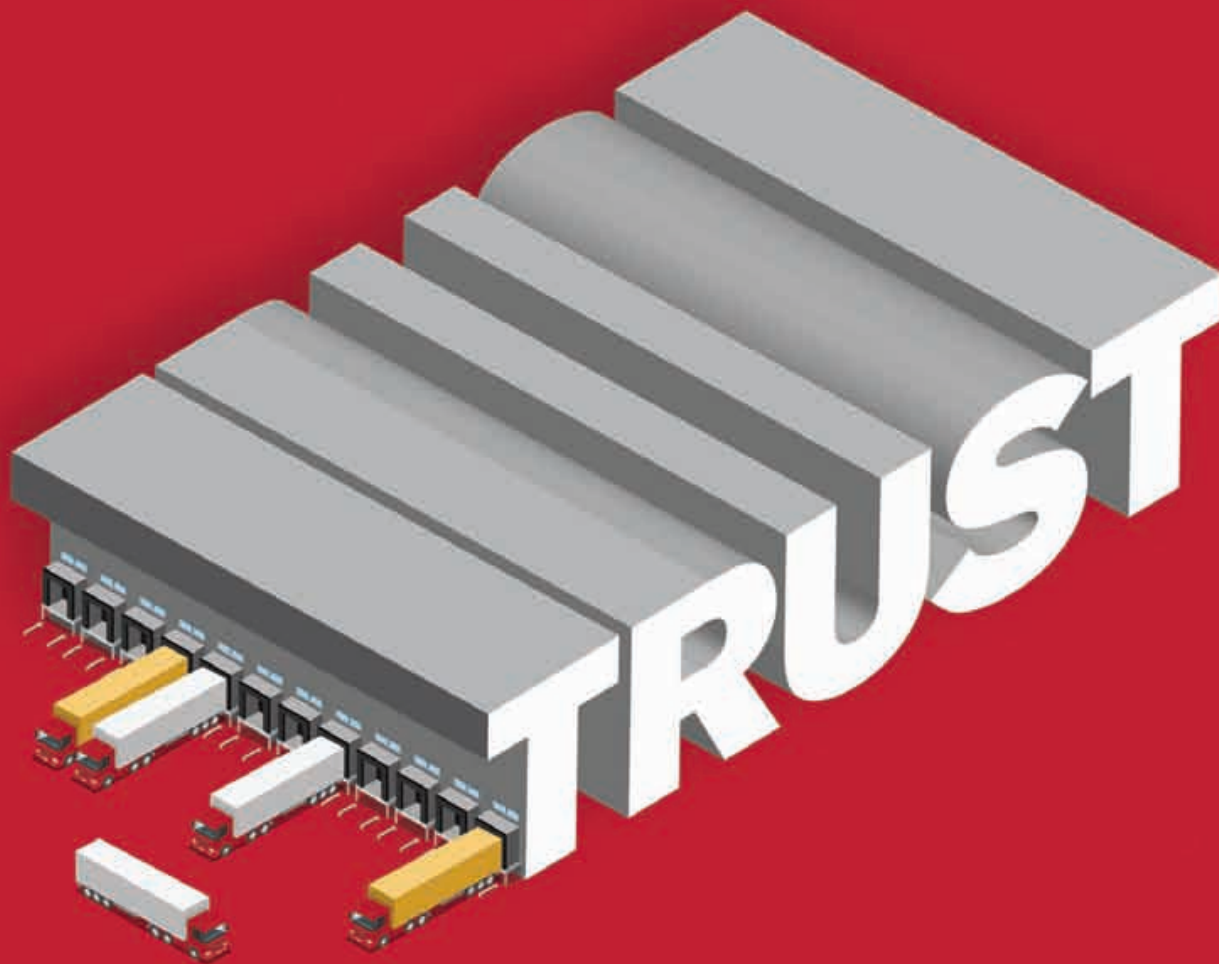
When I was young I'd often watch the news with my grandmother, and I'd be very critical of everything Putin was doing. But now I live a comfortable life. I earn good money for an 18-year-old, and that is really thanks to him. So he's doing a good job.

But in six years, I'm almost certain I'll be in Asia. I just feel closer to my Asian heritage. **EMT**



“I find it offensive when people say: ‘You’re Kazakh, aren’t you? Or Mongol?’ We have our own cultural traditions.

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Andrei Drachyov

Born Feb. 17, 1999, in Arkhangelsk



PERSONAL ARCHIVE

My eldest brother, Denis, who began to provide for the family after our father failed at starting a business, was tough but permissive. He wanted me to learn from my own mistakes. My middle brother, Maxim, was strict, but also composed and smart. We also have a younger 12-year-old sister, Katya. She's very stubborn, but because of that she is also very independent.

Our father's dream was to become an engineer, and I could see from the intricate toy weapons he would build for us that he had extraordinary skill. Now that all three of us are essentially self-taught computer programmers and developers, it is clear we inherited his gift.

Like dominos, my brothers and I moved to Moscow. First, Denis moved, then Maxim followed, and I came last. My sister is still in Arkhangelsk with our mother. My brothers helped me find a job as a programmer and a room to live in. We wouldn't have been able to have careers had we stayed in Arkhangelsk.

I had the option of going to university right after school, and even considered studying in St. Petersburg like all of my friends from Arkhangelsk, but I didn't. I don't regret my decision because in Russia a university degree does not necessarily improve your chances of getting a job. On top of that, the programming languages I use are constantly changing and essentially can't be taught at universities.

I love my work. I remember after I first understood the most elementary algorithm, my paradigm completely shifted. I began to notice how my own patterns of perception changed.

I really respect the American programmer Aaron Swartz for his ideological devotion to making the internet a free space, a cause which he essentially gave his life for. [Editor's note: Swartz committed suicide while awaiting trial on hacking charges.] Swartz fought for interconnectedness and transparency – something we lack here in our society.

The best way of showing you don't agree with the political status quo is by not voting.

I do believe that my generation could have a positive impact, especially since we are equipped with the internet. But I don't like to harbor hope or make predictions. **TMF**

Lives in Moscow | Works as a programmer

Although I was born and raised in Arkhangelsk, my most vivid childhood memories are of summers spent with my extended family in a small village in the Vologda region. The place has a very specific energy to it. My grandfather lived there at a time when locals used kerosene lamps for light. He would walk 5 kilometers to school, often having to sneak past wolves.

Two summers ago my cousins and I drove a tractor about 10 kilometers out into the wilderness and over a river. By dusk we realized the tractor had a flat tire, and I was left alone to guard it. A massive wild boar suddenly came out of the woods and started circling the tractor. So I sprinted as fast as I could with the boar chasing me, just barely making it to the river. It was the biggest adrenaline rush of my life. But I live for moments like that.

Now that my two older brothers and I live in Moscow, our lives are far removed from that kind of village life. My friends from the village are all planning to serve in the military and then move to the city of Vologda, buy a car and an apartment and get married. It's a scenario that has been played a thousand times and it doesn't appeal to me.

My brothers and I have always been very close. Our father served in the Soviet-Afghan war and the horrors he witnessed there, combined with a head injury, left him somewhat detached and unresponsive.

This had a huge impact on our lives, and it was a tradition for each brother to help discipline the next in line.



“In Russia, a university degree does not necessarily improve your chances of getting a job.



Murmansk is the largest city north of the Arctic Circle and many travelers go there to see the northern lights

1916

Murmansk was the last city founded under the Russian Empire

35 meters

height of the Alyosha statue, a World War II monument



M

y mother works in the Murmansk city administration and my father works as a marine mechanic.

Because I'm an only child, I'm very close with my parents. My dad and I play video games together. After I moved away to go to college, they even

bought a PlayStation 4! I felt a bit betrayed that they got it right after I left.

I was an assertive child and knew exactly what I wanted. Aside from school, I also took up dance, music and volunteer work at an animal shelter. My parents didn't have to push me.

Murmansk, where I was born and raised, is a cold and snowy city. There's basically no summer and there are hardly any warm days, except in August and September. We get polar nights in the winter, when there's no sunlight for 24 hours. The whole city is decorated with lights; it's a beautiful sight. Ulan-Ude felt like a very dark place when I moved here because there's no artificial light at all.

Right before 11th grade, I decided to dye my hair bright pink and cut it short. I love anime, and it inspired me to wear bright colors and cosmetics. My mother was a bit alarmed. "Your hair is getting pinker and pinker, and shorter and shorter," she'd say. My friends liked it, but the school administration was less happy, despite the fact that I adhered to the dress code.

Teachers would constantly comment on the way I dressed or ask why my parents allowed it. Once, I was called into our principal's office and she lectured me for three hours on the need for dress codes at schools.

Initially I wanted a career in law enforcement, but I realized soon after college that it just wasn't my calling. Everything is way too rigid, from the uniforms to the behavior.

Now I study at one of the best East Asian studies departments in the country. It's a cross-disciplinary degree, but my focus is on Chinese language and history. I've always been a huge history nerd, just like my dad.

My interest in Asia goes back to when I was 14. I used to watch anime all the time. It's just so bright and exciting. I especially love "Attack on Titan" and "Sailor Moon." Then came the K-Pop, the J-Pop and the food. I'd like to live in Asia and Ulan-Ude is a good start.

Buryat culture is a whole rich culture of its own, but we just don't cover it in our history books. I do feel like our education system needs to devote more attention to the non-ethnically Russian peoples of this country. The people here are incredibly hospitable. In Murmansk I was often stared at for the way I look. Hipsters would chuckle or make stupid jokes about me, and kids would say things like, "Don't people in Asian cultures eat dogs?"

