

Deep down, we are all the same



It's in there. You just don't want to admit it.

You can try to hide it, fight it or ignore it, but it's there.

It's an innate longing buried in the depths of your being... to eat greasy fried chicken in a wife-beater on your porch, with your feet in a kiddie pool.

Just like original sin, it's congenital. It's white trashiness. We have it at birth, and no actions of our own can get rid of it. No posh environment we're put in can mitigate the effects of this illness.

I truly am convinced that with enough scientific research, a white trash gene will be found. But all the fetal cell research in the world can't stop this disease. So it's time we embrace it.

The most important thing about white trashiness is that, because it's genetic, it breaks all societal barriers. Contrary to popular belief, you don't have to be white to have a little white trash inside. Caucasian skin helps to provide a better contrast between tanned body parts and ordinarily hidden body parts (for example, upper butt crack or lower calf). But people of all races, creeds and backgrounds can be white trash. It's an equal opportunity disease.

And you don't really have to be trash to be white trash. I wear a suit and tie every day, but I'll eat a bucket o' gizzards at Eagle Raceway just like those guys in the Jeff Gordon jackets (Usually part of an ensemble including thick mustache, GM Goodwrench hat, tight jeans and Lynyrd Skynyrd '82 tour T-shirt).

Chances are most of you have a little bit of trashy desire inside, too. It may not be in the form of consuming unknown chicken parts while watching cars hit each other, but the need for WT is inside of you.

So the tag "white trash" is just an unfortunate, derogatory label cast upon the lower classes of our society. I really don't think you have to be white or trash to be white trash. If we'd all let our individual white trashiness out, we'd all be white trash. Let me explain.

Practicality

White trash are renowned for their extraordinary ability to be thrifty and economical. For example, if they have an appliance that ceases to function, they simply fill it with dirt and place it in the yard. Voila! The planter and former toilet is a two-in-one miracle of modern technology.

Or take the porch, for example: It serves as an entryway, storage room for extra furniture and recycling center. (The cluttered beer cans may seem hazardous, but there is a method to the madness.)

White trash also took the inventions of cement blocks and duct tape and brought them to the masses.

We all strive to cut corners and be fiscally responsible; white trash just do it much more obviously than we do. The only exception to this rule may be their excessive lottery playing.

Clothing

You have to get tired of putting on your Nautica khakis and Tommy Hilfiger polo shirts every day. Have you ever even used that hammer loop? Don't you love that feeling when you put on an old ratty T-shirt and worn-out

jeans? White trash get to live this simple dream every day. Imagine living world where dressing up is putting on a shirt with sleeves. Glorious.

Music

Country western is the defining music of white trash as we know them. It is unmusical, simplistic and unimaginative. But the standard lyrics are tried and true. These songs' subjects are more than relevant to our lives: Women leave, dogs die and life is painful. The music of the white trash is about the fundamental dynamics of life. Add to the basic country a little bit of Southern rock, and you've got quality music to go with the inspirational lyrics.

Simplicity

Similar to the lyrics in their music, the lives of the white trash are very basic. When they want to relax, they're happy just watching NASCAR. When they want to have



The tenets (and tenements) of white trash

fun, they sing karaoke and drink Jack Daniels.

When they want to show affection to their significant others, they give them a plastic rose wrapped in plastic from the local truck stop (panty rose given for special occasions).

Like the Amish, white trash live simple lives. Except for the intermittent police visit for domestic violence, the lives of white trash are relaxed and enjoyable because of their simplicity.

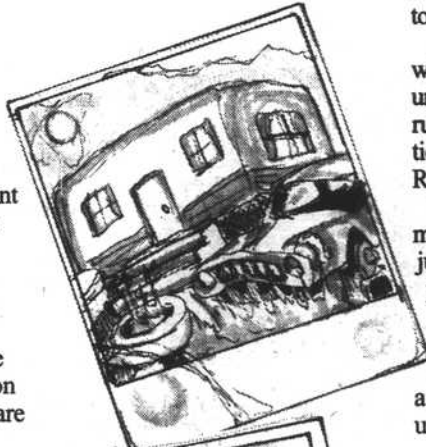
It has nothing to do with racial, economic or social status. White Trashiness has to do with who we are inside. They are the ones who write on their bellies at football games. They are the ones who keep the National Inquirer and Soap Opera Weekly at the checkout stand.

They are the ones who gorge themselves at the all-you-can-eat buffets, grow rattails, put AstroTurf on their porches (or yards) and make the trailer park what it is today.

White trash are the lifeblood of America. And we're all just a little white trash at heart.

So indulge yourself in the natural desire of your humanity. Drink a Pabst. Leave your Christmas lights up 'til March. Find out which Dale is a better NASCAR driver. Give in to the white trash feeling.

And God bless the WTUSA.



Scott Eastman/DN

No excuse for trashy tendencies



"Usually trash is dirty, but sometimes it comes out white."

