

Don't waste your breath

Time can be spent in better ways than trying to dictate others' behaviors, morals



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This summer I read about an ad campaign hoping to convince homosexuals to change their orientation. The idea intended to rescue gays from their "harmful" decision.

If you guessed that the Christian Coalition was involved in this charade, you are correct. But of course there are others who believe that homosexuality is a choice.

Televangelist D. James Kennedy, who is the national director of the Center for Reclaiming America — a group that also is a conservative Christian organization — says he thinks gays can choose otherwise.

It is also well known that Republican Senator Trent Lott announced publicly that gays can be compared to alcoholics and kleptomaniacs.

He said this as if homosexuals were suffering some sort of mental breakdown rather than simply expressing themselves as sexual

human beings.

These right-winged homophobes must think the Christian Bible enforces our country's laws.

But no article or amendment of the Constitution forbids homosexuality.

We must not forget that the Constitution of the United States empowers our laws.

The Bible cannot and must not be involved in lawmaking because not everyone follows the Christian beliefs.

If we let one religion govern our nation's people, we would be going against the initial purpose of the United States of America.

Our ancestors settled here for a better life away from the religious control of the King of England. They came so we could have the freedom of religion, among other human rights.

Our forefathers drafted a Constitution so that from then on, we could choose to think and to believe freely.

But now some conservative Christian groups think the public should follow their beliefs about morals and conduct.

Must I repeat myself?

Not everyone is the same!

Some so-called Christian-rights groups don't seem to follow two true tenets of Christianity anyway: love and acceptance.

Jesus loved a woman named Mary Magdalene, who was a former prostitute. But the Bible abhors prostitution.

This point just shows how contradictory the Bible can be about some

controversial topics. This goes for all religious-based documents.

The American people should put their religious beliefs aside when forming opinions related to abortion, euthanasia and homosexuality.

Do people really believe gays and lesbians can change their minds and function as heterosexuals?

If they could, then why wouldn't they?

It would be much easier for homosexuals to stop their fight for their First Amendment rights and hide behind the safe mask of similarity. But not everyone in this country is the same, nor do they want the same lifestyle.

We see different people everyday. Different races, creeds, abilities, sexes, sizes and shapes. We must begin to include sexual orientation on our mental lists of acceptable differences.

The United States is known for its tolerance of differences. Our country is labeled a "melting pot." No one really thinks that label refers to cooking supplies, do they? As much as some would like to shield their children from homosexuality, it is still there. It's reality. We all must deal with it.

I, for one, can admit that I don't understand homosexual orientation. I don't even have a personal relationship with a gay or lesbian person.

But I do know that I never want anyone to tell me not to do something or be something because it doesn't fit

with their narrow version of how things ought to be.

If I choose something in my life that doesn't coincide with others' morals, then so be it. It is my life, and I live by my own morals.

That is why I cannot object to gay behavior. Whether they choose to be gay, which I believe is a ridiculous assumption, or they are born gay — it is their right to love and form an intimate relationship with whomever they want.

If we insist on taking that right away, what would be next?

Will some group propose sending Jewish people to concentration camps because it doesn't agree with their religious choices?

I genuinely hope whoever said that history repeats itself was a blatant liar. I hope America would never again sink to such a level.

Or could we?

Because America is the land of the free, the home of the brave and often the place where ignorance deprives freedom and breeds violence.

My advice to these people who say that homosexuals can and should change their lifestyles, is: Mind your own business!

The truth of the matter is, anyone could be gay. One of our children could be gay. One of our friends could be gay. Even our brother or sister could be gay.

We might as well get used to the fact that gays are here to stay. In fact, gays have already been here for thou-

sands of years!

Unfortunately, as Americans, we often concern ourselves with other people's business. Especially about issues that don't involve us at all.

Bill Clinton's scandal is a prime example of the snoopy American public.

What the president does with consenting female interns is none of anyone's business, yet it remains the main topic of almost every nightly television news program.

What a gay neighbor does on Saturday night is also no one else's business, yet everyone on the block in any small town knows the details of the event that Monday morning.

Don't Americans have problems in their own lives to think about?

Or is the constant curiosity and obsession with others an escape from our own daily trials and tribulations?

Some of the free time the public seems to have to gossip would be better spent worrying about finding homes for unwanted children.

Focusing on controlling unwanted pregnancies and educating about birth control would also be more worthwhile, because it can be controlled.

These issues actually affect the whole country — especially taxpayers — unlike the lifestyles of gay people, which isn't public business.

So if you're complaining about what gay people are doing, quit wasting your breath. You may never stop being ignorant, but you could at least try to use your time and words wisely.

The downward spiral

Violence involving children should be stopped at the source before it spreads further



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Names of children appear under headlines almost without pause these days. For many of us they pass through our memories just as quickly as they come, like ghost ships in the night.