But I don't understand how anyone can trash-talk their own country. I support Putin: There is no real alternative. **TIME**

Darya Meteleva

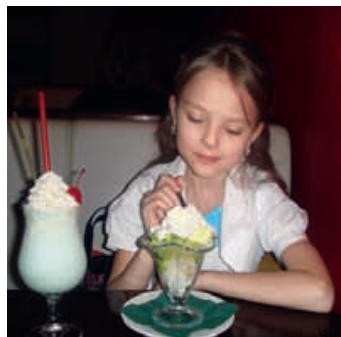
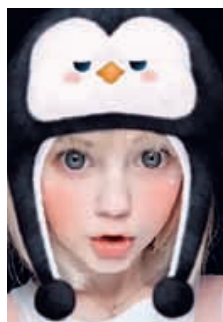
Born July 14, 1999, in Murmansk



PERSONAL ARCHIVE

Lives in Ulan-Ude | Studies East Asia

“I was called into our principal's office and she lectured me for three hours on the need for dress codes at schools.”



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Nikita Protasov

Born May 23, 1999, in Kovrov



Lives in Vladimir | Studies sociology

It is a Russian wedding tradition to toss grain, rice and money at newlyweds.

When I was five, my grandfather sent my sister and me outside to pick up the money from the ground after a wedding in our apartment building. It was enough for bread and sweets. When I think of that moment, I well up and a chill runs down my spine.

My family struggled financially for a long time. As a child, I used to stand behind the door and listen debt collectors make threats outside our apartment.

My father barely had a hand in my upbringing; he was drunk most of the time. The problems in my family stemmed from the combination of my mother, who was a very resilient woman, with a father who, not knowing what to do with himself, succumbed to alcoholism.

One time my father came back from a business trip to Moscow completely drunk. He stumbled through the doorway, collapsed somewhere in the hallway and didn't get up until his next business trip. When I was told this story, I laughed — it's a classic tale of Russian drunkenness.

My parents fought constantly. There were screams and physical fights and blood. But I also have pleasant memories from my childhood: Whenever my dad came back from work trips, my mom would set the table. I clearly remember the cake with cranes on it. It looked like Gzhel (a traditional Russian style of ceramics), but covered in cream. I've never seen anything like it.

Kovrov has 150,000 residents and it's a monotown: Its entire economy depends on the Degtyaryov Plant. The plant manufactures weapons, and employs about 70 percent of the population. The rest works in the service industry.

Until 2016, my mother earned less than the living wage. She has two children but received no more than 5,000 rubles (\$88) a month per child. She studied to become a teacher, but teachers get an even lower salary in this region.



“My father stumbled through the doorway, collapsed somewhere, and didn't get up until his next trip. It's a classic tale of Russian drunkenness.

I studied from secondhand textbooks and wore homemade clothes. It was extreme poverty. That is what life looks like in a provincial Russian town struggling for survival.

My grandfather was an extraordinary man. If he were still alive today, he'd be a millionaire. One time he sold a non-existent garage. Then he sold our dacha but continued planting crops on the land. After my grandmother died, my grandfather became depressed and began to drink himself into oblivion. My father didn't like it: Two alcoholics just couldn't get along under one roof. There were fights, arguments, yelling.

My mother would constantly kick my father out of the house. I would tell her to never take him back. But she would still forgive him, and I'd be furious with her for walking into the same wall again and again. At some point he vanished.

My childhood was still awesome. We had mobile phones, Cheetos, tents where the homeless lived strewn with syringes, late-night fires in our courtyard and angry grannies that we'd run away from. The next generation won't get to experience these things.

The only movie theater in Kovrov closed down in 2009. It only reopened in 2017, so for eight years the town didn't know what a movie theater was.

My interests changed dramatically after I found a new group of friends. They showed me that there's more to life than Counter-Strike and bike rides. There's film, art and underground music. I began to connect with musicians and artists in larger cities online.

It's awful to have interests like that and live in a place like Kovrov or even Vladimir, where I'm studying now. You feel like nobody needs you here, like you're completely alone.

After the 11th grade I really wanted to attend the Gerasimov Institute of Cinematography, but the film equipment was too expensive. For a year I waited tables at a pizzeria to save up money. But I felt like I was wasting my time. I'd rather study and do freelance photography than work full-time.

I now study sociology and spend most of my time in our student dormitory. Everything here is stuck in a state of inertia. Everyone who has ideas in Russia ends up running to Moscow or St. Petersburg. I want to join them one day. Maybe I'll live in an artists' squat in Moscow, but even the thought scares me, because I don't know anybody there. The minimum you need to survive in Moscow is 20,000 rubles (\$351) a month — I don't have that kind of money.

Life has steadily improved, though. There might be more restrictions, like those imposed by [media watchdog] Roskomnadzor, but I know how to side-step them. The government doesn't really encroach on my life, except that it created the conditions for total illiteracy, a lack of culture and intense poverty.

I consider myself part of the opposition, but I don't see any viable candidates. Alexei Navalny doesn't have what it takes to govern such a massive country.

Mr. Putin is totally ineffective at running the country. He devotes too much time to geopolitics. He should pay more attention to ordinary citizens, who are forced to stand in line for medical clinics and drive on crooked roads. I would never have chosen to be born in this country. **TM**



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B

efore I moved to Moscow with my parents and my younger brother and sister, we lived in the Siberian city of Surgut.

My mother has worked as a hair stylist for more than 20 years, and my father has worked as chief editor of a political newspaper, a television host and a political scientist. They moved to Moscow for their careers.

It was a huge turning point in my life; everything changed. Surgut is a small, isolated city where people are narrow-minded. If I went there now and told people about my gay friends in Moscow, they would be shocked. They would laugh if I told them about my weekends at techno clubs or my interest in fashion. Every time I come back to Moscow after a visit to Surgut I realize I have everything: the freedom to do whatever I want.

My parents mostly let me be. I tell my mother matter-of-factly that I'm going to a techno party. But I keep her informed. Once an hour I'll write: "Mom, everything's fine here. The music is great." Or I'll send her a few pictures with my friends.

I move in different social circles and people often call me "Nina the party girl" or "Nina the techno cobra." The *Afisha* magazine once had a quiz on how well you know the Moscow club scene, and my result was "Techno Cobra." The name has stuck ever since.

I've been going to clubs since I was 14. "Face control" is strict here in Russia, but I always stood firm with a glamorous face and they'd let me through. Now most of the bouncers know me.

When I was 16, I started dating a guy 10 years my senior. At first, my dad was not happy about it, but then they started to get along. We belonged to absolutely different generations; I would tell him stories from my world, he would tell me stories from his.

I don't really look my age — I have a sort of "resting bitch face." But really I am vulnerable and sensitive and I've created a shell around myself. In the 10th grade, when I switched to a new school, nobody spoke to me because they thought I was a glamorous moron. But now I've adapted and nobody is afraid to talk to me anymore.

Initially I wanted to study journalism and did an internship at a fashion magazine. It was a good experience because I realized that any job can become routine. You show up to a magazine thinking you're going to be writing about something extraordinary, like about the evolution of fashion in the 1970s, but then they tell you to write about Kim Kardashian's breasts.

This is the way it is. Take a tattoo artist who loves drawing intricate tattoos: A girl comes in one day and asks for a heart, and the tattoo artist thinks to himself, "Am I really about to draw this girl a damn heart?"

After university I want to be a producer. It's the ideal job. You have an idea, and then you have designers and programmers to execute it.

I like being Russian. Russia has unique stereotypes that don't exist anywhere else, like pickled tomatoes, bears and the balalaika. Take the designer Gosha Rubchinsky, with his "gopnik" [Russian for thug] fashion. For Europe this is new, but we see this every day on the outskirts of Moscow.

I feel proud to be associated with quirky stereotypes. I wouldn't like to be American.

Russians love to criticize Russia. It's like with a family — you scold your brother, but you'll still tell other people how much you love him. We might not have this thing or that thing — there are imperfections here. But still, when we talk to foreigners, we'll boast about our cultural grandeur.

My grandmother used to recite this poem: "I'm a little girl, and I don't go to school / I've never seen Putin, but love him I do."

Last summer, my friends and I bought purses and shirts with Putin's face on them and went to clubs. Now that I'm seeing shirts of Ksenia Sobchak for sale on the streets, I want one too. It's just hype; trends infused with a bit of patriotism.

But in my opinion, it doesn't matter who is in power. Putin is just my president. It's fine. It doesn't really change anything. **TMT**

Nina Gubskaya

Born Dec. 13, 1999, in Surgut



Lives in Moscow | High-school student

“My grandmother used to recite this poem: I'm a little girl and I don't go to school / I've never seen Putin but love him I do.”



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Though best known as a religious site and one of the Golden Ring towns, **Sergiyev Posad** also has a strong industrial base

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Moscow

1890

the first matryoshka
doll is thought to have
been made here

Ilya Klyuchnik

Born Nov. 28, 1998, in Sergiyev Posad



PERSONAL ARCHIVE

“I’m pretty passive about following the news. I’ll glance at it when I’m stuck in a traffic jam or around the house with the television on.

My town, Sergiyev Posad, is slowly improving; buildings are constantly being renovated thanks to government funding. Obviously when you live in Russia, Putin is always a role model, basically because he’s president.

