

Disintegrating Families, Disintegrating Culture

The root of our cultural rot can be traced back to one place: the shift away from nuclear families. [Arnold Ahlert](#) · Oct. 25, 2018



In [recent columns](#), this writer has sought to address the root causes of the nation's increasing polarization. One of the foremost of those is an education system that turns out generations of weak-thinking Americans whose command of the nation's founding documents, civic structures, and historical foundations is virtually nonexistent — even as those same Americans are well-schooled in the nation's shortcomings. If this effort is allowed to continue, our status as a constitutional republic and what is often referred to as the world's "last best hope for mankind" is seriously threatened. Nationally televised congressional hearings would be a great way to begin shedding light on a contemptible dynamic that can no longer be blamed on incompetence. It is nothing less than a concerted and coordinated effort to "fundamentally transform" the nation, and it must be exposed.

Yet there can be no mistaking the reality that the devolution of our education system has root causes as well. The failure factories otherwise known as public schools created — and nurtured — by the Democrat Education Complex are far easier to maintain in a disintegrating culture. There is a level of legitimacy in the all-too-familiar teachers' lament that some children are "unteachable," and that assertion is almost invariably accompanied by the reason for it: Most of these children live in circumstances that could be charitably described as "chaotic" at best — and wholly removed from anything resembling civilized norms at worst.

How did we get to *that* place? Before the emergence of LBJ's Great Society, [Aid to Families with Dependent Children](#) (AFDC) was reserved for widows, as a means of funding once-married women who had lost the primary male supporter of the family. In the 1960s, Johnson and Congress [changed](#) the qualifications: Any household where there was no male family head present became eligible for taxpayer subsidies. The late Patrick Moynihan [predicted](#) the [calamity](#) that would follow, especially among blacks, where the out-of-wedlock birth rate has now [reached](#) 77%, and single-parent families are mostly headed by women. Moynihan was criticized for being racist, and for assuming middle class values "are the correct values for everyone in America," as civil rights leader Floyd McKissick asserted at the time. Middle class values? In 1963, more than 90% of all American babies had married parents. A UN [report](#) released last week reveals the overall number of American births occurring out of wedlock has now reached 40%. The [numbers](#) for the Millennial generation are even worse: A whopping 57% of parents ages 26 to 31 are having children without getting married. Bloomberg News [characterized](#) the UN report as a "cultural shift." A cultural calamity is more like it.

Nonetheless, Americans are supposed to be encouraged by the fact that these births are occurring predominantly among unmarried couples living together, as opposed to single mothers. Moreover, the nation's fertility rate, which reached a 30-year low last year, "would be much steeper if women weren't having children outside marriage," states John Santelli, a professor in population, family health, and

pediatrics at Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health. "The trend will continue, there's no doubt about it," he adds. "We can't go back to [the] '50s." "The '50s" is a term currently used by progressives to belittle the nation's cultural values, and no one [demonstrated](#) that better than students responding to two law professors who took Americans to task for abandoning them, including the idea that one should get "married before you have children and strive to stay married for their sake." The students asserted those values "stem from the very same malignant logic of hetero-patriarchal, class-based, white supremacy that plagues our country today," and are "steeped in anti-blackness and white hetero-patriarchal respectability, i.e. two-hetero-parent homes."

In other words, getting married and staying married is racist, homophobic, and elitist. Columnist Joseph Misulonas is also [on board](#) with the current trend. "So don't feel bad if you get pregnant out of wedlock," he writes. "You simply are representing our modern times." How are our modern times working out? According to a Brookings Institution [report](#), *two-thirds* of unmarried parents split up before their child reaches the age of 12. And according to the latest study in a series of them conducted by [agencies](#) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services approximately once each decade, children living with their biological but unmarried parents are *four times* as likely to be physically, sexually, or emotionally abused than children living with married parents.

It doesn't get more "modern" than that. And while it's easy to paper over this worrisome trend with the angry jargon of social justice warriors, or simply embrace it as the latest fad, there is no avoiding what's really going on: More and more Americans reject the idea of being wholly committed to a marriage and their children. It's not surprising. While marriage is a legal commitment, it is also a spiritual one, and religion has been in [decline](#) for decades. We also live in an age where technology [abets](#) increasing levels of social dysfunction in a nation where millions of Americans now prefer social-media connections to physical interaction. Add [identity politics](#) to the mix, and it gets pretty tough for "toxic," "[privileged](#)," or "[unnecessary](#)" males to interact with women who are [alternately](#) "survivors" or "empowered" — all while the specter of violating the ever-expanding demands of political correctness hang heavy in the air.

Furthermore, if one can remain noncommittal with regard to two of life's most important decisions, that casual indifference will not be quarantined from other aspects of one's life. Perhaps that's why it's been so easy to convince millions of Americans that nonjudgmentalism, which posits that believing one value is superior to another is the equivalent of bigotry, is a superior way of thinking. Perhaps it's why [record numbers](#) of Millennials are living at home, or why 60 million abortions have been [performed](#) since 1973.

In short, the "easy way out" has never been easier.

Even more troubling (and indicative), when the important is trivialized, the trivial becomes important. Thus, we have a nation where Hollywood celebrities [wax indignant](#) about Disney cartoon princesses, college students demand "[safe spaces](#)" and courses free from "micro aggressions," white *milk* is [called](#) a symbol of white supremacy, and a semipermanent [state](#) of hate and hysteria becomes a lifestyle choice.

A choice that allows one to [completely dismiss](#) millions of one's fellow Americans as "deplorables" who "[cling](#)" to guns, God, and religion.

What millions of Americans are clinging to are the values that made this nation exceptional, and nothing forms the bedrock of that exceptionalism better than an intact nuclear family. A nation that dismisses it as just another "lifestyle choice" does so at its peril. There is nothing remotely "modern" about abandoning marriage, or "allowing a village" to raise one's children. That such a proposition can be even be considered indicates we are a society besieged by toxic levels of self-centeredness and irresponsibility.

When children and marriage are essentially disposable, so is everything else