



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on October 21, 2009

## Boy Set on Fire in Brutal Revenge Attack

In one of the most heinous crimes imaginable, a 15-year-old Florida boy was set ablaze by five other teens in a revenge attack stemming from a dispute over a video game.

The victim, Michael Brewer of Deerfield Beach, suffered mainly second-degree burns on 65 percent of his body and is currently hospitalized at Jackson Memorial Hospital's burn center in critical condition.

The youths charged in the attack are Jesus Mendez, 15; Steven Shelton, who will be 16 on Thursday; Matthew Bent, 15; and two brothers, Denver and Jeremy Jarvis, 15 and 13 respectively. The boys are accused of dousing Brewer with rubbing alcohol and then igniting it with a lighter. All five are charged with aggravated assault, and Mendez, who is said to have set the victim ablaze, is also charged with attempted second-degree murder. Writing about the events leading up to the vicious act, CBSNews.com [tells us](#):



Broward County police say Michael owed one of the suspects Matthew Bent \$40 for a video game. When he didn't pay up Bent allegedly tried to steal a \$500 custom bicycle, belonging to Brewer's father. And when Brewer called the cops, police say, Bent wanted revenge.

Sheriff Al Lambert said, "This group of kids thought, that because the kid may have snitched him out, and turned him in because they were trying to steal his dad's bike, they felt in their mind, it was OK to set him on fire."

While Brewer will likely survive his injuries, his ordeal has just begun. It is said that burn victims actually become sicker several days after being burned, and Brewer is now combating systemic inflammation and probably will have to deal with organ failures and infections in the near future.

Yet at least some of his assailants seemed to show little remorse, as it's said that Bent (who directed the attack) and Mendez laughed upon being questioned about the incident.

Crimes such as this certainly are shocking. But they have also, sadly, become increasingly common with each passing decade. We have heard stories the last few years about babies cut from pregnant women's wombs and about pre-teen boys gang-raping girls, and, of course, there are the high-profile incidents such as the Columbine massacre. And every time these horrors hit the news, some people will ask that inevitable question: why? How is it that as society increasingly preaches tolerance and non-violence, its people become ever more violent?



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Unfortunately, while this question is often asked, it's seldom answered adequately. Yet the problem isn't that hard to understand.

When evaluating these youthful offenders, it is obvious that they had neither moral constraints nor a fear of consequences sufficient to deter them from doing evil. Yet is this surprising when we live in a civilization that has removed both? Let's take this one at a time.

While we cannot know for sure how the boys were raised, we do know that, generally speaking, accountability has gone the way of the Dodo. The psychological establishment's self-esteem police and CPS social workers have made many parents not only afraid to spank their children but even reluctant to utter a harsh word. It is an outgrowth of that leftist philosophy stating, "Punishment doesn't work"; it is the reason why "punishment," a dirty word now, has been replaced with "time out" and why dubious conceptions of rehabilitation are often thought a substitute for prison. Of course, interestingly, leftists' skepticism about punishment seems to go right out the ivory tower's window when the subject is, oh, let's say, "hate crime" — or hate-speech laws overseas. Then they just can't punish transgressors enough. But I digress.

The point here is an obvious one: Children raised without consequences will tend to not fear any. Of course, I don't mean that they won't know there are such things as cops and courts; I mean that since consequences were never a reality in their lives, they are only theoretical in their minds. And it just may be a matter of out of sight, out of mind.

Yet this doesn't explain why so many today lack the most basic moral constraints to begin with. After all, aren't we in pretty sad shape if people will tear babies from wombs (of course, abortionists can do it legally) and light schoolmates on fire absent external constraints? Only dangerous wild animals should need to be caged to live in civilization. People are supposed to have consciences.

The reason for this breakdown in internal personal governance is simple: moral relativism. Now, this may not be something you often hear about, but don't touch that mouse. For you simply cannot grasp what ails modern civilization without understanding this factor.

Moral relativism is without a doubt the characteristic spiritual disease of our time. It's the idea that what we call right and wrong are relative to time, place and people, that they are in essence synonymous with opinion. It's not a new world view, as it was even expressed in ancient Greece by the philosopher Polybius when he said, "Man is the measure of all things." Yet when he promulgated this idea it created quite a stir, and it certainly was rejected in the Western world for virtually all of the last two millennia. That is, until about 200 years ago.

Since then it has gained ever more currency, and now it's the dominant "perspective" of our day. It's reflected in popular mantras such as "That's your truth; mine is different," "Don't impose *your* values on me" and "Everything is a matter of perspective." Why, it's so bad that one poll showed that even a majority of Christians believe morals are relative (while I won't treat this here, this renders the very basis of Christianity, the sacrifice on the cross, incomprehensible).

But while saying that "The world is shades of gray" sounds very enlightened and open-minded to many moderns, it is philosophical juvenility masquerading as sophistication. Because if right and wrong were just a function of opinion, there would be no right or wrong in any real sense. And then tolerance and non-violence couldn't be any better than intolerance and violence — and open-mindedness couldn't be superior to closed-mindedness. Hey, it's all a matter of perspective. Don't impose your values on me.

This lesson is being learned well by young and old, and it destroys that necessary element for true



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civilization: internal personal control based on recognition of an absolute, external moral standard. After all, if what those backward religionists call morality is really just values and values are opinion, why not rape, kill or steal if it suits me? Who is to say it's wrong? As serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer rhetorically asked his parents after having this realization as a teen, "If there's no God, why can't I just make up my own rules?"

The great British philosopher Edmund Burke once said, "Society cannot exist, unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere; and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without." Our civilization has embraced the unsustainable: the lessening of internal governance *and* external control. And unless we want to adopt Sharia law and start chopping off thieves' hands, we'd better work on cultivating the former. This means growing up, dispensing with moral relativism and accepting absolute morality. Because people won't accept absolute anarchy — and the only other choice is absolute tyranny.

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