I mostly get my news from the internet or television. I’m pretty passive about it; I glance at the news when I’m stuck in a traffic jam, or I’ll be lying around the house with the television on.

I’m too young to call myself a patriot. Once you’ve lived in the same place for half a century, then you can call yourself a patriot. At that moment you realize how the city has changed over the course of your life and how you’ve changed with it.

But I do feel Russian; I’m comfortable in this country.

I’ve been to Crimea several times. Last year we drove there from Sergiyev Posad. The trip took 10 days, and I remember the hills and nature.

The relationship between Ukraine and Russia doesn’t particularly interest me. Everything that the Ukrainians are doing is just stupid. They are fighting each other. They’ve made a mountain out of a molehill and innocent people are suffering. Obviously, the majority just want to live in peace, but they are the ones who end up suffering most.

I didn’t live through the ‘90s — all I know is that for some people life was difficult and for others it was easy. During the Soviet era, everything was stable. But there’s progress — people live differently now. Nothing ever stays the same. **TIME**

Lives in Sergiyev Posad | Works at a pipe factory

When I was 14, I started socializing with older kids who earned their own money. It made me want to start working, too. I got my first job promoting a local pizzeria and for the first time I had pocket money.

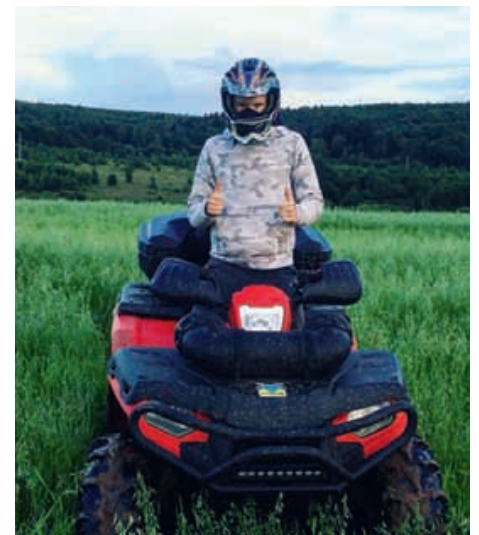
Now I study hotel management at the Russian International Academy of Tourism and work at a pipe factory. In my department, the pipes are coated in a rust-prevention spray. I sit behind a control panel, give orders and press buttons; sometimes I work at the warehouse. Before I started at the factory, I worked as a hotel courier. It’s easy to combine with my studies, especially since the factory is close to my house.

I try to be financially independent from my parents, who are event planners. They mostly do weddings and corporate parties. Any free time I have, I spend with my friends or with my girlfriend. My only real hobby is football and I’m pretty excited for the 2018 World Cup.

My friends and I never really discuss politics. Our conversations are usually pretty simple: about school, work, our personal lives.

My first memory of Vladimir Putin was a New Year’s address on television. He deserves respect for everything he’s done for Russia and what he’s still trying to do.

I can’t really say specifically what he’s done. But he helps people, and that’s the most important thing. The regions beyond the capital are developing. If there is some sort of natural disaster or a problem with health care, he takes the right steps to improve the situation.





Moscow-Paris

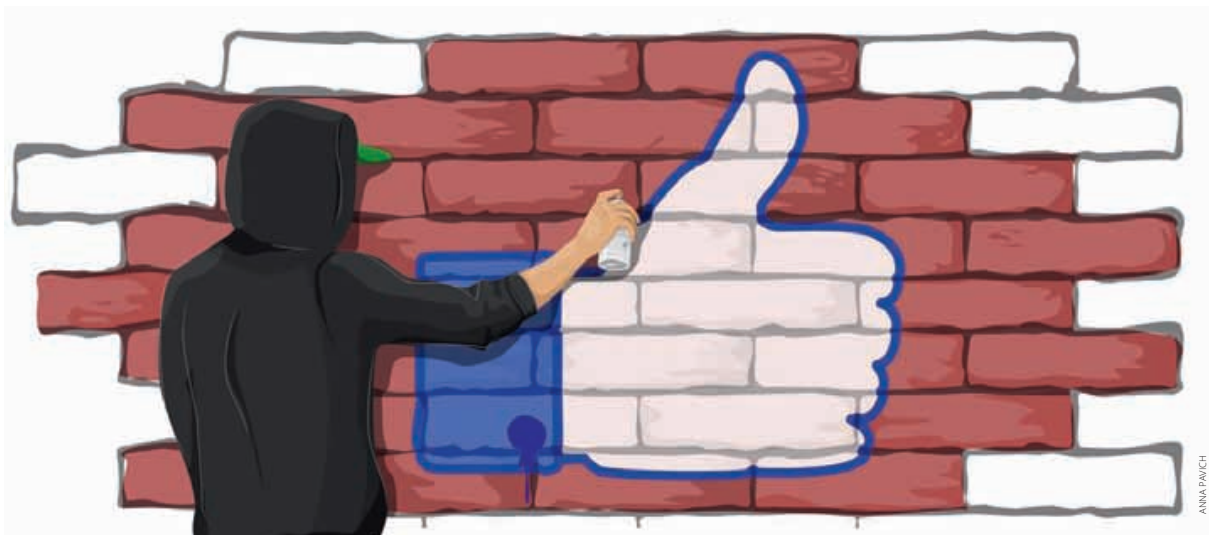
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Smug, Patriotic and Rebellious

By Maria Tsompilantze | @masha_tsn

The young Russians who grew up under Vladimir Putin might yet surprise

They are the children of the 2000s, the digitally savvy youth who were reared on social media and came of age online. They have also only known life under one president, Vladimir Putin. We might as well call them Generation P.

The 1.3 million Russians born in 2000, the year that Putin first became president, and af-

ter are difficult to pin down, analysts say.

On one hand, Russia's relative wealth and comfort have created a generation that is both self-righteous and apathetic, says Natalya Zorkaya, head of socio-political research at the Levada Center, an independent pollster. "They are Putin's self-satisfied and smug youth," she says.

On the other hand, they were on the front lines of anti-Kremlin rallies that swept the country last year. "This generation has little in common with the regime," says Yelena Omelchenko, who runs a youth research center at the St. Petersburg Higher School of Economics.

Now that Putin has won an overwhelming victory in the March elections, extending his rule to 2024, who are Generation P and what role will Russia's youth play in the next six years and beyond?

Break with the past

In 2005, Putin famously described the collapse of the Soviet Union as the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the century." While not all Russians agree, few would dispute that the Soviet collapse brought turbulence and uncertainty. Crime skyrocketed and poverty and unemployment hit almost every Russian family.

But it was also a time of unprecedented freedom, including in the media and politics. And almost three decades later, luxuries that were unattainable for most Russians in the Soviet Union, like holidays abroad, the latest gadgets and freedom of movement, have become features of everyday life for Generation P.

"The previous generation grew up in a world that was only just opening up," says Vasily Gatov, a Russian media analyst. "For the new generation, the doors were already wide open."

Generation P appears to be embracing this post-Soviet Russia. They have prioritized getting ahead in education and their careers, Omelchenko told The Moscow Times. "They have moved away from the collectivism of previous generations to a more individualistic approach," she says.

They are also overwhelmingly conservative. According to a survey published in December by Levada, young Russians are the group most averse to change. "The youth today don't

Older Russians describe Generation P



(Poll conducted in June 2017 among 1,200 Russians)

vote," says Zorkaya. "They prefer to preserve the status quo."

Those who did go to the polls in March voted overwhelmingly for more of the same, an exit poll by the state-funded VTsIOM pollster suggests. Almost 70 percent of respondents aged 18 to 34 cast their ballot for Putin.

In the same poll, the former reality television host Ksenia Sobchak, who at 36 was the youngest candidate and ran on an anti-establishment platform, won just 6 percent.

YouTube generation

This reluctance to change can be traced, in part, to the crackdown that followed mass anti-Kremlin protests in Moscow in 2011-12, says Zorkaya, when dozens of young

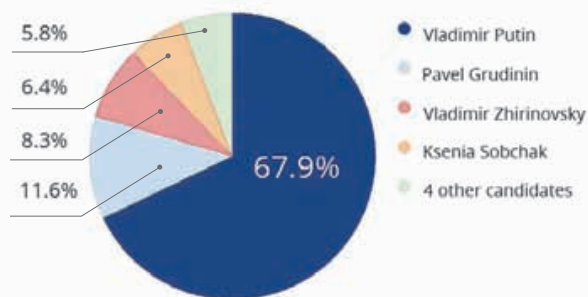
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Results of exit poll among voters aged 18-34



Source: VTsIOM

Russians were detained and handed heavy prison sentences. "The protesters realized their helplessness in the battle against political power," she says. "They were disturbed and discouraged."

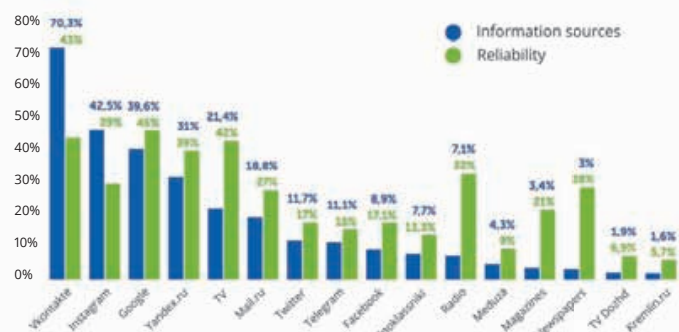
After that, Russia's youth mostly lay dormant until a wave of anti-government demonstrations led by opposition leader Alexei Navalny erupted last year. Young Russians climbed lamp posts and were at the forefront of the protests, chanting slogans like "Corruption is stealing our future." Photos of riot police violently detaining them flooded social media.

