

OPINIONS

Subculture driven out of existence



JIMMY RAY TYRRELL
Columnist

Has anybody noticed how sterile and homogenized popular culture among youth has become in the last five years?

Since about 1991 (when Nirvana dealt the killing blow to punk with Nevermind), I have been watching "Alternative Sub-Culture" wind its slimy way through shopping malls and MTV (on its way, losing all of the elements which made it appealing in the first place) and become the most insidious mass-market scam I've ever seen.

The ideas and affectations once used by honest and creative people to express their individuality have now been twisted into a pasteurized template, a uniform standard which has resulted in armies of "individualists" devoid of any individuality.

Once upon a time, subculture was employed to set people free by giving them a favorable context to express their tastes.

Now, the same concept is used to rob people of confidence in having individual tastes by forcing them to conform.

Today, popular culture stands for nothing, means nothing and is nothing.

It is little more than a transitory, noncommittal shroud people tend to hide behind so they don't have to stand on their individual merits. Aside from that, it's also a sedative which is employed to make naive people feel okay about being exploited.

As a contrast to this unhappy state of affairs, I am reminded of the old days of punk, when the bands had names which were too controversial to be mentioned on air and could reach their audience (who were really listening to the music) with unpolished and angry lyrics.

These kids knew they were in danger of being victimized; not by the people on stage but by corporate America.

In those days expression was encouraged, and it was natural to see kids fighting and drinking and destroying property not just because they were destructive (I'll grant many of them were) but because they actually felt something besides a compulsive desire to spend money.

In those days, the neighbors would complain and the cops would be afraid to face those kids. The producers even let people in free.

It's not that way now. Even in a small town, you go to a concert and the scene is very different.

The bands, who suck, flounder about, imitating old style punk, and try to pass off their stale and impotent lyrics to a bunch of kids who just don't care. Who's concentrating on the music anyway?

The fashion is too hard and expensive to keep up with. Go inside the concert and you're lucky if you can turn around without bumping into some merchant trying to sell accessories at inflated prices.

Emptying kids' wallets is the only purpose for having a concert now and expression is out. Plenty of cops hang around to make sure there is none of that.

Subculture is not controlled by its members. Record companies and retail merchandisers are the ones who have the final say on everything kids see, hear, wear, think, desire and buy.

They also set the prices. How can kids possibly be passionate or angry when they're dumb enough to pay \$25 to get into the show, \$30 for a t-shirt, \$20 on concessions and another \$20 for piercings in all the currently fashionable body areas (plus about \$50 each for hypoallergenic jewelry).

Kids who go to a bad concert and spend up to \$200 on merchandise don't deserve to be angry. They should be hiring accountants or becoming accountants.

Subculture was once a lot more than clothes or accessories. It was something a person could identify with naturally, and as a result, be empowered.

It is sad to see it become something people sacrifice their personal identity to in return for acceptance.

Jimmy Ray Tyrrell will return your call if you leave a message at 335-1140.



Violence not a group issue

From people killing each other on the streets to ethnic cleansing in Bosnia to teachers being shot in classrooms, violence is a force that threatens our very existence.

Realizing this painful fact, various groups on campus are involved in Week Without Violence activities. We applaud their efforts.

However, all of their efforts are wasted if the entire WSU community does not get involved in them as well.

Most often, we tend to look at violence as something not really relating to us on an individual basis. For example, men may not be as active in the fight against rape because they are not as directly affected by it as women.

Hate crimes involving race may not create as much immediacy in the minds of White people. For someone who is not a Jew, crimes against Jewish people may not be addressed with urgency. This kind of attitude however, essentially increases the violence against each other because we choose not to unite against it.

What we need to learn from this week is that violence in its many forms affects all of us and we all need to be concerned about it.

More men need to show up to the Take Back the Night March to show solidarity and concern over the incidences of violence and rape women confront each day.

EDITORIAL

More White and heterosexual people need to show up to the brown bag, hate crime discussion. Although it affects people of color, non-Christians and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people the most, it is not just these groups' issue.

Violence, no matter at whom it is directed, is a human issue. As humans, we all need to be concerned about it.

More men should participate in the Clothesline Project. It is not only women who know females who have been victims of violence.

The GLBA also has events, especially the brown bag discussions, that both the queer community and the heterosexual community can benefit from. Stereotypes need to be set aside in order to learn from these events. The more viewpoints that are heard, the better each side will understand its position.

The problem with violence is rooted in our inability to communicate and to stand up for issues that do not affect us directly.

Go to these events, ask questions and listen to others. Start a dialogue and continue the talk after this week.

Plan on making each week a week without violence.

Doonesbury



BY GARRY TRUDEAU

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