
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A NEW VIEW OF SEX EDUCATION

To the Editor:

Our society gives teenagers the message that being sexy is necessary for self-esteem. We encourage teenagers to look sexy: have sexy eyes, sexy hair, sexy teeth, sexy skin, sexy clothes, ad infinitum. We expose teenagers to sexy music, sexy dances, sexy movies, etc. We give teenagers lots of leisure time to be alone with the opposite sex. At the same time we promote all this sexiness and opportunity to participate in sex, we admonish teenagers to avoid sex until they get married: "Be sexy. . . Don't have sex!"

"Unmarried sex is sinful. . . Every child is a gift from God." Why does sinful sex result in a gift from God? Outside of married couples, why does God reward only the sinful with the most precious gifts—a baby? Why do not the unmarried faithful who abstain from sin receive comparable or superior gifts? How do we expect teenagers to believe that sex is sinful if sex is the only way to receive this precious gift from God?

"Sex is dirty. . . Save it for the one you love!" Dirty jokes are sexy jokes; dirty pictures are sexy pictures; "Dirty Old Men" are men seeking sex from young girls. If sex is so dirty, why not give it to someone you hate. Why save this dirty thing for someone you love?

"Sex is natural. . . Learn to enjoy it wisely." The wise approach to sex is to use the same moral standards in regard to sex as you do in other human relationships, while keeping in mind its specific consequences. As in other interactions, never exploit another human being. Respect your sexual partners: their needs, their vulnerabilities; be responsible for your sexual acts; do not allow preoccupation with sex to interfere with your long-range goals.

"Sex is powerful. . . Teach children to respect and control it." Educate children about their sexuality so they learn to keep control of this powerful force despite the many temptations to either negate and deny sexual feelings or to indulge without serious consideration of both physical and emotional consequences.

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WHO AND WHAT IS A BLACK, AND WHY?

To the Editor:

A little more than 45 years have passed since David Lawrence, one of the most influential newspapermen of his day, declared in his column—and this was not a tongue-in-cheek riposte—that Negroes could never develop into good baseball players. They were by nature too mercurial; they tended to react more from primitive instinct, and were incapable of developing the controlled mental and emotional discipline so vital to good ball players. History subsequently answered Mr. Lawrence. Around that time, similar remarks were also made in reference to tennis. Now, in 1987, comes a professor of physiology from the University of Indiana to declare as a scientific opinion that blacks—this is the term now favored in society for what used to be Negroes—cannot become good swimmers. They are not as buoyant as whites in the water.

The present commentary has not been provoked by the inanity of that statement, but rather by the continued and pervasive use of race as a category of reference, which in itself is incongruous and absurd. Who and what is a black, and why? Every demographic study that claims to identify and interpret human variations in terms of genetic influences uses racial categories; race is noted in actuarial tables, vital statistics, and by

medical researchers. Indeed, whenever there is a context of racial comparison, race becomes a parameter of reference. But what is a black? In the context of general use, it is not a pigmental classification. Dictionaries define a black or Negro as one having an ancestry traceable to Africa. But what if that same individual also has an ancestry that is traceable to Caucasasia? Why is there a consensus that Negroid genes are always the ones so prevalent when the overtones are denigrating and negative?

In most parts of the country state laws rather than biological considerations determine race. An individual is classified as black even if the "Negro" blood can only be suggested by tracing the ancestral archives. Such an individual may present all the qualifications for a Caucasian. Incidentally, science cannot distinguish a Caucasian from a black by examining the blood cells. Bias determines race in the United States. Less than 40 percent of the blacks in this country are 100 percent Negroid. With such diversity, how can there be a common racial gene? How can scientific explanation based on invalid premises be sound? This challenges the validity of all statistics that are based on such inconclusive parameters. For example, how can statistics on black hypertensives be accepted as credible when many of the subjects have as many white genes as black? Such use of statistics reflects not a scientific inquiry, but a procrustean exercise.

The insensate waters do not reflect society's genetic prejudice against blacks. Water will refuse buoyancy to *anyone* who cannot swim. Successful swimmers are those who have had both opportunity and access to adequate facilities for training and practice.

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