One explanation for Generation P's protest potential is their immunity to state propaganda, says Gatov, the media analyst: "The internet is their natural habitat." (Notably, it was a video posted by Navalny on YouTube that eventually led to the protests.)

Russian teenagers participating in the rallies also seemed unafraid of possible repercussions. "Going to protests is a physical activity with elements of risk, something more attractive for the younger generations," says political scientist Yekaterina Schulmann.

Kremlin-run news outlets and state officials suggested Navalny had used the internet

Where do young Russians get their news, and how reliable do they think these sources are?



Source: Higher School of Economics

to manipulate young people onto the streets. Presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov even said that they had been promised cash.

But teenagers interviewed by The Moscow Times at an election boycott rally this year painted a different picture. The protests, they said, allowed them to express their frustration at the lack of momentum in Russia. "Putin has been president for longer than we've been alive," said Nastia, 15.

Echoing the sentiment widely heard in pro-Kremlin circles, Margarita Fadeicheva, who runs the state-funded publication Our Youth, says Navalny's protests have nothing to do with

politics. "It's just hype," she says. "They protest for the imaginary popularity they get online."

But the online space has also provided young people with a different means of political participation. "Youngsters who watched the live coverage of the protest automatically became part of it, without being physically present," says Schulmann.

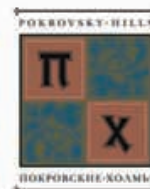
Kremlin's youth

Pro-Kremlin youth is mobilizing, too. After the 2011-12 protests, groups like Nashi,

Continued on Page 18 →

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← Continued from Page 17

a modern-day take on the Soviet-era Komso-mol, and Lev Protiv, which aggressively fights smoking in public, were part of a government-led effort to create an army of politically active youth.

The Kremlin has also funded patriotic youth forums such as the famous Seliger camp, which Putin and other high-ranking officials have made a point of visiting.

They target young Russians who have a sensitive spot for Putin's brand of conservative nationalism and feel the need to defend Russian values. In a study by the Higher School of Economics, 68 percent of students said Russia's survival depends on its status as a great power. "We call it 'offended patriotism,'" says Omelchenko.

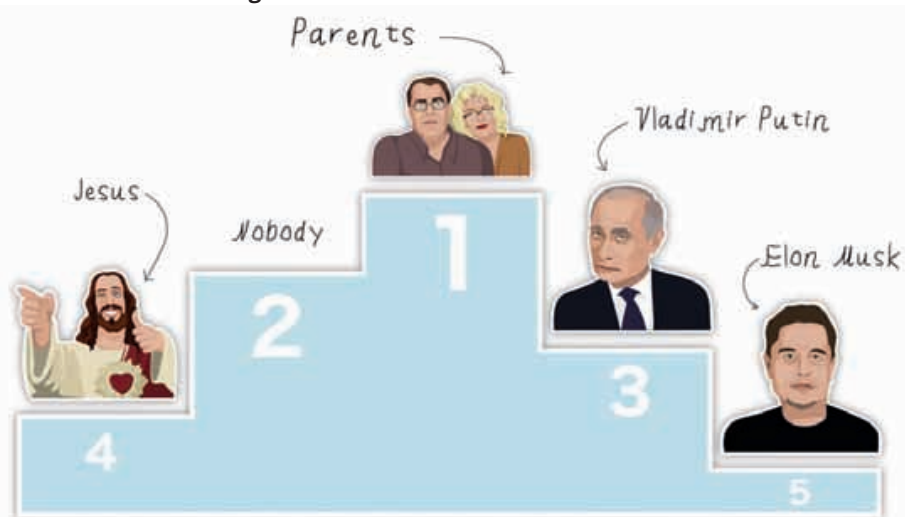
But members of these groups are not necessarily staunch supporters of Putin personally, researchers add. Pro-Kremlin activism might also be just a way of climbing the social and professional ladder. "These groups are formed under the wing of the power elite of Russia," says Omelchenko. "They know that their activism will be rewarded and will boost their professional careers."

Because pro-Kremlin youth groups are not grassroots, "they'll continue to exist as long as they are given official attention," adds Schulmann. "When they don't get any, these groups vanish."

Role models

With only a small group of young Russians taking part in anti-government demonstra-

Russian social media users aged 14-25 name their role models



Source: Vkontakte

tions, and pro-Kremlin groups having little effect on the overall political landscape, why is the Kremlin concerned with Generation P at all?

Mostly, the Kremlin's attention is symbolic, says Schulmann: "Politicians want to create a sense of closeness to younger generations."

But "the current regime doesn't understand that it is not the desires of the youth that need to be discussed, but how to share power with them," says Gatov.

Young Russians need a leader closer to their own age, someone who is more relatable, he suggests. "Someone like Pavel Durov," the co-founder of the Vkontakte so-

cial network and the Telegram messaging service which was recently banned by the Russian authorities.

Ultimately, Generation P's impact on Russia over Putin's next term depends on whether it can organize coordinated action, says Zorkaya. "Otherwise, they are doomed to fail." **TIME**



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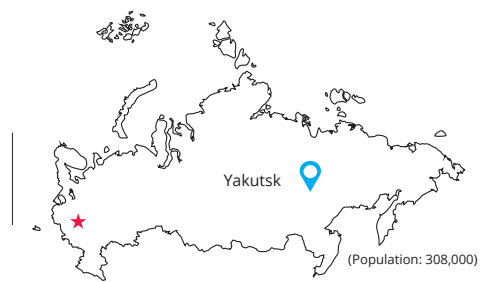
During Soviet times, **Yakutsk** was a transfer point in the gulag system, continuing its long history as a place of political and criminal exile

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Yulia Vladimirtseva

Born June 11, 1999, in Yakutsk



PERSONAL ARCHIVE

Lives in Moscow | University student

I guess you could say that my family is different. My friends describe my parents as hippies, whatever that means.

They never subscribed to that typical brand of Russian conformity. My dad supports opposition activist Alexei Navalny and my mother always tried to make our family stand out somehow. My dad doesn't really identify as Russian. Like me, he calls himself a "citizen of the world." We grew up in a very free environment.

My father's side of the family is large and tight-knit. Every summer, some 20 relatives gather at our home. We go camping and boat across rivers and lakes.

I love Yakutsk. In winter there is thick fog, and in summer the city is covered in smog because of forest fires in the Taiga. It has a Silent Hill [a movie and video game] vibe to it.

Yakutsk is small, but it isn't governed by old conservative men like some other Russian cities. It doesn't feel provincial or stagnant. There's a kind of youth movement here with lots of festivals and other events. People are happy here.

The city is about 50 percent Russian and 50 percent Yakut. They have their own culture, cuisine and even their own language. I was one of only three non-ethnic Yakuts in my class. But I was never made to feel different. Everyone is very tolerant here, and the old Yakut grandmothers and grandfathers all love "grandpa Putin."

I've been living in Moscow since I started at the State University of Management in August. I'm studying for a bachelor's degree in development, which teaches you how to bring together people who have ideas with people who can implement and sponsor those ideas.

Moving to Moscow was easy. It is much busier and more anonymous than Yakutsk. People couldn't care less about you. I like it;



you're less attached to people, and you begin to realize that you're alone in life. I don't mean it in a bad way, like, "Oh, I'm never going to have any friends," but in the sense that we're alone, and that's actually great.

I don't really want to go back to Yakutsk because I don't want to be tied to a single place. But I would like to help the city develop: open a private school or become an architect and design new buildings.

When I lived in Yakutsk, we met a couple from Brazil who were traveling around the world. They had contacted the local Buddhist temple, where my father was volunteering. They showed us their mobile home with big wheels and beds, and now I really want to take a trip around the world.

After I graduate college I'd like to work as waitress on an international cruise ship. I really, really want to go on a trip across the ocean, like in cartoons.

Reading books about science has played an important role in shaping my world view. They have helped me understand why we humans behave the way we do. I take my own immediate desires less seriously than before. Shout-out to Richard Dawkins' "The Selfish Gene" and Matt Ridley's "The Rational Optimist."

I don't like the fact that most people don't think politics is important. Or this feeling that we can't change or influence anything. It's because everybody thinks like this that nobody votes and nothing happens. I'd like for people to be more engaged.

Until I was about 12, Putin and Russia seemed to be two inseparable concepts. Then I began to think: "When will he leave?" I don't think he's terrible or that everything he's doing is bad. I just think he's been in power for too long and that he can't improve certain obvious problems. He's settled in the position, as have his friends who control all the money. The system is stuck and he can't leave. And I don't know what needs to happen in order to change that.

There are certain things he's done that I don't agree with — like the law that defends the rights of religious believers or the ban on the film "The Death of Stalin." But he also said he wasn't against Russian Olympians performing under a neutral flag. That's cool. **TIME**



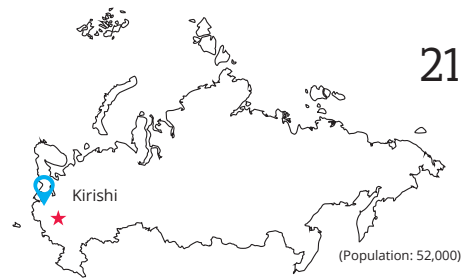
“Yakutsk is small, but it isn't governed by old conservative men like other Russian cities. People are happy here.”



