



Bill Cosby on Culture: Very Right and Very, Very Wrong

Comedian Bill Cosby spent years rendering fatherly advice on the hit sitcom *The Cosby Show*, but in recent times has received more press for the fatherly advice he has given off screen. And he's on the social stage again with a *New York Post* [article](#) in which he discusses apathy, responsibility, race and religion. Unfortunately, his pleasingly paternal prescriptions were mixed with statist paternalism — and naiveté.



Cosby opened his piece with a defense of Little Big Gulp's (a.k.a. Mayor Michael Bloomberg's) health puppeteering, writing:

No 1: Smoking — and a big howl went up from people who want to smoke. But when you look at it, everything points to smoking as a problem; whether a person dies from cancer or not, it's still other things — emphysema, all kinds of breathing problems... Mayor Bloomberg jumped in on that and people complained. Restaurants complained, people complained, why did they complain?

Money. That's why. People are greedy. It wasn't about somebody dying, it is all about money, so they use something called choice, which makes no sense at all. I have the right to smoke myself to death, they say.

No. 2: Juvenile diabetes. Children are not being taken out of harm's way. And there are many things that we also can do, but one is you don't want your child consuming too much sugar. That is what the mayor tried to do with the sugar in the soft drinks.

There is much wrong with this passage. Yes, people want to make money, greed has always plagued man, and everyone knows that excessive smoking and sugar consumption is a problem. But none of these things is the issue. You could outlaw ice cream citing health concerns and, when people complained, accuse them of greed for wanting to sell a fat-laden food that is a "problem." The real question, however, is always the same: What freedoms should people have and what is the proper role of government?

Let's start like this. Virtually everyone would agree that I have a right to allow in, or disallow from, my home whomever I please. If I want to prohibit smokers — or only allow smokers — that is my right under the principles of private ownership and freedom of association. Moreover, I may refuse to give my guests soda or happily serve them sugary pop by the keg. Now, why should I lose these rights simply because I decide to erect a few more tables and start selling food? It's still my property. It was still paid for with my money. It was still created by the sweat of my own brow. It's viewed differently only because an activist Supreme Court once decided that its agenda demanded it label private businesses "public accommodations," an act that did violence to the principle of private property.

In addition, no one forces any person to patronize any business or buy a certain product (not until ObamaCare at least). If diners won't tolerate smoking in restaurants, then many establishments will remain smoke-free while others will provide well-insulated non-smoking areas. But why should people who want a setting in which smoking is allowed or who want to buy a 32-ounce soda not have the



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freedom to enter into a contract with those who would provide the same?

Cosby also wrote:

It is my belief — my BELIEF in big letters — when people don't make good choices, you can yell as loud as you want to at me about this is my body and I do what I want to do with my body, so OK yes you can. But now you are spreading it along generationally so that your daughter and grandchildren have it and everybody's doing it.

Actually, this is one of the best arguments for outlawing liberalism I've ever heard. But Cosby is right. As the Bible tells us, "The sins of the father will be visited upon the child," so, yes, any sin imaginable can be handed down. We then have to ask, however, where does this end? Do we empower government to proscribe anything that is — or is thought to be — a sin? That would take in a lot of territory. It would also take away a lot of freedoms.

As indicated earlier, Cosby also had some sage things to say. For instance, while discussing race and responsibility, he wrote:

There is this situation where people tend to think that we are all victims. Victim meaning somebody else is doing this to us. That's not true.

"Sir, there is something wrong with you wanting to stay here [in the projects] forever because it means as long as you're excepting [sic] these two [government] checks, you're apathetic."

If a white person ... sells drugs to black people, then we're up in arms ... but when a black person sells another black person crack cocaine, heroin or something that will give us addiction ... nothing is said.

Some [blacks] say, "Don't bring out our dirty laundry." How much sense does that make?... What are you doing with your dirty laundry? You walk around with it!... [But] the dirty laundry is very simple, man: You wouldn't have it if you did something about it.

But while Cosby's prescriptions here were largely spot-on, he stumbled badly with the following:

Muslims are misunderstood. Intentionally misunderstood. We should all be more like them. They make sense, especially with their children. There is no other group like the Black Muslims, who put so much effort into teaching children the right things, they don't smoke, they don't drink or overindulge in alcohol, they protect their women, they command respect. And what do these other people do?

They complain about them, they criticize them. We'd be a better world if we emulated them.

Now, it is true, as Ralph Waldo Emerson said, that "every man I meet is my superior in some way, and in that I learn from him." This is also true of groups, and there's no question that Muslims are correct when they talk of Western decadence. Yet the virtues Cosby praises are hardly unique to Muslims. They're also exhibited by Hasidic Jews, devout home-schooling Catholics, the Amish, and others. Of course, I understand that Cosby's focus was the black community and that he would thus be likely to use an example from it. But is exalting Islam a solution? For there are sins other than smoking, drinking, and failing to protect the fairer sex. As an example, the Black Muslims are well known for combining their temperance and traditionalism with a strong dose of bigotry. And the last thing a child needs is a pristine body unsullied by excess with a soul rotting from hatred within.

This brings us to the greatest defect in Cosby's commentary: failing to mention that profound difference



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between Islam and Christianity — emphasis on forgiveness. As Rev. Jesse Lee Peterson often points out, racial hustlers such as Jesse Jackson keep young blacks angry so that they won't be able to think straight. For anger is like darkness: The more there is, the less you can see. But forgiveness dispels the wrath and turns the light on, allowing reality to be seen clearly. This is the real remedy for racial — and all human — problems.



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