

Plain Janes are Put this in your pipe and smoke it eco-heroines

by L. Kelly
Knight Ridder Newspapers

Call it a righteous victory for all the women out there who don't primp and preen, and for the guys who believe that a five-minute shower is all they need to face the world.

Turns out, we're on the front lines of environmental defense.

An analysis released Wednesday by a team of scientists for the U.S. Geological Survey shows that a variety of chemicals from personal care products - shampoo, makeup, deodorant and such - are among the 95 "organic wastewater contaminants" found in U.S. waterways.

Sure, we no makeup types just thought we were saving time and money by not spending an hour every morning in front of the mirror with an array of foundations, concealers, highlighters, minimizers, moisturizers, powder palettes and other weapons of facial warfare.

We comb and go folks thought we were just simplifying our lives when we adopted "basic" haircuts that don't require the application of "product" - gels, shins, waxes, sculpting sprays, volumizers, mousses, thickening glues, glazes, activators or texture creams - before we can leave the house.

We accepted that others would often judge us to be lazy, ill-groomed, unaware of our beauty potential or "letting ourselves go."

Most of us never dreamed we were on the cutting edge of an "emerging" environmental issue.

You see, all those beauty products eventually get scubbed off faces and washed out of hair - and into water treatment systems that aren't designed to remove them. So the chemicals that millions of Americans put on their bodies end up in our water.

Although most of us think of solvents and other industrial wastes when we think of water pollution, the Geological Survey looked for chemicals found in PPCPs, which stands for "pharmaceuticals and personal care products."

It's becoming clear, from the new analysis published in the current issue of Environmental Science Technology and from previous studies done in Europe and Canada, that chemicals used in beauty aids are a growing concern.

Generally, we're talking about trace amounts, not rivers flowing with shower gel and mascara, but scientists are uneasy because the effects of long-term exposure and how such chemicals may interact in the wild are unclear.

While they try to sort it all out and develop better ways to remove PPCP contaminants, it would be prudent to reduce the flow. Sure, the folks who will give up their hair gel only when it's pried from their cold, dead hands vastly outnumber the shampoo-only community, but perhaps we all could use a bit less.

A headful of thick, foamy shampoo may feel luxurious, but it's just wasteful, say beauty-care experts. When you use too much shampoo, you're sending more detergents, fragrance, preservatives, humectants, thickeners, emulsifiers and conditioners down the drain needlessly.

It's also worth noting that frequent shampooing can make hair dry and unruly, which prompts many folks to turn to other products - and a whole additional slate of chemicals - to solve the problem. Better to just wash your hair a little less often; you'll create less pollution and spend less time and money on your hair, too.

The same is true of bathing and showering; there is such a thing as being too clean. Not only does the resulting dry, itchy, flaky skin prompt us to reach for moisturizers and lotions, it can make us more susceptible to irritations and infections.

By definition, PPCPs include common medications, too, such as antibiotics, hormone replacements, antidepressants and analgesics. To be honest, it's easier to focus on beauty products than treatments that measurably improve our quality of life.

Everyone can live without wrinkle cream and hair spray, though.

Can't you?

ABOUT THE WRITER

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Look, here's how it is
Guy Reschenthaler
NewsWire editor

Look, here's how it is

The other day I heard on the radio that the state of California is seriously considering raising the smoking age to 21. If one is not over the age of 21 then he/she cannot purchase or smoke cigarettes, cigars, etc. This is just down-right stupid.

Think about it. An 18, 19, or 20 year old could serve in the Armed Forces but could not smoke a cigarette if he/she is in California. It is bad enough the drinking age is 21 (that is a topic for another day) let alone that

the Golden State is considering making the smoking age 21. Every time I turn around, California is doing something moronic so normally I would not be surprised by a bad idea coming from the West Coast, but this shocked me just because it is such a bad idea.

If someone wants to smoke, let him or her smoke. Live and let live, live and let die of lung cancer—who cares? Everyone knows the risks of tobacco use. They are not my lungs, your lungs, or the state of California's lungs. So let people do what they want to do. Their body, their choice.

When making legislation it is important to look at one question: Will the law change how people behave? If the answer to the question is no and the law is passed, then one more useless law is put on the books.

If a law is so ridiculous that no one will follow it then it is not worth passing. Pennsylvania would never want to pass a law making the speed limit throughout the state 10 MPH. That would be dumb. If California

passes this law it will also be dumb because no one will follow it.

Laws cannot change how people think. That is a very important concept, so I'll repeat—laws cannot change how people think. If a teenager thinks he/she wants to smoke he/she will smoke. If someone thinks smoking is cool he/she will smoke. The government can waste all its money on enforcement, on useless TV commercials but when the day is done they will have done absolutely nothing to change public opinion about smoking.