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I spent a large part of my childhood in Kirishi with my grandparents. It's on the Volkhov River and no matter the season, I would fish from six in the morning until four in the afternoon. My friends and I often travel to Lake Ladoga or to Karelia. You feel the difference.

The St. Petersburg neighborhood I grew up in was full of Soviet-era high-rises and courtyards. Kids there have nothing to do except play football and basketball.

My father works as a tractor driver. The job was well-paid when he started and his salary always came on time, not like now. When I was a child, my mother was a stay-at-home mom, but later on she became a teacher.

As a child, I liked to dig around under the hood of my dad's Zhiguli. I bought my first car in 2015. It was an old piece-of-junk BMW, but I didn't care because I wanted to learn how it worked. Now I work with diesel engines.

Every day is a holiday. I tell myself that if I don't finish working on a certain number of cars, then the day's been wasted. I don't like social media; I try to live my life in the here-and-now.

My first job was handing out leaflets. Then I started making real money working at an insurance firm. I got the job by faking my age on my passport. Then I worked at a construction firm, where I eventually became deputy foreman. But I got fed up pretty fast. Working in construction today means constant theft and deception.

I like being able to support myself and the people close to me. My mother would tell me: "Study, earn money, and you can open up your own business so you don't have to work for the Man."

Two years ago I went on a snowboarding trip across the Caucasus with my friends. We spent some time in Tbilisi, and I loved it for its architecture and its people. The Russian media portrays people from the Caucasus as being aggressive or terrorists, but it's just not true. The people there are very outgoing and helpful. They'll even give you directions in broken Russian.

When I started mountain biking, I wanted to commit to it professionally. But after a few years I realized that nobody in Russia cares except for other mountain bikers. If you really want to get something going here, you have to make it happen yourself. You take a shovel and build a bike track — but then because the land belongs to the government, they immediately bulldoze it. I don't often talk about these things with my friends. We have different perspectives. All they ever want to do is hang out and get drunk.

When I saw people going to opposition demonstrations, I was honestly afraid. These people don't understand the consequences of their actions, they don't realize that they alone are responsible for their lives. They just blame the government.

When I ask people my age why they go to protests, they never have an answer. Everyone's arguing, saying that the president is bad and that we need someone else in power. But nobody wants to actually do anything.

I just don't want a war like in Ukraine, where people murder each other just because they have different opinions.

I don't feel oppressed. If I want to make money, I do it. If I want to buy a car, I buy one. If I want to go somewhere, I go there. A person can do anything they want, under any restrictions and under any government. **15+**

Yevgeny Syutev

Born July 18, 1999, in Kirishi



Lives in St. Petersburg | Works as a car mechanic

“If you really want to get something going here, you have to make it happen yourself. You take a shovel and build a bike track.”



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The name **Vladivostok** reportedly comes from the Russian expression "vladei vostokom," which means "rule the east"

8

hours to fly from
Moscow to Vladivostok

3

hours by bus
to China



Ira Smirnova

Born Oct. 1, 1999, in Vladivostok



PERSONAL ARCHIVE

Lives in Vladivostok | Studies chemistry

Whenever I think back to my childhood, I remember my grandfather, who was a devout communist and a member of the Communist Party. He would say: "Show me how Lenin looks at the bourgeoisie." I

was supposed to scowl in response.

He died when I was four. And although I didn't understand it at the time, I felt his absence later. The knowledge he passed on to me has formed the basis of how I see the world.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, my mother lost her job as an engineer; she now works as a nanny. My father is a former army captain who lives on a pension and teaches English at Vladivostok's Maritime State University.

I was always very close with my older brother. As children, we'd do drawing competitions. I've continued to spend my free time on creative pursuits.

Now I play guitar and sing, and a year ago my friends and I formed a band. My brother first worked in Vladivostok as a cook, but the pay was too low and he moved to South Korea. Now he is a mailman there.

That is typical for people who live in the Far East. Since we're so close to Asian countries like South Korea and China, people often move there because the pay here is too low to meet normal living standards. When I was a child we'd often take the bus to China for weekend trips to stock up on cheap goods. The border town of Suifenhe is just a three-hour bus ride from Vladivostok.



“Stalin was a great leader, especially if you consider our victory in World War II and who our enemy was. He shielded us from the ultimate evil. What else is there to say?”

I do love my country, but the current economic slump we're in is awful. Our lives are getting worse, and will continue along that path. Factories are closing across the country, roads are falling apart, and yet we're about to host the World Cup.

Salaries at state-funded schools and hospitals are incredibly low. Who would want to be a teacher for 10,000 rubles (\$172) a month?

But I feel obliged to stay here: This is the home of my ancestors. Nobody needs you abroad; they need you in your home country and you have to take the initiative if you want your surroundings to improve.

After I finish my chemistry degree, I'd like to work in a laboratory. I'm considering moving to Novosibirsk because I've been told it's a good city for the sciences.

I'm a member of a communist party called the Revolutionary Workers' Party, which adheres to Bolshevism and Leninism. We go to factories and listen to the workers, and we try to bring attention to specific issues through media coverage or sanctioned pickets.

We also hold lectures on political theory to inform people, and we discuss the drawbacks of the Soviet Union and how those pitfalls could be avoided if the system were to be implemented again. The average age of our Vladivostok faction is about 18. None of us were alive during the Soviet Union.

In Soviet times, the quality of education was phenomenal. But people without a higher education could also achieve financial comfort. There was stability, which is the most important thing in a person's life. They say that Soviet citizens had no clothes or food, which isn't true. Everyone had just what they needed.

Now we see all these exotic fruits at the supermarket, but what's the point of having them if we can't afford them? On the surface it looks like, "Oh, we live such wonderful lives!" But then you go home and eat your buckwheat for dinner. All the U.S.S.R.'s achievements — free education, free health care and free housing — are becoming inaccessible dreams for ordinary Russians.

People often criticize the Soviet government for repression, but all the amazing achievements of that time justified the means. It often feels like the stories about repression under Stalin are exaggerated. I've asked my relatives and friends, and not a single person knows anyone who was a victim of the Soviet regime.

History is written by the winners, but the Soviet Union collapsed. Accounts written by dissidents like Alexander Solzhenitsyn were overly dramatic.

Stalin was a great leader, especially if you consider our victory in World War II and who our enemy was. He shielded us from the ultimate evil. What else is there to say? **THE**



Before the Soviet Union took over in 1946, **Bagrationovsk** belonged to Prussia, Germany and, briefly, Poland

2 km

from the main border
crossing point between
Russia and Poland

37 km

from
Kaliningrad



M

My mother moved from Kazakhstan to the Kaliningrad region before I was born. I don't know much about my father, other than that he was somehow associated with the army.

My mother also works at a military base, which is why we lived in Bagrationovsk, a military town on the border with Poland. I don't really have any positive memories of the place; I just associate it with a sort of void in my life.

By age 14, most of my close friends had already moved to Kaliningrad, and I felt myself rotting away on the border. My school was mediocre, and most people in the town ... well, let's just say you'd be better off not engaging with them at all.

After asking my mother over and over to allow me to move to Kaliningrad, she eventually caved. Because she's in the military she has the right to an extra apartment, so we bought one there. Suddenly, my life was a lot more exciting: I made friends and became more open-minded.

Kaliningrad is the perfect location, with its coastline, beautiful West Prussian architecture and Immanuel Kant's tomb. The mentality here is more relaxed than in other Russian cities, probably because of our proximity to Europe.

As part of a university work experience program, I worked at an Italian restaurant on Rugen Island in Germany. I realized there that the European mentality is radically different from ours. Everyone was kind and smiled. Some might call this sort of interaction fake, but it's definitely more pleasant than in Russia.

There, I could walk alone without fear of being mugged. At work, if I made mistakes, they'd just wave them off. It's cleaner and the standard of living is higher. Parents are always trying to make their children happy with new toys. These are the sorts of basic things I never had growing up in Russia.

After I finish university, I'll join the army for a year. It has nothing to do with continuing a family tradition or fulfilling some sort of patriotic calling. I just want to go see what it's like. I'm not afraid of hazing, especially since I've heard it's nothing like it used to be. As the Russian saying goes, if you're afraid of wolves, don't go into the forest.

In my free time, I make electronic music, and I'm hoping to make a career out of it. It is my dream to get signed to a European label and move to Germany.

I prefer not to associate myself with Russia, mainly because of the politics here. You could be sitting around one day and suddenly the police raid your house and throw you in prison for no clear reason. It's terrifying, and I don't really see any space to grow here. There's no evolution, just degradation.

My generation needs to get up off its knees. If they have an ounce of patriotism, they'll have to acknowledge that something isn't right. Because our country is great, but it is slowly rotting. If I can, I'll leave and my heart will always hurt for Russia. It'll hurt. **TMF**



Danil Inyushkin

Born March 15, 1999, in Bagrationovsk



PERSONAL ARCHIVE

Lives in Kaliningrad | Studies tourism management

“You could be sitting around and suddenly the police raid your house and throw you in prison for no clear reason. It's terrifying.”

