



"If you want to do something positive for your children, work to improve your marriage."

—Anonymous

21-Sep-07

The Real Solution to Baggy Pants

A few months ago, as my wife and I were bustling through a local Wal-Mart on our weekly shopping "date," we came across a trio of young men slouching their way down a main aisle. They were walking three abreast at turtle-time, attempting to look hip and tough, bored with [the world](#) but too cool to care. Beyond their attitude, what was attracting attention was that all three of them—in order to walk at all—had to have a firm grip with one or both hands on their pants! They were sporting oversized jeans-shorts, but they might as well have been long pants for as low as these three were wearing them. Yes, it was a baggy-pants sighting. We were lucky—if that is the word—that we were not witnesses to any indecent exposure.

Similar baggy-pants sightings have been happening for some time throughout America. It is primarily an "urban" fashion statement, supposedly an exaggeration of belt-less prison pants endorsed by hip-hop and rap artists, a rebellious sneer at societal conventions. Baggy pants are the latest in a long line of avant-garde clothing styles among young people breaking from the mores and standards of their parents and trying to carve out their own identity. They are modern versions of grunge, punk, mod, hippie, beat, and other youth clothing trends over the past fifty years, as it seems that every

new crop of teens feels it must test the culture's boundaries. Remember bell-bottoms and halter-tops?

Let me go on record as saying that the baggy-pants phenomenon is ridiculous. It not only looks stupid, but it may also pose a safety hazard should any baggy-pants wearing youth need to move faster than a slow crawl. One slip from the grip, and a face-plant on the sidewalk is a real possibility. Of course, there is also the problem of indecent exposure.

To combat this trend, several communities—from Atlanta to Charlotte to Dallas to Trenton—have enacted or proposed bans on baggy or saggy pants. These saggy-baggy laws usually mandate a modest fine, but on the extreme end, the Delcambre, Louisiana, "bare-your-britches" law comes with a fine of \$500 or six months in jail for the public exposure of underwear. The American Civil Liberties Union is fighting these local ordinances, saying that they are racially discriminatory, targeting only young black males. CNN reports one hip-hop clothing shop owner asking, "Are they going to go after construction workers and plumbers, because their pants sag too? They're stereotyping us."

One problem with this argument is that these laws are primarily proposed and endorsed by black lawmakers, preachers, and community groups concerned about both the public image of African-Americans and the trajectory of a generation of black men. The Trenton, New Jersey, law still being drafted not only assesses a fine, but the offender must also undergo evaluation and counseling regarding the direction of his life. Turning the racial bias argument on its head, some proponents argue that the wearing of baggy pants automatically stereotypes a young man as a shiftless rebel, causing employers not to hire him, and thus aggravating the problem. In addition, the fad has crossed over into general youth culture, so it is not a single-race issue.

Even so, the baggy-pants problem is most critical in the black community. Obviously, politicians and community leaders want to provide a solution to the dilemma—or at least to be seen trying to do something. What is frustrating—and oh-so-typical these days—is that their first spasmodic reaction is to propose, draft, and enact a law to cover the specific infraction that they do not like. Every community in America, however, has at least

two ordinances on their books to deal with baggy-pants offenders: indecent exposure and disorderly conduct. These laws are usually vague enough to be used to deal with most situations of nudity or partial nudity and the public reaction to it. They just need to be enforced.

When problems like this arise, we are often quick to cry, "Where are the parents?" Truly, parents are a society's first line of defense in shaping a productive and moral next generation of citizens. It is unfortunate that, in this case, too many urban black families are single-parent households, and the only parent is almost always the mother. By the time her young son reaches his mid-teens, unless she has made extraordinary efforts, he is more likely to conform to his peers than to his mom's advice and desires for his success. It is a terribly sad state of affairs. (See Kay S. Hymowitz, "[The Black Family: 40 Years of Lies](#)," *City Journal*, Summer 2005.)

In this parental near-vacuum, other members of the black community have tried to pick up the slack. Mostly, it has been left-leaning black activist groups that have led the charge, advocating well-known socialist policies like Affirmative Action. Yet, after two generations of political agitation to level the playing field for minorities, family conditions, the root of the problem, have worsened. Churches and their pastors have entered the fray as well, but overall, their impact has been limited. It is a tragic, seemingly hopeless situation.

The solution is not more laws, not more activism, not more money for social programs. The answer is a commitment to marriage. Noted economists Walter E. Williams and Thomas Sowell and others regularly preach that the secret to staying out of poverty in America is three-fold: 1) Graduate from high school; 2) get a job and keep it; and 3) get married and stay married. The last point not only provides personal stability, but it also ensures that the next generation grows up in a stable and hopefully loving environment. Statistics consistently show that the two-parent family makes the best platform for continued and increasing success of children of all ethnicities. The solution really is that simple, though it does take time and effort.

It is for reasons like this that the first institution that [God](#) created for humanity was marriage, even before creating the [Sabbath](#) (He ordained marriage on the sixth day, the Sabbath on the seventh; compare [Genesis 1:27](#)

; [2:2-3](#), 18-24). As God said in the Garden of Eden, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him" ([Genesis 2:18](#)). Human beings were made to live in committed, divinely joined pairs, not just for reproductive reasons, but also for deep relational and social reasons. When the institution of marriage breaks down, the whole society begins to crack and crumble.

Baggy pants are just a sign of this breakdown. So, the secret to hitching up our youths' pants is—pardon the pun—getting hitched.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Choosing to Have a Good Relationship](#)

by Martin G. Collins

The Bible emphasizes marriage as the primary bond of society. The purpose for the marriage relationship is to depict the metaphorical marriage of Christ and His bride (the collective members of His affianced church). Ancient Israel violated this betrothal contract, embracing pagan idolatry, the metaphorical equivalent of spiritual adultery. Using a five point outline, derived from Len Wood in his book, "Tough Choices" [on marriage], Martin Collins, using abundant scriptural examples, gives us a formula for keeping our relationship with Christ chaste by making choices: 1. to be committed for better or worse, 2. to speak or not to speak, 3. to make our house a home, 4. to marry the whole family, 5. to live in love, 6. to stay till death do us part.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[The Seventh Commandment \(1997\)](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

For the past 40 years sexual sins have topped the list of social issues in America. Divorce is at an all-time high. John Ritenbaugh examines the

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seventh commandment, the penalties paid for breaking it and how to become faithful to God in the keeping of it.

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