— A Baker family motto

When my editor and I started talking about white trash, he had a journalistic vision of investigative reporting with startling facts and figures in which I would blow the top off one of America's biggest mysteries yet again.

He wanted me to talk about "the serious underlying currents of classism and oppression" — something I've never associated white trash with before.

So I borrowed a book from a radical friend of mine entitled "White Trash: Race and Class in America," written (with intimidating back-to-back multisyllabic abstractions) by a respected cultural critic, so I could get informed on what academia has to say about my peeps.

I'll be the first to point out classism and racism in America and its institutional workings, but I've had a very hard time placing white trash under the banner of any -ism.

With my tendency to sympathize with the poor and downtrodden, I almost bought into the book's libertarian dogma, until I went back to Texas over spring break to visit my white trash kin.

This trip reminded me that I come from a long line of undistinguished trash.

My grandparents not only raised most of their children in a trailer park, but also allegedly had some of the first models of mobile homes named after them.

They had 13 white trash children, all of whom married or knocked up (but rarely in that order) pure blood white trash, which begot my generation of white trash. I was able to escape this generational cycle of white trash by moving to Nebraska and cleaning myself up, so to speak.

Maybe the best way to summarize white trash is to look at its vanguard figures. While my parents' generation was ruled by velvet Elvis murals, my generation was ruled by Warrant and now Kid Rock.

But being white trash is about a lot more than just butterfly collar suede jumpsuits, sexual innuendoes to cherry pie and trailer park rap.

What is pure-blood white trash? It has nothing to do with biology or blood type at all. It's more of a culture, a type of low-brow society with various unique behaviors and aesthetics.

You may find some of my following characterizations of white trash offensive, but if you do, remember that I come from white trash and therefore have full authority to generalize and stereotype my own people, even if I am reformed.

White trash are some of the poorest people in America. While that normally would give one the impetus to improve his or her condition, white trash can be distinguished from simply poor whites in their utter lack of work ethic and culture of failure.

Rednecks in western Nebraska and hillbillies in the Appalachian Mountains are quite different from white trash, who tend to live in rundown

urban or suburban settings.

Moreover, they don't have the traditional "moral backbone" found in Bible-belt Appalachia, nor the puritan punctuality of simple redneck farmers.

Allow me to give you a brief tour of a typical derided white trashville.

A trashville often has an overabundance of rusted-out Chevys on blocks propped up in the front or side yard — which, after sitting for several years and being surrounded by weeds and bushes, conveniently double as lawn ornaments.

The El Camino (a rare half-car, half-truck) seems to be the model of choice.

Another surefire way to confirm you're in a trashville is to visit the local convenience store (one of the few where the "no shirt, no shoes, no service" policy actually is enforced) and listen to the calls of mothers to their children.

From my experience, it is always only a minor variation on, "Dammit, Junior, I done told you three time we ain't buyin' no more bubble gum or beef jerky! Now shut up and go get your Mom a six-pack of Old Milwaukee!"

The main variations on the call above are to replace these food items with either microwaveable hamburgers or the five-pound family size of Doritos. PBR or a white can named "Beer" can replace Old Milwaukee on occasion.

If visual contact is possible, look for the cigarette centered in the mother's mouth bobbing up and down with each word.

Convenience-store dining also has given true white trash serious weight problems; they're either obese or famished, with few exceptions. The oddest medley of ribs and fat rolls results.

For the males, a dead giveaway is the "short in front, long in back" hair cut (ask for the SFLB at the local barber for the real experience).

The younger children sport a slight variation to the SFLB with a short front and long rat tail in the back.

White trash children rarely are cute and can be quite disgusting. They were never taught hygiene (to which their advanced tooth loss and cavities, lice and ear infections can attest), not to mention the permanent dirt and snot caked on the upper lip.

And under the guidance of their parents, they like to pick their noses a lot too, all the way through adolescence.

My dad called me "booger" until I was 12.

Family events normally revolve around the TV dinner (on the TV dinner pop-up tray, likely another invention of the Baker family) and professional wrestling. After that sixer of beer is put down, the wrestling can turn real. Half-, step- or full brothers and sisters, newly-weds, parents or children can turn on each other in a bloody mess of domestic disputes.

Check your next airing of "Cops" for further documentation of this behavior.

Men wear the wife-beater white tank top (regardless of ribs or rolls). Women prefer to wear blue jeans cut off just below the buttocks, with a bikini top if they're less than 100 pounds; when more than 300 pounds, they slip on tent dresses.

A nice crank and speed habit can help maintain that 100-pound figure.

It's exactly these kinds of behaviors that turn poor whites into white trash.

I'm not denying that there is a classist construct that creates poverty, but by using and selling drugs and practicing such deplorable hygiene habits, white trash only exacerbate classism and leave no one but themselves to blame.

It's repeated stupid human errors and failings that create and define white trash, not any form of social disempowerment or discrimination.

And in this land of wealth and opportunity, while American classism explains the existence of poor whites, there's still no excuse for white trash; despite how many syllables are used to describe it.

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