

SURVEYING THE BATTLEFIELD

A few years ago, I was analyzing the last 30+ years through which I have lived while preparing a talk on youth violence. I quickly jotted down some of the lies that I, and most of us, have been affected by and that still dominate today's American culture. Through us, our young people have been affected to a significant degree.

1. God, if he is considered to even exist, is irrelevant to everyday life of most people.
2. There are no absolutes; everything is relative.
3. Right is what I say it is.
4. My rights come first.
5. Authority is repressive and must be attacked (the 1968 Chicago riots).
6. Freedom is an absolute right (Woodstock).
7. Personal responsibility is passe.
8. If I don't break any laws, it is not immoral (Dr. Kavorkian, Al Gore, Bill Clinton argument).
9. The "System" is the problem.
10. Sex is free – anyway I want it.
11. Commitment is unimportant (Live-in and transitory relationships; Rent-a-spouse).
12. Fathers can beget and then forget their kids. Over 50% do.
13. Life is cheap. ("Abort it." "Mercy-kill" it through Physician-assisted suicides or otherwise).
14. Children are a bother. (They restrict our freedom and lifestyle and careers).
15. I have a right to prevent life from being created through pills, creams, IUD's, condoms, and operations.
16. A fetus is just an intrusive blob of tissue that can be gotten rid of at will and for any reason. (If this is true *before* birth, what makes it any different *after* birth).
17. People are expendable (They have a "right" to "die with dignity").
18. I can have it all. (So say the beer commercials and other advertising).
19. Life is meaningless. Suicide is a "solution" (So sing the Rock stars). Suicide is now the third leading cause of death among adolescents, after accidents and homicides (Blumenthal, 1990).
20. Parental discipline is defined as child abuse and violence (Justice and Justice, 1990).
21. Lawsuits and violence are the ways to resolve conflicts and grievances.

Here are some of the consequences of those lies:

- According to official statistics, approximately 22,500 murders were committed in 1992, as well as 109,062 rapes, 1,126,974 aggravated assaults, and 672,470 robberies (Uniform Crime Report, 1993). Over 68% of the homicides reported in 1992 were committed by people using firearms; over 80% of those homicides involved handguns.
- There are over 3 million cohabitating couples in the United States. Cohabitation has been increasing at a rate of about 15% a year for the past decade or more

- According to one study, young, married, childless couples were found to be the happiest of all marital-status groups. Childless marriages were seen to be less stressed and emotionally satisfying. Many young wives do not regard childbearing as necessary to a woman's role (Campbell, 1975)
- Almost 68% of American women with children under 18 work outside the home (Statistical Abstract, 1993)
- When the wives work out of necessity, marital happiness suffers (Orden & Bradburn, 1970).
- As women gain greater economic freedom and independence, couples are more likely to end an unhappy marriage
- A significant proportion of men have found it too hard to adjust to the demand for greater equality or to find wives with more traditional views. Instead, they are choosing to avoid lasting relationships in favor of the single life (Gerson, 1993).
- America's divorce rate is the highest in the world.
- One out of every two marriages ends in divorce; 67% of all second marriages end in divorce (Bureau of Census).
- Every 30 seconds, a child's parents divorce (National Center for Health Statistics). Among first marriages, 43% break up within 15 years, about 60% of divorcing couples have kids, and about 1 million children every year experience the divorce of their parents.
- Twenty-four million U.S. children (34% of the total) live in homes without their biological fathers.
- Nearly 20 million children (27%) live in single-parent homes.
- In the year 2000 alone, 1.35 million births (33%) took place out of wedlock.
- About 40% of children living in father-absent homes have not seen their fathers in the past year.
- Children without contact with their biological fathers are on average 2 to 3 times more likely to be poor, use drugs, have educational, health, emotional and behavioral problems, be victims of child abuse, and engage in criminal behavior than are children living with their married, biological and adoptive parents.
- This trend is partially responsible for the significant increase in the proportional female-headed and single-person households in the population.
- 50% of the divorced mothers never receive any child support; 60-80% of the others receive some as ordered.
- One-half of all single mothers are living in poverty; 70% are black; 53% of the whites are Hispanic (Bureau of Census)
- 90% of divorced mothers have custody of their children.
- Single-mothers support up to four children on an annual after-tax income of \$12,200.
- The biggest single event that takes them out of poverty is remarriage; marriage = economic arrangement, not necessarily a loving relationship.
- Welfare resources such as AFDC are drained by ineffectual restructuring processes.

- Divorce and desertion are the leading causes of dependence on welfare.
- 60% of all cases in court are domestic relations or domestic relations derived; 25% of judicial time is allotted to these. Each year, between 2,400 and 4,000 are beaten to death by their spouses, and 25% of all female suicides are preceded by a history of battering (Reid, 1991). Between 30% and 40% of the time, a man who abuses his wife also abuses his children (Erlinger, 1987).
- In one study, 65% of abused partners were in live-in (cohabitating) situations; 19% were in traditional marriages.

What is the impact on children?

- 1.1 million children are affected annually by divorce (House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, 1987). An estimated 86% of black children and 42% of white children will spend some time in a mother-only or other single-parent household (Bumpass, 1984)
- Ongoing parental conflict is associated with poorer school performance, lower grades, less social competence than peers, more behavioral problems at school, and perceptions of being less intelligent and popular than their classmates (House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families - Dr. Neil Kalter).
- Children of divorce are 5 times more likely to be suspended from school, 3 times as likely to need psychological counseling, 2 times as likely to repeat a grade. Children from single-parent families are absent from school more, late to school more often, and show more health problems (Dr. Gene Brody, Study of Competence in Children and Families).
- Divorce is the major etiological or causal factor in child physical and sexual abuse and neglect.
- 50% or more of non-custodial parents disappear from their child's life (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development).
- 75% of adolescent patients at chemical abuse centers are from single-parent families (Centers for Disease Control, Atlanta, Georgia).
- Every 78 seconds, a child attempts suicide; every 90 minutes, one succeeds (National Center for Health Statistics). Although successful suicide is more common in males than in females, more females attempt suicide (Centers for Disease Control, 1990).
- Every 31 seconds, an adolescent becomes pregnant (National Center for Health Statistics). Teenage women make up about 25% of the population of childbearing age, yet they account for over 45% of all illegitimate births.
- 70% of teenage pregnancies are single-parent children (Children In Need: Committee for Economic Development).
- 3 out of 5 juveniles in youth correctional facilities are from single-parent families (Bureau of Juvenile Statistics, 1988). 50% of children on probation are children of divorce.

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The real enemy of America is not among us from terrorism but within us from Godlessness.