



Culture and Social Pathology

A civilized society's first line of defense is not the law, police and courts but customs, traditions, rules of etiquette and moral values. These behavioral norms — mostly transmitted by example, word of mouth and religious teachings — represent a body of wisdom distilled over the ages through experience and trial and error. They include important thou-shalt-nots, such as thou shalt not murder, thou shalt not steal and thou shalt not cheat. They also include all those courtesies that have traditionally been associated with ladylike and gentlemanly conduct.



The failure to fully transmit these values and traditions to subsequent generations represents one of the failings of what journalist Tom Brokaw called “The Greatest Generation.” People in this so-called great generation, who lived during the trauma of the Great Depression and fought World War II, not only failed to transmit the moral values of their parents but also are responsible for government programs that will deliver economic chaos.

Behavior accepted as the norm today would have been seen as despicable yesteryear. There are television debt relief commercials that promise to help debtors pay back only half of what they owe. Foul language is spoken by children in front of and sometimes to teachers and other adults. When I was a youngster, it was unthinkable to use foul language to any adult. It would have meant risking a smack across the face. But years ago, parents and teachers didn't have “experts” on child rearing to tell them that corporal punishment was wrong and ineffective and “timeouts” would be a superior form of discipline. One result of our tolerance for aberrant behavior was that, according to the National Center for Education Statistics, during the 2011-12 academic year, 209,000 primary- and secondary-school teachers were physically assaulted and 353,000 were threatened with injury. As a result of this and other forms of school violence, many school districts employ hundreds of police officers.

Nowadays baby showers are often held for unwed mothers. Yesteryear such an acceptance of illegitimacy would have been unthinkable. Today there is little or no social sanction or shame for illegitimate births. There are no “shotgun” weddings to make the man live up to his responsibilities. But not to worry. Taxpayers bear the financial burden of illegitimacy. Any economist worth his salt will tell you that if something is taxed, expect less of it. If something is subsidized, expect more of it. Taxpayers have been forced to subsidize slovenly behavior. The statistical evidence proves it. According to the 1938 Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, that year 11 percent of black children and 3 percent of white children were born to unwed mothers. Today 72 percent of black children and 30 percent of white children are born to unwed mothers.

For nearly three-quarters of a century, the nation's liberals have waged war on traditional values, customs and morality. Our youths have been counseled that there are no moral absolutes. Instead, what's moral or immoral is a matter of personal opinion. During the 1960s, the education establishment



Written by [Walter E. Williams](#) on June 17, 2015

began to challenge and undermine lessons children learned from their parents and Sunday school with fads such as “values clarification.” So-called sex education classes are simply indoctrination that undermines family and church strictures against premarital sex. Lessons of abstinence were considered passe and replaced with lessons about condoms, birth control pills and abortions. Further undermining of parental authority came with legal and extralegal measures to assist teenage abortions with neither parental knowledge nor parental consent.

You say, “OK, Williams, the Greatest Generation is responsible for our moral decline, but what about our economic decline?” Ask yourself: What are the massive government spending programs that threaten to bankrupt our nation in the future? The answer would have to be Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid. Over 50 percent of today’s federal budget is spent on these programs. Around the time when many in the so-called Greatest Generation were born (1920), there were no such programs, and federal spending was \$53 billion. In 2014, federal spending was \$3.5 trillion.

If it were only the economic decline threatening our future, there might be hope. It’s the moral decline that spells our doom.

Walter E. Williams is a professor of economics at George Mason University. To find out more about Walter E. Williams and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com.

COPYRIGHT 2015 CREATORS.COM



Subscribe to the New American

Get exclusive digital access to the most informative, non-partisan truthful news source for patriotic Americans!

Discover a refreshing blend of time-honored values, principles and insightful perspectives within the pages of "The New American" magazine. Delve into a world where tradition is the foundation, and exploration knows no bounds.

From politics and finance to foreign affairs, environment, culture, and technology, we bring you an unparalleled array of topics that matter most.



What's Included?

- 24 Issues Per Year
- Optional Print Edition
- Digital Edition Access
- Exclusive Subscriber Content
- Audio provided for all articles
- Unlimited access to past issues
- Coming Soon! Ad FREE
- 60-Day money back guarantee!
- Cancel anytime.

Subscribe