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The iconic Mukhtarov Mosque in Vladikavkaz is named after the Azeri millionaire who paid for its construction more than a century ago

34 km

north of Russia's border
with Georgia

1784

Vladikavkaz was designed
to be a fortress and only
became a city later



Elina Turiyeva

Born Feb. 4, 2000, in Vladikavkaz



PERSONAL ARCHIVE

Lives in Vladikavkaz | Studies theater and painting

My mother is a nurse and my father is in the military. They don't always understand the way I see the world, probably because of how I dress or because I want to study science. Vladikavkaz is a city rooted in Ossetian traditions and rituals. It's a very Christian culture, so you'll see images of St. George all over the city. Shop names and street signs are often in Ossetian, even though people don't really speak it anymore.

The stereotypes about "Caucasian hospitality" are true of Ossetians as well. People will invite you into their homes and feed you home-cooked meals.

My family is almost entirely ethnic Ossetian, but I've never felt connected to the traditions. Here, girls are proud of having long hair. But when I was 15, I decided chopped mine off. It was a huge scandal. My grandparents on my father's side are very traditional and they saw it as a crime. But I had always wanted to cut my hair, especially after seeing how Mulan cut hers with a sword in the Disney movie. She has always been a heroine of mine.

I don't wear makeup or dresses. Sometimes people mistake me for a boy, but I don't care. I feel comfortable in my own skin and don't see the need to cover myself in makeup. In Ossetia it is customary for women to serve men: cleaning, cooking, all that. It's frustrating because these are grown men! They can get up and do it themselves.



My therapist once asked me at the end of a session how I feel about my gender. I told him I didn't know, to which he answered, "That's great!" He's always been very reassuring.

I guess I just don't care about gender stereotypes. Feminism does interest me, but not the radical interpretation. It is important to fight for equality, but not for domination. Just don't overdo it!

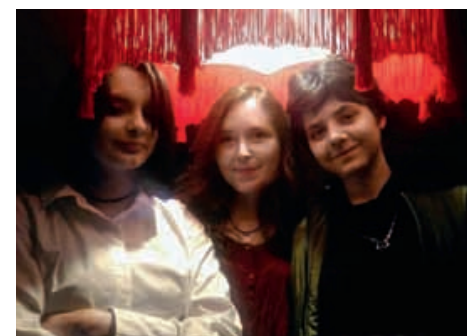
A priest came to our school once and ranted for three hours about how great God is. He told us that we're free to choose what we believe in, but if we choose the wrong thing, we'll burn in Hell. I began to ask him questions about the different interpretations of the Bible. He was flustered, and I was later called into our school administrator's office for a disciplinary hearing. Apparently my questions were somehow insulting. They almost kicked me out.

I remember how at school a social studies teacher forced us to watch the news and share our opinions. If we expressed our views "incorrectly" — essentially, in a way that was not in line with her own — we got a bad grade.

Last year I applied to art school, but I didn't get in. I ended up going to the State Pedagogical Institute, where I could study painting and theater instead. One of my teachers gave me a book about the Celts and I was immediately taken by their art and worldview. It was a warrior-based society where people were not afraid of death at all and were always on the attack. That's what I love about them. In an ideal world, I'd move to Ireland, but realistically, I'll probably move to St. Petersburg. I like to learn how things work and I daydream about becoming a scientist. I'd have 40 research patents and my own wine cellar.

Growing up in Russia has meant feeling insecure. When I read the news, I often wonder, "What the hell is going on?" I want to shout to everyone, "Don't you have something more important to do?" When we were young, we were told that when we turned 18 we'd be allowed to vote in elections for a candidate who shared our views. That isn't true. It feels like we're part of some kind of theatrical performance, and we have no say.

Putin has been around practically my whole life. At first, I liked him because my parents supported him. Then I started thinking: "Why do I see all this horror around me? Man, that's disappointing. Go away!" **TMF**



“In Ossetia it is customary for women to serve men: cleaning, cooking, all that. They can get up and do it themselves!



Novosibirsk's architectural highlight is the Opera and Ballet Theater, with its 60-meter wide dome

3rd

largest city
in Russia

27%

of the Soviet Union's
ammunition was produced
here



I

was raised in Iskitim, a town about 50 kilometers from Novosibirsk.

When I was in second grade we took a leadership test, and I scored at the top of my class. I understood then that I needed to continue improving myself and developing my leadership skills.

I spent a lot of my childhood behind a computer screen playing games. My teachers kept telling me that gaming is harmful and even dangerous. So during a presentation for science class, I explained that games help develop rapid and analytical thinking and improve motor skills.

By the end of high school I was fully immersed in eSports, but I wasn't sure I could sit in front of a screen for up to nine hours every day. Instead, I began commentating on my friends' games. I applied to an eSports organization and within two months I became the youngest professional eSports commentator in Russia and the CIS.

I'm currently in my third year at the Novosibirsk State University Higher College of Informatics. After graduating, I want to move to Moscow because there are just more work opportunities there. The time zone I live in now is also not very convenient for commentating — a European match that starts at 5 p.m. Central European Time starts at midnight in Novosibirsk.

I want to continue working in the media sphere, and hopefully one day become a chief editor. I follow a lot of different outlets — from independent media like Meduza to larger news agencies like Interfax.

I also really like the journalist Yuri Dud [a journalist who runs one of Russia's most-watched YouTube channels]. There is a lot of bad content out there, but he filters it out. He also provides a platform for people who wouldn't otherwise appear on state television.

In Russia, television is a waste of time. They cover the wrong topics and often the discourse on political talk shows is absolutely absurd. All the major channels are monitored and regulated, and there is no freedom of speech. If I ever do have the option of working for a state television channel, I would want a guarantee that I could choose my own topics.

There is media censorship in our country, and I don't like it. The authorities also criticize the internet because it is supposedly "too free."

Kirill Li

Born April 23, 1999, in Novosibirsk



PERSONAL ARCHIVE

Lives in Novosibirsk | Works as an eSports commentator



“It's sad that we have had the same politicians all these years. Then again, who is there besides Putin?”

I sense that Russians are becoming increasingly interested in politics, especially with the emergence of the opposition movement led by Alexei Navalny.

A 26-year-old girl from Denmark recently told me that she and her friends are apolitical. “But if we are unhappy about something we go to rallies,” she said. That method just doesn't work for us. My friends are very proactive, and many of them lead different school clubs. They support the current establishment because they're given the opportunity to pursue their ambitions.

Vladimir Putin is the only one who can lead the country in its current state. It is sad that we have had the same politicians for all these years, because our country is stagnating. Then again, who is there besides Putin?

We just need to wait for a new leader to emerge who will be able to carry out the necessary reforms. In general, I really love our country. I value the opportunities it gives us. And helping move it forward is a great opportunity. **TMT**

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largest
city in Russia

Peter the Great
built the city
on a swamp



Vasily Khodakovsky

Born June 19, 1999, in St. Petersburg



PERSONAL ARCHIVE

“The older generation still can’t break away from their collective Soviet mentality. They never do anything that would seem out of the ordinary for fear of judgement.”

These personal changes drove a wedge between me and my parents. But we eventually emerged from the rough patch, and now I feel we’ve come to a mutual understanding. They’ve accepted my views and choices and treat me with respect, and likewise I respect them and appreciate everything they’ve done for me. It’s a relationship you can’t replace.

To this day I enjoy long journeys and I spend a lot of my free time going on long walks through the city. I live by myself in an apartment in Devyat’kino — a remote neighborhood on the outskirts of St. Petersburg made up of newly built high-rise apartments. It lacks the gleam and color associated with the historic city center. But I’ve gotten used to it, and the neighborhood is constantly evolving.

Last summer my ex-girlfriend and I sat on the bank of the Neva River for hours before walking across the whole city to her neighborhood. We bought cheese puffs and iced tea, and sat on a bench and had a picnic. St. Petersburg is the perfect setting for slow, meandering moments. You can walk aimlessly and let your mind wander, immersed in the history written by the great writers and poets who have lived here.

I guess I am a patriot of my city, but not of my country. I don’t agree with its politics, and I’m worried about the worsening situation in Russia — specifically the rise of conservatism. There are also many things I don’t like about the Russian mentality, like the absence of trust. You can’t leave your belongings anywhere without them disappearing. And the older generation still can’t break away from their collective Soviet mentality. They never do anything that could seem out of the ordinary for fear of judgement. Then there’s the feeling that you can’t change anything, either in your own life or in society. You often have no control over what happens to you.

I’ll try to continue on my path within the existing framework in this country, because I’m certain that even after six more years of Putin, the president after him will also be a United Russia candidate.

Maybe by my 40s I’ll just lose my rebellious spark and become a conservative. **TM**

Lives in St. Petersburg | Studies political science

My father is a professor of pre-revolutionary Russian architecture and my childhood summers were spent traveling across western Russia in search of old villages and monasteries.

When I was very young, my parents bought a UAZ [a Soviet-era SUV] and we would haul it along dirt roads and rough country terrain. After my brother and sister were born, we had to sell the car. Academics are not well-paid in Russia. Even if, like my father, you are the dean of the art history department at one of Russia’s most prestigious academic institutions, you only make about 40,000 rubles (\$710) a month.

My parents are Russian Orthodox, and I was baptized as a child, too. For most of my life, I crossed myself when I entered a church. But every time I went to a service, I felt like Tom Sawyer: bored and out of place. It was an obligation, like a trip to the doctor. When I was 16 and we were on a trip in Serbia, I didn’t cross myself in church for the first time. That was the moment that symbolically marked my path toward atheism.

