

Moral decline

Political correctness takes away our voice, self-identity



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There's something about the 1950s that I just love. I don't know if it's the white T-shirts and greased hair, or the malt shops and pep rallies. Maybe it's the girls' hairstyles. Or the good old-fashioned rock 'n' roll.

No, I don't think it's the fashion or necessarily the music that's so appealing, but rather the general attitude in society at the time. People thought differently. They acted differently. People loved America and everything it stood for. They won the war, had kids and wanted to build a

great society.

News flash. America has changed. As philosopher Michael Sandel has said, "The moral fabric of community is unraveling around us." Our morals today are about as strong as George McFly.

C'mon, just look around. Teenage pregnancy rates, the spread of AIDS and a largely divorced nation show our moral decline. How about our leaders? We've got an intern-loving, backroom-dealing, tie-wearing, I-don't-define-that-as-sex blubbing scam artist at the helm of this star-ship!

So what has America misplaced since this morally pedastalic time of yore? I don't think that we've lost something, but instead we've gained something — tolerance.

The perversion of tolerance

Now let's make sure we're all on the same page before we delve into this topic. First of all, there's nothing really wrong with tolerance in its truest sense. Good ol' Webster (no, not the kid with an '80s TV show, the dictionary man) says tolerance is the

disposition to be fair toward those whose opinions or practices differ from one's own. But that's not what tolerance really is today.

Try to visualize tolerance as a picture in your mind. I see a big group of people huddled together, hugging, swaying and singing "We Are the World." But each race, gender, lifestyle and disability would have to be represented in a perfectly proportional manner. And we couldn't sing "We Are the World," because it might offend someone. Come to think of it, we probably couldn't even be singing, because it might violate the rights of those who can't sing well!

This is the tolerance that has slowly begun to euthanize our nation. In our perverted vocabulary, a once-cherished word is at the root of society's immorality.

Diversity's dilemma

We couldn't have tolerance without diversity. And there's no word more annoying than diversity. Not because I'm close-minded, racist and just want to live in a colony of

WASPs detached from civilization, but because society has changed the meaning of diversity as well. I always thought benefiting from diversity was being able to learn from others' lives, cultures and ideas in order to better ourselves and our society.

Today's diversity isn't as positive. We come to college and, instead of shaking the friendly diversity hand, we get a diversity enema before we know what hit us! We're suffocated with multiculturalism and lifestyle awareness. Action groups pummel us with their extreme propaganda and hidden ideological agendas.

Now ease up for a second, feminists. Of course there's nothing wrong with finding out about other races, the opposite sex and people of different political beliefs. But there has to be a point where it all becomes too much. We need to remember to stay afloat on our own beliefs in this murky swamp of diversity. When we are completely immersed in the actions, beliefs and ideologies of others, we lose sight of

our own beliefs and who we are as individuals.

A moral wasteland

Tolerance has grayed the moral landscape of America, because we accept rather than respect. We embrace rather than love. We compromise rather than discuss. Morally, there are rights and wrongs — in clear black and white. But the diversity has surrounded us so that we overly tolerate these different views. No longer can we healthily disagree with others — it's oppressive and demeaning. We can't stand up for our values and convictions unless we're politically correct. We can't be ourselves unless we're politically correct.

The parameters of our tolerance have been pushed to the outer limits. When the consequence of our version of tolerance is widespread moral decay, it's obvious that the boundaries have gone too far.

I can understand if you don't want to go back to a mom-and-apple-pie era, with relative homogeneity, racial disrespect and life in general with blinders on. But acceptance and political correctness has corrupted America. And we shouldn't tolerate it.

Sick of it all

Antibiotic overkill prohibits our bodies from fighting germs the natural way



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We're working our way into a crisis that will literally plague the world for decades. And it's pretty good fodder for today's sensationalist media outlets. But since there are so many ugly absurdities in these waning months of the century, the coverage isn't to the extent it really ought to be.

What am I talking about? You could call it a millennium bug ... an organic one, not the binary problem that has gone from media darling to overstuffed, overhyped monster in the past year.

I'm talking about antibiotic overkill, and it's way past time everybody — from manufacturers to consumers — took it seriously.

I rarely go to the doctor when I feel sick. I've forced my body to fight off illnesses that doctors could have and would have cured faster. Among middle-class Americans, I'm largely alone.

Is refusing to medically treat an illness sometimes stupid? Absolutely. Medicine exists for a good reason. But done sensibly on a large scale, reducing medicine use could be a real life-saver.

Most people, when they get even a nagging cold, go to the doctor. Too often, the doctor gives them antibiotics that may or may not kill the germs causing the illness.

This happens thousands of times every day, and it's the incredible numbers that make this activity a threat. Almost every time you use medicine, some of the germs you attacked live to reproduce and fight another day.

The more germs that survive and replicate themselves, the stronger bacteria become on the whole. Because bacteria reproduce in such volume, they are outpacing our medicines. That amoxicillin you took last time you got sick? It may not work

the next time. It already may have failed on other patients.

This is serious. And it's been unutterably worsened by the advent of antibacterial soaps.

It's really hard to find a hand soap on the shelves that isn't labeled as antiseptic — which means that, like penicillin, it's made to kill germs.

You don't need germ-killing soap. You mostly just need water. Bacteria are very, very small (hope you knew that). An open faucet on your hands is like the Great Flood to them. Unless trapped by dirt (or other foreign substances on your hands),

germs will flow down the drain and will not bother you again anytime soon.

That's where soap comes in, because its main purpose is to loosen dirt, so the odors and bacteria trapped in it will also be washed away. You don't need antibacterial hand soap.

Not only do you not need it, it is becoming essential that you not use it. Nor should you use the new antiseptic products for mopping your floors. (Why

in hell would you need that on your floor anyway? To protect your ass from infection when you slip on the bathroom rug?)

The more we use these products, the more we help to create antiseptic-resistant germs. Think of the bacteria on your hands as a battalion of Nazis.

Using these soaps is like firing a pistol at them. Sure, you may kill a few, even a lot. But the ones that get away are going to come back driving tanks. And they are going to laugh as they crush your pistol, and you with it. (All right ... take a short break to make some of your own jokes about pistols. I know you want to.)

Because millions of Americans now use antiseptic soap products, science may be spending the rest of the next century having to discover entirely new methods of curing germ-related diseases, and new ways of disinfecting things when it's really necessary.

That is a frightening prospect. Just ask a grandparent (or history professor) what it was like while this country was trying to figure out how to defeat tuberculosis.

Now we're on the verge of having to do that again, and the new answer may be twice as difficult to find.

Next time you're under the weather, don't beg student health for antibiotics. Ask your doctor if prescription medicine is really necessary. An over-the-counter drug to relieve the symptoms may be just as effective in making you feel better. Or, maybe a little sleep is all you need.

Just as importantly, don't buy soaps that purport to be antibiotic. Just look for the old-fashioned kind, if you can find it. It's probably cheaper, anyway.

And if you really want to join the cause (and you *should* — this is everybody's future, here, dammit) write a letter to the manufacturers of these new "super soaps" and tell them to stop selling them for general use.

Here's a sample letter you can feel free to copy:

Dear Purveyors of World Destruction,
 Too many Americans are being suckered into buying your antibiotic soaps. We don't need them. We promise people will still buy plain old soap if you put it on the shelves instead ... and put lots of aloe in it. And make it smell like chocolate-covered cherries.
 Sincerely, A Citizen Who Fears Painful, Extended Death by Some Disease We Had All Forgotten About.

Have a nice day.



SHAWN DRAPAL/DN