A case in point is the drinking age. It is 21, last time I checked. Go around Bruno's and ask students under the age of 21 if they consume alcoholic beverages. Then ask them if they think it is wrong that they do. I'm willing to wager a few bones that at least 85 percent of the students under 21 drink and that close to 80 percent of them feel it is not wrong to do so.

State law states that the drinking age is 21, but most do not think it is wrong to drink. Once again—laws cannot change how people

think. If California truly passes this law—it wouldn't surprise me these people out there are off the wall—they will only find it unenforceable and waste of their time and money. In fact, raising the age under 21 will increase the "rebel" factor will add into the smoking equation. Everyone loves a rebel, thus everyone will love an under 21 smoker in California.

I don't know how dumb this idea is dumb. The law will accomplish nothing. It may be a feel good law of legislation but it won't do a thing. It's wrong for the government to regulate what people do to their own bodies, it is wrong to force men and women who are old enough to be in the service not be allowed to have a smoke. No law will change the image of a soldier. No law will change how people think.

Reschenthaler's column appears every three weeks.

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Race-baiters can forget this Texas case

by Stanley Crouch
New York Daily News

In Texas, the state where James Byrd was dragged to his death by three white men who were convicted of homicide and sentenced to death by an integrated jury, a black woman was just charged with murder.

She is accused of running into a homeless white man who got caught in the glass of her windshield, driving him home, parking her car in the garage, closing her garage door and allowing him to bleed to death as he begged her to call for help whenever she checked on his condition.

If she is found irrefutably guilty, is this Texas woman's crime different from that of James Byrd's murderers?

Sure, on one level, Byrd was lured to his death by men who had killing on their minds. There was clearly a racial subtext. The home-

less man's tragic story began as an accident and allegedly descended into astonishingly cruel treatment, followed by the woman and some friends dumping his body in a park, where the cops initially assumed he was the victim of a hit-and-run driver. Not a hit-and-carry driver.

We know, of course, that if the situation were reversed, we would see all the civil rights establishment speaking on somebody's steps somewhere in the area. We would see a march, a candlelight one if by night.

There would be loud talk about hate crimes, and someone would say predictable things about the white woman who ran that black man down and refused to call for help while he bled to death. She'd be accused of locking hands with all those white women in the past who've been central to the murders of black men. The incident would be described as an-

other example of the war against black men.

We might even see a march by the new Black Panthers announcing that homeless black men should arm themselves so that, if caught in the windshields of white women, they could shoot their way out or avenge themselves.

What we really need to do is to remember less expected kinds or responses that express our collective relationship to the threat of lethal violence.

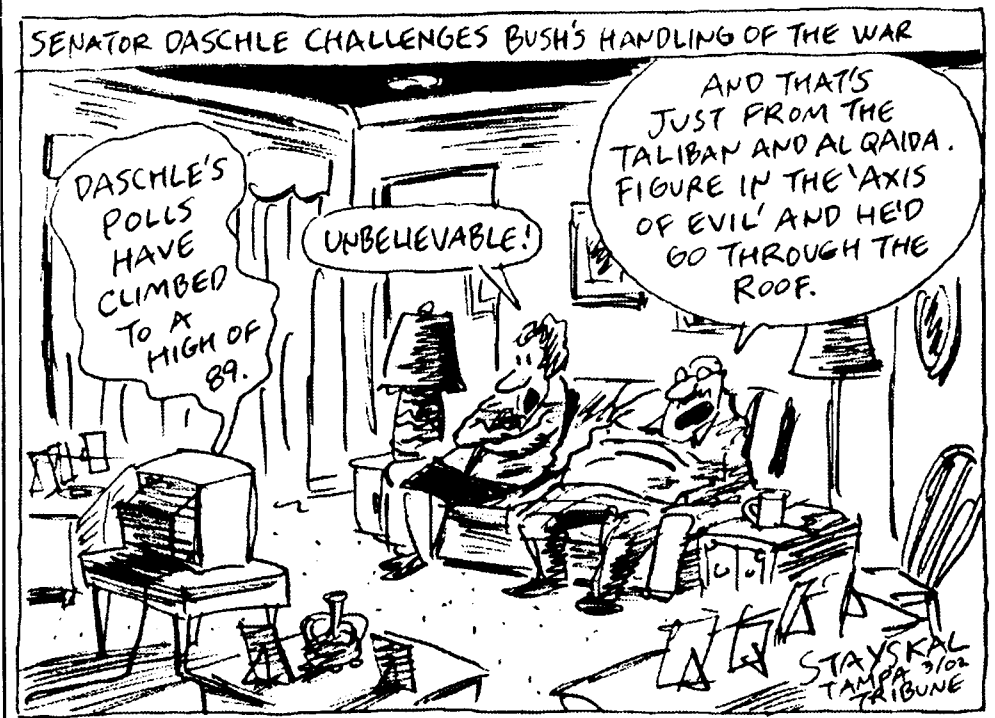
In 1989, when a gang of black and Latino teen-agers attacked a white woman who was jogging in Central Park, bashed her skull with a brick, beat her with pipes, raped her repeatedly and left her for dead with 75 percent of her blood creating red mud, the Rev. Herbert Daughtry and a number of black ministers held a daily prayer vigil for her as death tried to rock her to sleep. It was one of the most

civilized actions I have ever seen in this town.