Now I study political science at St. Petersburg State University. I rejected religion because of its lack of rational thought and critical thinking. But political theory is based on everyday practice and evidence. I no longer have the comfort of relying on God in difficult situations, but on the other hand, I also don’t feel guilt or fear divine punishment for committing a “sinful” act.

At 16, I also began to change my social circle and hang out with a less studious crowd.





Maxim Gorky was born in **Nizhny Novgorod**, which bore his name for 58 years

37 meters

height of the famous hyperboloid Shukhov Tower, first built here

1991-97

Boris Nemtsov served as Nizhny Novgorod's first governor



I

'm an only child, and I'm close with my parents. They're quite liberal in their views and support me in whatever I do.

My mother taught at a music college and my father worked as an engineer, including for Nizhny Novgorod's city administration at some point. Then they opened up a business together selling school supplies.

I spent the first half of my life in the Avtozavodskaya neighborhood. In the '90s it had a reputation for being very rough, but when I was growing up there it was alright.

Once, when I was six, my dad and I were strolling through Nizhny Novgorod when we walked past a large, intimidating building in the shape of the Russian letter П. I pointed to it and yelled, "I want to study there!" It was an English immersion school, which I ended up going to the next year.

I never liked school: It's a prison for children. I was a good student, but I just don't flourish in a regimented setting.

I love Nizhny Novgorod, but I really don't see a future here. It was once the third capital of Russia — there was a huge market that attracted merchants and brought prosperity to the city. Now there are only physical remnants of its grand historical past. The roads here are trash and money is being thrown around without any thought at the World Cup, which feels like a distant, mythical phenomenon rather than a real thing.

There's a lot of pre-revolutionary architecture here, but the view is often ruined by brand-new high-tech buildings that are awkwardly jammed in.

The environment here is awful too: The neighboring city Dzerzhinsk is just a wasteland. It's one of the 10 most polluted cities in the world, with a life expectancy of something like 50. You'll also constantly hear about some city politician or other being jailed for corruption.

There's a massive social and wealth gap between Moscow and St. Petersburg and other cities in Russia. I don't blame the kids who choose to abandon their hometowns — everybody wants to have a chance, everybody wants to thrive.

I've always dreamed of living in St. Petersburg, especially because it's the birthplace of Russian rock 'n' roll.

I'm currently working as a concert photographer for Nizhny Novgorod's rock 'n' roll magazine, which is an awesome gig because I've met some of the musicians I idolized growing up, like the band Severny Flot. You know, I had posters of those guys hanging in my room when I was a child, and now I'm chasing them at concerts and hanging out with them backstage. It's awesome, but it's also a testament to how stale the rock music industry is in Russia. There are never any fresh faces.

There are loads of young musicians who are playing small gigs in different cities, but they're so unsure about how to promote themselves that they never expand to a wider audience. I play drums in a rock band too — we're called Blackened Sun.

Last summer my dad and I went to the Nashvestie festival [often dubbed "Russia's Woodstock"]. It's a huge festival with tens of thousands of people, but a lineup that has barely changed in 10 years. It poured down on us. Thousands of Russian rockers stuck together in a swamp for a week — very Russian, I guess.

At one point I got stuck knee-deep in a puddle of mud, and some guys who were walking by jumped in to pull me out. Rock 'n' roll is

Katya Firsova

Born March 2, 2000, in Nizhny Novgorod



PERSONAL ARCHIVE

Lives in Nizhny Novgorod | Works as a photographer

“The official we were meeting laughed and said there were too many girls in the room.”

all about camaraderie and unity. But the infrastructure at festivals here is subpar. No one cares about people's comfort, as is the case with many other things in this country, unfortunately.

I'd really love to go to Coachella one day — not even for the music, but just for inspiration. My dream is to organize a festival of that caliber in Russia.

I consider myself a feminist, even though it's not socially acceptable. Many people are embarrassed and worry that others will think of them negatively. I believe there's still a woman's cause to fight for in Russia. Take the recent law decriminalizing domestic abuse — it's atrocious. Women across Russia are suffering from underreported acts of violence and rape.

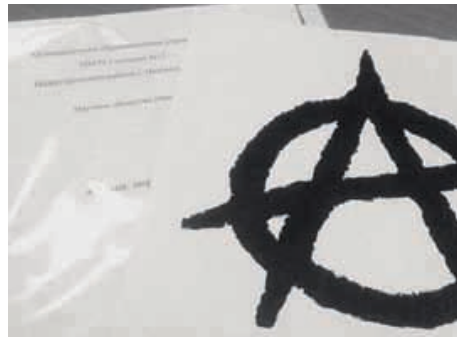
On a professional level, gender discrimination still exists. When I was 15, I wanted to become a diplomat, so I signed up for a school trip to the Foreign Ministry and the Duma. When we walked into the office, the official we were meeting laughed and said there were too many girls in the room. At least the pickled herring in the ministry cafeteria was good.

I've never faced censorship at my work, because our magazine is quite progressive. But just a few months ago, we had a guy claiming to be a university professor come to our class and give us a "lecture" on why we shouldn't go out to opposition demonstrations. This shouldn't happen at schools. School is not a place for political agitation.

I see Putin's long reign in a historical context: Russia has always been governed by absolutism, from the tsars to Soviet leaders. This type of long-lasting leadership is embedded in the psyche.

Russia is a very unpredictable country; I really can't say what'll happen after the next presidential term, let alone what'll happen tomorrow.

But Russia can be a wonderful country too, and its rich cultural heritage is a testament to that. I suppose that's why people say it has a mysterious soul. **TM**





During the Soviet Union, **Zheleznogorsk** was a secret town and went by the nicknames "Atomgrad" and "Nine"

1950

founded on
Stalin's orders to
develop plutonium

1992

under Yeltsin, the town's
existence is revealed



Vladimir Gistsev

Born Dec. 20, 1999, in Zheleznogorsk



PERSONAL ARCHIVE

Lives in Yekaterinburg | Studies clinical psychology

I was born and raised in Zheleznogorsk, a closed city about 40 kilometers from Krasnoyarsk. My parents ended up there in the 1990s after being invited to work for a firm that manufactured satellites.

The city is surrounded by a barbed wire fence, and outsiders need special government-approved passes to be allowed in. It's not so much that the residents are closed off from the outside world like in North Korea, it's more that the outside world doesn't have access to us. Nevertheless, living with

so few people, enclosed by barbed wire, can certainly be depressing.

It really leaves you with just two options: motivate yourself to leave, or stay there forever. I was lucky enough to take the first route, as were most of my friends.

I was a rather introverted child. I couldn't really find a common language with my peers. Now I wear mostly dark clothing, and it could be an extension of my introverted character. I was never really a normal kid or a rebellious teenager.

After my first romantic encounter at the age of 14, I started to become more sociable. We were on a school camping trip, sitting around a campfire grilling shashlik. I had a guitar, and I heard a voice behind me ask for a Nirvana song; I turned and saw her green eyes. We dated for a few months, and we are still close friends. The time I spent with her helped me come out of my shell.

These days, my father works as an insurance agent and my mother is an accountant. I'm an only child. My parents went through turbulent periods throughout my childhood, but their relationship has stayed strong. Whenever they were confronted with challenges, they would work through them as a couple.



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

“The standard Russian scenario where the man comes home, beats his wife and drinks his beer while the wife prepares borsch doesn't appeal to me at all.

As banal as it sounds, I think mutual understanding and care is the foundation of a good relationship. The standard Russian situation where the man comes home, beats his wife and drinks his beer while the woman prepares borsch for him and their four children doesn't appeal to me at all.

When I was in high school, I would spend my weekends in Krasnoyarsk volunteering at a center for contemporary art. I like abstract art because it isn't straightforward. For that same reason, I am a huge fan of David Lynch — he evokes this feeling of complete uncertainty. And it is left up to the viewer to piece together what he means.

I don't like it when people begin to advocate certain points of view against their own common sense: someone who has always been tolerant toward religion reads social media posts about atheism and suddenly begins to hate religion. Or someone who has never had an opinion about traditional domestic life reads an article online and begins to hate family values. I am neutral toward all values — I don't really like to have strong opinions.

Take the topic of homosexuality: I don't think it is fair to smear someone for being gay and I personally am not against it. But you'll never succeed in conducting scientific research on the roots of homosexuality because of the trend of tolerance pervading the internet. Any attempt to study homosexuality as a non-pathological phenomenon just won't see the light. This happens on a global scale. I have never really noticed prejudice toward homosexuality in Russian society, probably because I don't watch any television.

