

The Thought Connection

Habituated Hypocrisy

by Christine Burton

Do you read the daily news? Papers count the bodies for you; TV shows them to you in body bags. Papers report investigations; TV shows you well-dressed and well-heeled men in august congressional chambers or lofty courtrooms accusing/denying. All the while Alaska's pristine beaches that water birds and animals call "home" are tarred with the inebriated carelessness and corporate greed of those higher(?) creatures called men.

Sometimes on talk shows you hear older women and men in the audience (or if younger they're libido-suppressed bible thumpers) regret the passage of the "good old days" when you didn't hear all this talk about sex (shudders) and women were virgins until they married (not required of men), and prostitutes were called "fallen women"; (the johns weren't "fallen"). And "mercy me! I never heard of homosexuals until Phil and Oprah came along. My tough luck to get tickets for today."

This columnist has always wondered about the "oldest profession on earth." It must have a valid place in human living to have found such an enduring market. Manufacturers of detergents and cereals should be so lucky. Since it's MAN'S money that keeps prostitution going, it may fulfill the needs of his nature; all he has to do is pay for it. Many species of lower(?) animals have to fight to the blood for the

right to enjoy sex.

Nostalgia seems to fill most people with pleasure and pain; pleasure that the past was wonderful and with pain that the present is horrible. They get a double-shot of emotion, an effective defense against thinking. Otherwise they might realize we create the world we live in and always have.

I never yearn for the past, that time when women were economically enslaved by the conniving of men. I think we live in wonderful times and the best is yet to come. TV, that accused destroyer of the innocence of our children, is destroying their ignorance. Never again can there be a rug large enough to sweep under it all the vagaries and exigencies of the human condition that we have not been mature enough to face. Never again will the human spirit be content to live in a hypocritical world in which we swathed our moral sense with pretense.

Never again will we be satisfied to disassociate effect from cause. We humans are moving away from obedience to authority; we are evolving towards acceptance of personal responsibility, the only way to go if our species and our planet are to survive.

Are you reminding me of the Alaskan oil spill and the perennial corruption in high places that only seems to get worse? But we find those aberrations in the older generation. More and more our young people are opening their eyes, accepting diversity, and assuming responsibility for their own

choices. Sometimes the only way for a culture to eliminate its own restrictive conditioning and to move upward is for older people to die off.

Before I am accused of being a senseless Pollyanna, let me tell you the source for my opinion. It is that modern communication phenomenon, the TV talk show. The star of the show is the audience. The talk show host is useful to move the microphone around, the panel sets the focus of stimulus. But watch the audience, listen to the audience, and you have your ear to the ground of what's happening to our culture.

A year ago, at the mention of homosexuality, homophobes were loud, their mouths juicing around their words with disgust, their body language suggesting violence. If one timid soul would remind them that after all homosexuals are human, the homophobes would come on like ten brass bands. Last week I watched two talk shows with homosexual themes, one Oprah and one Donahue. Only a couple of people timidly hinted at homophobia, their voices mild. They were easily talked down and ignored. I've noticed this trend for several months now. And where is that mighty roar we call Jerry Falwell? Since a gay man demanded to see Falwell's boastful tape in court a couple of years ago, and won a money award, Jerry has been on the decline.

During this cultural leap forward, lesbians and gay men cling to their closets even when they don't need to. They still strive to pass while fewer and fewer people show interest in their sexual orientation. Are they becoming the new anachronism?

More laws will be passed to protect the civil rights of lesbians and gays. But what will we do with our long-sought freedom? Nothing, probably. Are we so accustomed to hypocrisy that we can't give it up?

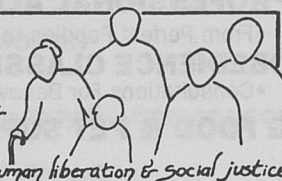
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