American Culture Under the Knife and Hose

Michael Kniss

Liposuction is the rather gruesome process of removing excess (unwanted) fat from the human body. It also appears to be excep-
tionally appealing procedure to people that do not usually enjoy thinking about the actual process when it is over, and a person is left with a more beautiful figure, they do not have the sudden urge to pon-
der over what was taken from them, how it was done, and where it all went. They are mere-
ly concerned with their newly found "perfection."

America is a society con-
stantly under the knife and hose of liposuction. A gorgeous metaphor, don’t you think? I guess we are treating other cultures as unwant-
ed fat a little too barbarically, but it is not that far from the truth.

How many of us can say that we truly value the important cul-
ture of slum America? To the majority of Americans, ghettos are places of danger, fighting poverty, "base-culture" and "ignorant minorities."

We fail to see the family in the 26th floor apartment of the high-rise hous-
ing project that is fighting to sur-
vive on the minimal welfare offered by the government. This family may well be composed of better Christian and stronger peo-
ple than most of us.

There are networks of peace, protection, and education (perhaps not quantum mechanics, but at least knowl-
edge of how to survive in a prej-
suded world), in the 26th floor of the ghetto. It is not a war zone, but a community, struggling to survive within poverty.

What do we not fail to see is the value of the real estate that these buildings are resting on. The infamous Cabrini Green in Chicago has been bás-
appeared and other projects on the west and south sides of the city are condemned to follow. Chicago is not a unique example; big cities across the nation are doing likewise. What is the moti-
vation? In the case of Cabrini Green, the projects occupied the land just north of downtown that was waiting to be developed into an aristocratic neighborhood full of million-dollar mansions.

The justification for this "humanitarian gentrification" is that housing projects are bastions of concentrated poverty, drug dens, and dense pockets of crime, drugs, unemployment and dis-
ter. This is an integral part of our American culture. There is nothing all true and it is a convincing rationalization. What if we were to ask, however, what ever happened to these people will go. With the destruction of 30 - 40 high rises, how many people will become homeless? Is this really the best solution? I think not.

The same metaphor of lipo-
suction can be applied to immi-
gation. Every year there are thou-
ousands of immigrants flock to American soil, some legal, some not. These immigrants are imme-
diately looked down upon for not being American, not speaking English, not having a job or not having a visa. Do we forget that at some point in history, our fam-
ilies were immigrants? Why do we choose to ignore this as well?

Modern immigrants are searching for the "American Dream" that we do; the rights to life, lib-
erty and the pursuit of happiness.

Every year, America deport's countless illegal immigrants because they did not or a visa or other permission of the sort. I find it strange that a nation founded on the propositions of Freedom, Liberty and Equality of Opportunity, should deport immi-
grants that are merely trying to find a better life than they had previously. Again, America uses a little plastic surgery to rid the nation of people searching for a livable life. How inferior are we?

People, no matter how poor or "un-American," should not be treated as unwanted fat! Society is a body of diversity, all cultures contributing valuable traditions.

It is not our job to decide which cultures are good and which are bad. We should not try to get rid of every "blenmish" on our "pure" culture. Maybe not. America is a body of diversity as valuable civilization and work to improve the lives of the people's want to do what they want to do.

We are a multicultural democracy celebrating an inter-
national heritage. Let us embrace the majority of the Empire State Building and the Americaness of McDonalds alongside with the "mom and pop" Mexican restaurants. These pictures are all American and all precious. It is high time that we wake up and recognized it.

Beyond the Language Barriers

The language that we use to de-
bate is so specific to the com-
munity. And I’m talking about the Mennonite culture.

Over academic free-
dom, society and same-
sex marriages. In the last meeting, students over these issues.

I hear a lot of "I don’t understand" and I can’t believe they can say that’s. From professors I hear some "I don’t know" and from the administration and leaders of the church I hear “This is where the church stands.”

I think this language, where will a conversation lead? That is, if we ever get to the point of a conversa-
tion. Right now we’re just yelling at each other in The Weather Vane (like I’m doing right now) and talk-
ing about it over lunches, dinners and interactive meetings.

Yes, we are in a time of transi-
tion with the new Mennonite Church USA. But do we realize that a member of the church cannot have an opinion contrary to one aspect of the Mennonite confession of faith? It’s been said before, but it is worth saying again. You’d be hard-pressed to find a professor, or for that matter a student or con-
stituent, who agrees with all parts of the Mennonite confession of faith.

Why is this particular issue threat-
ening and stealing the jobs of staff and faculty on this campus, right now?

Is it about money? Will EMU lose constituents’ money because of this? Will parents not send their children to this school? More ques-
tions. Will more anachronistic courses be put on the curriculum? Will the constituents who would give more money if EMU were the institution that allowed for dialogue on these issues?

I, like a lot of people dis-
cussing this issue, would like these questions talked about (at least if they can’t be answered) and face-
less. Maybe not. We should recognize that movements made, or executive decisions declared. I just want to talk about it without some power being taken away.

As I mentioned, I, like a lot of people in the Mennonite church believe that same-sex rela-
tionships and genital contact is wrong, bad, evil. But what about 20 years from now, when we stu-
dents are the leaders of the church? What issue will be wrong then?

Students are speaking out. A petition is circulating. For more information about e-mail Roxy at allens@emu.edu or Duane Miller at millerjd@emu.edu

~s.j.v.

Michael Kniss

Beyond the Language Barriers

Roxann Allen

The language that we use to de-
bate is so specific to the com-
munity. And I’m talking about the Mennonite culture.

Over academic free-
dom, society and same-
sex marriages. In the last meeting, students over these issues.

I hear a lot of "I don’t understand" and I can’t believe they can say that’s. From professors I hear some "I don’t know" and from the administration and leaders of the church I hear “This is where the church stands.”

I think this language, where will a conversation lead? That is, if we ever get to the point of a conversa-
tion. Right now we’re just yelling at each other in The Weather Vane (like I’m doing right now) and talk-
ing about it over lunches, dinners and interactive meetings.

Yes, we are in a time of transi-
tion with the new Mennonite Church USA. But do we realize that a member of the church cannot have an opinion contrary to one aspect of the Mennonite confession of faith? It’s been said before, but it is worth saying again. You’d be hard-pressed to find a professor, or for that matter a student or con-
stituent, who agrees with all parts of the Mennonite confession of faith.

Why is this particular issue threat-
ening and stealing the jobs of staff and faculty on this campus, right now?

Is it about money? Will EMU lose constituents’ money because of this? Will parents not send their children to this school? More ques-
tions. Will more anachronistic courses be put on the curriculum? Will the constituents who would give more money if EMU were the institution that allowed for dialogue on these issues?

I, like a lot of people dis-
cussing this issue, would like these questions talked about (at least if they can’t be answered) and face-
less. Maybe not. We should recognize that movements made, or executive decisions declared. I just want to talk about it without some power being taken away.

As I mentioned, I, like a lot of people in the Mennonite church believe that same-sex rela-
tionships and genital contact is wrong, bad, evil. But what about 20 years from now, when we stu-
dents are the leaders of the church? What issue will be wrong then?

Students are speaking out. A petition is circulating. For more information about e-mail Roxy at allens@emu.edu or Duane Miller at millerjd@emu.edu