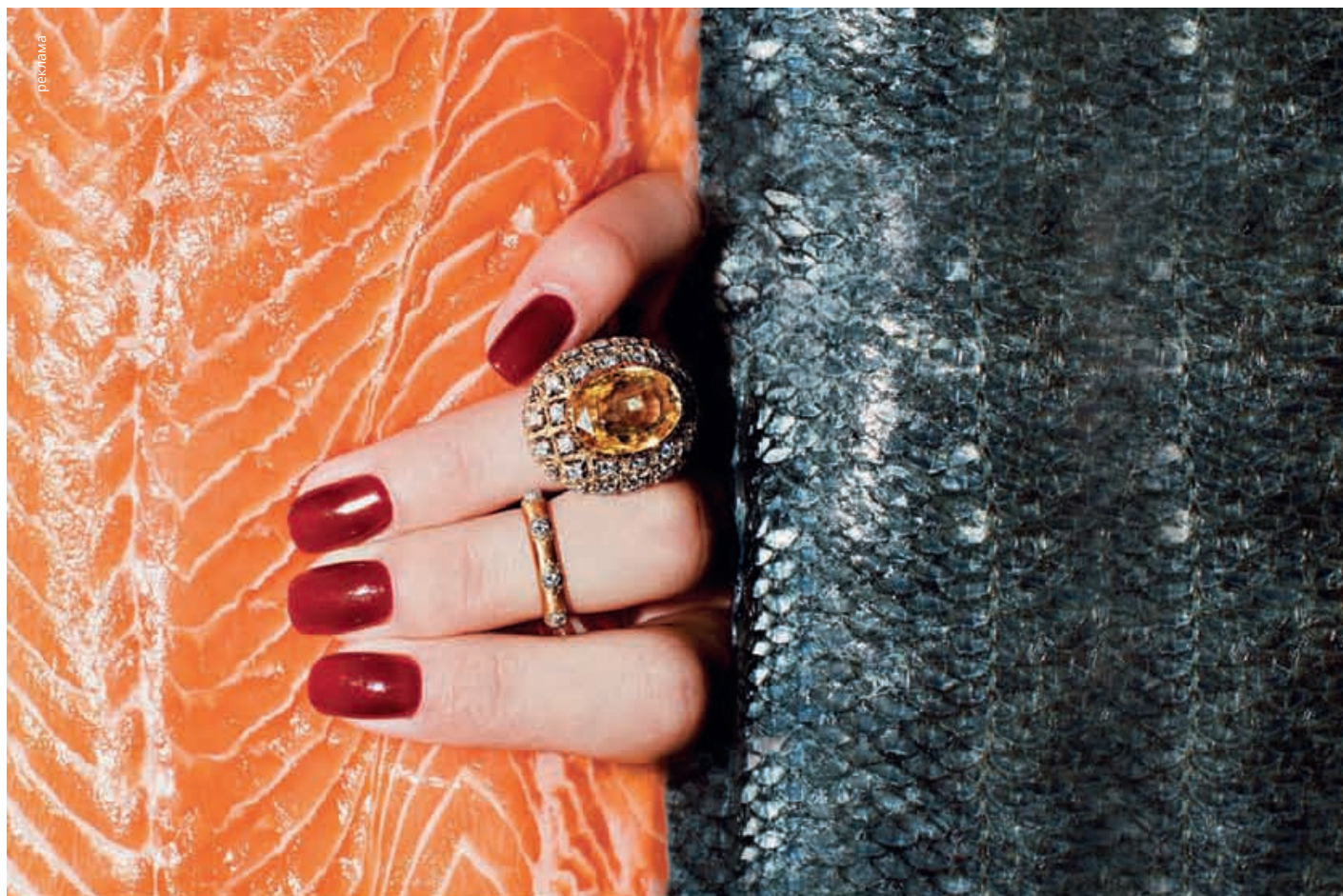
Last year I moved to Yekaterinburg to study. I'm currently a first-year student of clinical psychology at the Ural State Medical University. I guess I chose the field because of altruism: I want to help other people.

Since the Soviet Union, psychotherapy has been associated with psychiatric care and treating “disorders.” The idea that psychotherapy is an American scam, with therapists sucking you dry for simply wanting to talk about something, still pervades Russia.

But this seems to be slowly changing and psychotherapists are slowly becoming accepted as specialists. I think when I graduate in five years, the field will be much more popular. In Russia, women still dominate this line of work; the humanities are generally dominated by women here. But that doesn't bother me.

If I had a choice between the same salary and line of work here or abroad, I would choose to live abroad, simply because the idea of interacting with new cultures appeals to me. I don't think you can outright say that life would be simpler outside Russia. Every place has its problems.

I don't love Russia; I don't hate Russia. I don't understand this whole idea of “loving your homeland.” I am entirely politically neutral, and this apathy is what defines my generation. **TMF**



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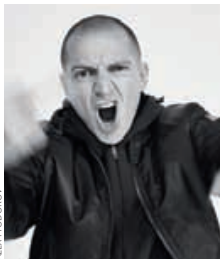
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THE GENERATION **P**LAYLIST



ALEX POCOROV

1. OXXXYMIRON

Oxxxymiron is the stage name of Miron Fyodorov, an Oxford graduate who started rapping while still living in England. His second album, *Gorod*, was an instant hit. Lately, he has been promoting rap battle culture, which has become immensely popular. In 2018 Oxxxymiron is set to play one of the main roles in the film "Empire-V" based on a book by Viktor Pelevin. "Gorod pod podshvoy" (City Under my Heel) is Oxxxymiron's most popular song.



PRESS SERVICE

2. HUSKY

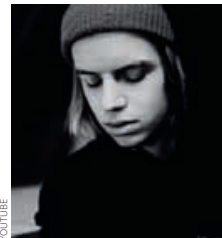
Husky's recent rise to stardom with his low-fi, black-and-white videos and rhetoric of a simple guy who grew up in a "panelka" (panel house) reflects Russians' desire to listen to more meaningful lyrics. Husky recorded one of the most critically acclaimed albums of 2017: "Favorite Songs of Imaginary People." He also took part in the embattled director Kirill Serebrennikov's latest theater production "Little Tragedies" at the Gogol Center. "Panelka" is one of Husky's hit songs, where he talks about "the panel house of my father."



FACE / INSTAGRAM

3. FACE

Face represents a new generation of Russian rappers who have become famous by posting their songs on the internet. In just one year, Face went from being an obscure internet sensation to someone who can pack one of the largest concert halls in Moscow. His best known song is "Burger," with its famous parental-discretion-advised line: "Going to the Gucci store in St. Petersburg, she's eating up my d*ck like it's a burger." Instant hit.



YOUTUBE

4. PHARAOH

Pharaoh is probably the most successful rapper from "Yung Russia," a grassroots association of young hip-hop artists that existed in 2015-16. Today, he can easily sell out a stadium-sized concert hall. "Diko, naprimer" (It's Outrageous, For Example) became one of the biggest hits of 2017 after it got spoofed by Russia's number-one late-night television show, "Evening Urgant." Pharaoh's lyrics read like status updates on social media: "Got unstuck from her lips, got stuck to my phone screen."

5. PASOSH

Pasosh means "passport" in Serbian and its front man is Petar Martich, a Muscovite of Serbian descent. Pasosh plays upbeat post-punk reminiscent of the bands popular in the 1990s like Green Day and The Offspring combined, with ironic lyrics in Russian. They started out performing at festivals, but now that their audience has grown, they give concerts in prominent clubs. In "Leto" (Summer) Martich sighs, "I want the summer to last forever, I want the winter to never come."



PRESS SERVICE

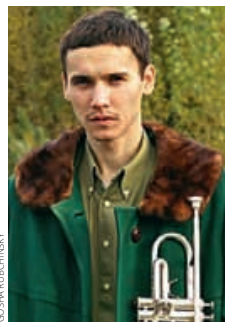


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PESKANA



7. POSHLAYA MOLLY

Poshlaya Molly ("Shallow Molly") is a pop-punk band from the industrial Ukrainian city of Kharkiv. The main reference is Blink-182 and the lyrics are ironic in the extreme. Last year Poshlaya Molly blew up the internet with their debut album "8 sposobov brosit drochit" (8 Ways to Quit Masturbating) and they just released their second album. Kirill Bledny, the band's front-man, was recently interviewed by Yuri Dud, Russia's number-one video blogger. "Lubimaya pesnya tvoey sestri" (Your Sister's Favorite Song) is dedicated to teenage rebellion.



6. ANTOHA MC

Antoha MC is a one-man indie act. He raps, plays the trumpet and occasionally dances to his own music. His songs are a blend of hip-hop, jazz, synth-pop and reggae, and have diverse influences, including the cult 1980s band Kino and Mihey and Jumanji, the legendary reggae act from the 1990s. Last year Antoha MC finally made it into the big leagues and performed at pretty much every summer festival. "Vremya tok" (Time is a Current) might be an anthem to an optimistic outlook or it might not: Antoha MC's lyrics are famously difficult to decipher.

8. MONETOCHKA

Monetochka is another internet sensation who started out by posting her songs on the Vkontakte social network. Hailing from Yekaterinburg, she describes her music as "psychedelic cloud rap." Monetochka writes ironic lyrics about a teenager's life in today's Russia with references to memes, politics and contemporary pop culture. After finishing high school in 2016, Monetochka moved to Moscow to study at film school. "Poslednyaya diskoteka" (The Last Disco), her most popular song on YouTube, is about a high school prom.



10. MAK KORZH

Maks Korzh is a singer-songwriter from Belarus, who first gained popularity on Vkontakte. Since 2012 Korzh has released five albums, and in December 2017 he received a VK (Vkontakte) Music Award. His music is a mix of rap and pop. "Endorphin" is one of Korzh's major hits, which reached peak popularity after being featured on the soundtrack of "Prityazhenie" (Attraction), last year's alien invasion blockbuster.

9. GRECHKA

Grechka took Russia's music scene by storm last winter. This 17-year-old singer-songwriter from Kingisepp, a small town some 100 kilometers from St. Petersburg, released her debut album at the end of 2017. Posted on the social network Vkontakte, it was soon noticed by music critics, and in March she was already performing on the "Evening Urgant" late-night show. This summer she will headline "Bol" (Pain), the biggest alternative music festival in Russia. "Lubi menya lubi" (Please Love Me) is a cover of a song by Otpetiy Moshenniki, a popular boy band from the 1990s.



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