



Stinking in America: Is Not Washing the New PC Trend?

People like me are often accused of wanting to return to the 19th century. But, if the New York Times is right about a new trend, some on the Left want to go back to the Middle Ages. What is that trend? Avoiding soap, deodorant, and even bathing regularly.



Today, though, it's often for environmental reasons.

It seems that top-notch Western hygiene has now joined SUVs, Wal-Mart, tobacco (not the wacky kind — it's in fashion), guns, McDonald's, and white males in the Museum of Politically-Incorrect Persons, Places, and Things.

For example, *Guardian* writer Kira Cochrane [tells us](#) about 51-year-old environmentalist Donnachadh McCarthy, who boasts that he's gotten his water consumption down to about "20 litres a day," that he's "as clean as everyone else," and that he's trying to reduce his "carbon footprint."

If I were Donnachadh, I'd be more concerned about my stink footprint.

McCarthy seems to bemoan what Cochrane calls the fetishizing of extreme cleanliness and says that when he was a lad "the normal thing was to bathe once a week." I don't know, perhaps he spent his youth as part of a head-hunting tribe in Papua New Guinea, but during my stateside childhood in the 1970s, a daily shower was expected. I mean, even in 1950s programs such as "Leave it to Beaver," the little boy who tried to avoid his nightly bath was often the stuff of comedy fare.

Speaking of soap-averse kids, Cochrane tells us, "more than half of British teenagers don't wash every day — with many opting for a quick spray of deodorant to mask any stink." And it appears that the [durian](#) doesn't fall far from the tree. Cochrane also relates that "41% of British men and 33% of women don't shower every day, with 12% of people only having a proper wash once or twice a week." She also provides the examples of a woman who "swipes a sliced lemon under her armpits instead of deodorant ... and a salesman who shampoos only once a month and gave up anti-perspirant for three years." I have to wonder if he gave up making sales for three years, too.

In fairness, not all of these "soap-dodgers," as they've been dubbed, are on the Left — just most. Not all cite San Francisco motivations, either. If you read Cochrane's article and the comments below it, you'll learn that some respondents cite health concerns such as dry skin and the danger of stripping the body of supposedly beneficial germs and bacteria. And, of course, anything can be overdone. I must confess that I was not a lad you had to cajole into the bathtub, as I was fastidious to a fault about cleanliness (not neat, just clean; there's a difference) and even developed a compulsive hand-washing habit for a while (hey, blame my Germanic upbringing). But there is such a thing as a happy, and not stinky, medium. Have you ever been around a restaurant worker who recently arrived from a nation (I'm thinking of one culture in particular, which shall remain nameless) in which deodorant isn't high on the shopping list? I'll tell you, it doesn't exactly enhance the ambiance.

Yet it's clear to me that most soap-dodgers occupy the same side of the political spectrum as most draft-dodgers. I had heard of this movement even quite a few years ago — among East Village grunge types in NYC — and it's all part of a mentality prevalent among people who might name their kids Eclipse, Feelfree, Rainbow, Snowphish, or Windsong (hint, folks, a child ain't a pet). It's about saying, "Hey,



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man, I'm natural! I'm savin' the Earth and gettin' back to it!"

A good example of this is found in a *Guardian* GreenLiving Blog piece [entitled](#) "Soapdodgers of the world, unite," by Mark Boyle. Like so many of his brothers-in-underarms, he laments that companies such as Johnson & Johnson, L'Oreal "and their ilk" have won a corporate propaganda victory in convincing us all that it's actually a good thing to be, well, clean. And he has a tip for staying "naturally fresh": "do absolutely nothing. Stop washing so damn often and definitely don't use soap." He claims he adheres to this himself.

Well, with scandals such as [CBSgate](#), I always knew that journalism stank.

I just didn't know it could be taken literally.

Boyle has some further advice, too:

If you do want to go soap-free, I would highly recommend a diet of fresh fruit, vegetables, grains and nuts. If you eat meat and dairy everyday, I'd cut back on your consumption of both, along with heavily processed foods. If you put nutritionally devoid, dead, toxic food into your body, expect it to come out smelling as such.

The only "toxic food" I've heard of recently is milk from Red China. As for this supposed link between carnivorous consumption and malodorous dysfunction, I'd rather smell a newly bathed, Alpo-fed Bullmastiff than a big, meaty, shampoo-shunning, deodorant-declining environmentalist any day.

So it seems that, among the Left, cleanliness really is next to godliness — on that list of what must be purged from Western culture. And with a sales pitch involving preserving health, saving the environment, and combating corporate greed, I'm sure the fruits, vegetables, and nuts on the San Francisco Board of Supervisors — which just [banned toys](#) in McDonald's Happy Meal — will soon consider following suit with soap, shampoo, and deodorant. After all, they're in good company in their infinite wisdom: *Communist Manifesto* author Karl Marx was so infamous for not bathing that even his collaborator, Friedrich Engels, found him a repulsive man.

It just makes you wonder, who really are the great unwashed after all?



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