In 1991, Tom Murphy, Teri Barnett, Bobby Green and Eric Yutley, four black men, saw on television that Ronald Denny, a white man, was being held in custody during the Los Angeles riot and they tried to get to the cops who beat him to the streets.

To all the race-baiters out there since then, think on this: The fact that Murphy, Barnett, Green and Yutley shocked and outraged as they did, their compassion and top-of-the-line concern for driving to the scene and pulling Denny not only out of the lion's den, but out of the lion's mouth.

In the case of the Texas woman, someone who allegedly ran a black man to the police after the murder of a man, supposedly was overwhelmed by the death of homeless man at a point where the civil rights leadership could have done nothing.



Lowest uncommon denominator: TV hits it

by Myriam Marquez
The Orlando Sentinel

Two trailer-trash girls duke it out on national television. We should laugh it off as just another example of American frivolity in a culture of throwaway excess. Fat and supposedly happy Americans don't take themselves too seriously. Even after the horror of Sept. 11, everything's seemingly back to "normal."

Except I'm not. The banality of what passes for normalcy in our society continues to astound even this child of pop culture and former addict of round-the-clock TV.

As a youngster, I learned rudimentary English, thanks to Lucy and Ricky and Ethel and that cheapskate husband of hers, Fred. I learned valuable economics lessons - particularly the cost of chi-chi things that were prohibitively expensive for my family - by watching "The Price is Right." Comedy shows, game shows, even soap operas helped lighten the mental load of a latchkey kid of the duck-and-cover nuclear '60s. I was not alone. American kids were glued to their TVs after school - little spuds in the making of couch-potato heaven.

They still are, but today's shows seek out the lowest uncommon denominator in our society. This hasn't happened overnight. It has taken decades to spiral uncontrollably downward, and every time I think there's no other place to go but up, another pathetic show or two or three drags us down.

Last week's new low in TV viewing may have caught my attention because I just had returned from traveling to a country where two government-run channels are the Cuban people's only choices. Given dozens of choices here at any given hour, what do Americans settle for?

Celebrities with little box-office flair (a Backstreet Boy among them) letting bugs, worms and snakes crawl over them in NBC's "Fear Factor."

On TNN's "Fame for 15" we were treated to short biographies of tangential no-names like Donato Dalrymple, the fisher guy who plucked Elian Gonzalez from the sea and then held tight till the bitter end, and Divine Brown, the Los Angeles streetwalker who latched on to Brit star Hugh Grant for her 15 minutes and then some.

But the absolute talk of the airwaves was a match that didn't take but a couple of minutes, if that much, between two scandal-

mongering bad girls on the Fox Network's "Celebrity Boxing" show. Tonya Harding, infamous for plotting to smash skating rival Nancy Kerrigan's kneecap before the 1994 Olympics, relentlessly pounded Paula "I'm a good girl" Jones, whose sexual-harassment lawsuit against Bill Clinton led to political investigations that uncovered an intern named Monica "not" having sex with Mr. President.

Of course, Paula only wanted her good name cleared. And Clinton the scum bucket should have apologized and spared us all the humiliation of two-plus years' coverage into such boxer wars. Why care?

Clinton's a has-been. And after posing in tight jeans and for a nude magazine spread, plus getting a new nose, Paula's good name can't be murkier.

But isn't that precisely why people tune in to watch such spectacles?

Paula always could say she was being a good sport. For Thursday's match, Paula stepped in for another bad girl, "Long Island Lolita" Amy Fisher, who probably could have creamed Tonya had the parole board allowed Amy to rumble. But alas, Amy had to pretend to be nice by parole-board decree and poor Paula, who looked

like a girl who'd had a hormone pumped hen running to the offense Tonya in the ring, had to do the same thing just one more time.

The new girl who has been hopping one another in the ring, Todd Bridges (the troublemaker), Ed Willis of "Different Strokes" and forgotten rapper Vanilla Ice. "The Pointed Fingers" Danny Bonaduce bopped Bill Williams of "The Brady Bunch."

It was all so much good fun, to provoke a laugh or two. Another time perhaps I would have caught a few giggles with the family, but I had my eyes about the late-night news on Americana and that would have been that. Hard to imagine it would get any better, but it will. History has taught us that Rome burned. The New York World Trade Center towers crumbled. And TV is still not cheap thrills.

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