It has escalated beyond the point of our dismissing this pattern with a mere shaking of the head and mumbling of "It's a shame."

It is turning into an epidemic.

The virus of violence continues to spread with a recent confrontation coming in Chicago, with the death of Ryan Harris, an 11-year-old girl.

"That's a shame, too," we might say or think, but tragedy doesn't begin to scrape the surface of this latest outbreak of child hostility.

The accused, a phrase we usually associate with the likes of serial killers played by John Malkovich or Kevin Spacey in movies, are two boys — ages 7 and 8.

What would it take for two boys, barely beyond infancy, to bear another child to death?

This question gets at the center of what is causing youth all over the country to take the lives of their peers. What makes the difference between a child deciding that killing is more "stimulating" than watching Sesame Street or playing Nintendo and any other child?

That is not a question or problem we like to think about, but it is one that has to be answered and rectified. Otherwise, Associated Press headlines may soon originate in Lincoln or another town, which immediately

would prompt us to call family, praying that it wasn't our relatives who were victims of another shooting spree.

Is this realistic? I don't think we want to find out the hard way.

The rippling effects of shooting sprees may never be fully realized by the family and friends of those who have fallen victim to internal battles with common sense and fantasy.

After being convicted of the Jonesboro shootings, Mitchell Johnson (now 14) and Andrew Golden (now 12) were sentenced to the custody of juvenile authorities, where they could remain until age 21 or longer.

Under Arkansas' current legal system, they could be released by age 18 — something the families of the victims have a hard time dealing with.

On May 21, Kipland P. Kinkel decided it might be "cool" to go on a shooting rampage of his own, and authorities say he started with his mother and father, both found dead later that day. Next, he proceeded to shoot and kill a classmate and injure 23 others at Thurston High School in Springfield, Ore.

What baffles most people, beyond the brutal assault at the high school, is the fact that Springfield police had to send in a bomb squad to defuse the house before they could even search it or bring out the bodies of his parents.

Just when we thought it couldn't get any worse — it did.

If we shift our focus momentarily from these childhood horror stories in America, we need not look far to other recent outbreaks of violence toward children of the world.

Richard, Mark, and Jason Quinn, ages 11, 9 and 8 respectively, lost their lives in Northern Ireland in early July during a firebombing of their house. The bombing was the result of hateful attitudes geared toward the Quinns' Catholic mother because she was living with a Protestant companion.

If you are expecting further explanation as to why this happened, beyond the long-standing unrest in

Northern Ireland, you won't find any. Someone decided that the message their mother was sending to the community crossed unspeakable religious barriers and "accidentally" killed three of her sons, leaving their brother, Lee, an only child.

Many residents of the Quinns' community still feel it was a justified attack.

In Sierra Leone, a land recently plagued by civil war, there is disagreement as to who has more power, the government or the rebels.

A group of rebels loyal to the ousted military regime are warring against a Nigerian-led West African intervention force. They tear through the country and carry out random acts of violence just to spite President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah.

Children are beaten, disfigured,

raped and killed

because a group

of people

think that is

the way to

power. Too

many pictures

have surfaced

in the media

depicting chil-

dren with fin-

gers sliced

partially or

fully off,

hands

missing or slashed faces.

Here, the only hope we have is to raise children that don't look to Beavis and Butthead for moral guidance and don't take peer influence as superior instruction to parental authority.

Then we have another issue: the parents.

How many alcoholic, drug-infested parents with gambling, abusive and other tendencies can we have before we will begin to see truly irreversible patterns of behavior and violence against children in more communities than we already have?

Someone or something needs to change. Who's it going to be? Parents? Children? The media? Simple.

Everyone.

I want to see newspapers printing

big, front-page stories and headlines when a third-grader gets an "A" on a test. Forget the lure of violence and mayhem on the front page.

Show me a child learning how to write in cursive or hitting a home run in Little League.

I want to see parents praising their children more in public. Enough of the excessive disciplining of children in front of others.

Treat children better than strangers, not the other way around.

Parents need to pay more attention to and spend more time with their children. Some studies have suggested that quality family time is decreasing rapidly in the average American household.

Give children more books to read, unplug the Nintendo three days out of the week and take children to the park or beach rather than the arcade.

Show them how to use the Internet as an educational resource and not as a television supplement. Otherwise we will see the birth of Generation Zombie.

With all this violence and tragedy, it would seem hard at times to find hope in those we look toward to become our future politicians, doctors, secretaries and esteemed burger-flippers. But what's done is done. Be thankful for what the departed have taught us and don't let the memories of them be in vain.

Cooper's Law: You can't prevent it from consuming the future.

So what can children do? Nothing by themselves, and that is where we come in. Give children good things to emulate and they just might turn to good deeds instead of bad ones.

Children have a right to their innocence.

Give it back to them.



ROBB BLUM/DN