

CELEBRITY'S NUDITY AND NUDIST LIFESTYLE: THE ANCIENT REALITY AND MODERN CONTROVERSIES

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ABSTRACT

Many have expressed concern over the trending nudity and nudist lifestyle among celebrities; even in conservative African settings. Others have argued otherwise, stating that this trend should not be evaluated in isolation as nudity is first of all, a natural phenomenon that has prevailed throughout most of mankind's existence. This review therefore, highlights the trend, the misconceptions and the associated conflicts shaping the seeming classical twist in human history and the attendant contradictions in Human Anthropology. In addition, it illustrates the socio-cultural consequences of offensive dressing and wondered what could explain this modern-day craving for nudity in a manner that sharply contrasts man's desire to cover the body in ancient times. Despite the divide however, the crux of the argument remains the fact that dress choice-decision making must not fail to reflect germane religious and cultural identity and must not also sacrifice overall decency and moral sanity on the alter of naturism, human right and the so-called 'social freedom'.

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INTRODUCTION

Nudism and nudist lifestyle have remained a highly contestable and controversial issue between proponents of the so-called 'social freedom' and those of decency, modesty, morality and human integrity. Some have even considered nudism and nudist life style as a response to appearing different and that the dominant idea that clothing is necessary for reasons of modesty is simply a cultural assumption since nudists accept the human body as natural, rather than as a source of embarrassment.

Despite the contestations, many have expressed sincere concerns about the growing trend of nudity among celebrities. Some argues however, that this trend should not be evaluated in isolation as many may be unaware that nudity is a normal phenomenon that has prevailed throughout most of mankind's existence and anything from complete nakedness to casual body covering was a lifestyle component from pre-historic times (Goodson, 2014).

This review therefore, highlights the trend, the misconceptions and the associated conflicts shaping this seeming classical twist in human history and the attendant contradictions in Human Anthropology.

THE CLASSICAL TWIST

Documented bible history affirms that man was created naked (Gen. 2:25; Gen. 3:7-21) and that until Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden, they had no clothing and were not ashamed due to their ignorance of being naked. However after they ate the forbidden fruit, they lost that state of ignorance and became ashamed. Excerpts of Gen 3: 6-7; 21 reads as follows (NKJV, 1982):

"...she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves covering. ... Also for Adam and his wife, the Lord God made tunics of skin and clothed them"

This biblical account further attests to the fact that human nudity is a historical fact and that man's discovery of his nudity stimulated his desire for body coverings. In other words, it is obvious that man in the early ages saw a need to cover specific parts of the body despite the limitations of that era.



Fig 1: Showing comparison between ancient and modern day forms of nudity. Note the stunning similarity (tagged A and B) between the use of leaves and fabric to cover the body parts.

THE CONTRADICTIONS/ MISCONCEPTIONS

In the words of Hansen (2004), anthropologists are inspired by interdisciplinary scholarship on textiles and dress, dress/costume history, design/art history, and social and economic history. It is also a well known fact that nothing human is alien to anthropology and historical transitions in clothing patterns remain a major aspect of human history. In the same vein, social nudity can be said to be part of a long historical tradition that was commonplace in the ancient Greek civilization and accepted in pre-medieval (circa 6th century) society, especially in places like Great Britain. However, if nudity in ancient times strongly reflects the technologies that these people mastered, why then go back to strap-clothing in this era of cutting edge technology.

Similarly, Hansen (2004) highlighted the opinions suggesting that clothing itself is neither moral nor immoral as others opined that is not necessarily rude to be nude. Shockingly, some have even suggested

that there is a link between clothing and increased susceptibility to bites and stings by animals and that clothing fashion throughout history, especially for women, often damage their physical and psychological health. Surely, the perceptions about nudity vary among individuals and societies.

It will interest you to know that up till this day various remote areas around the world have ancient tribes with populations that do not wear clothes. A good example is the Koma people of Adamawa State in Nigeria, who have been hiding in their mountainous habitat but their existence came to light in 1986. The women use leaves to cover their private parts while the men wore animal skins; with the children playing about roughly 'butt-naked'. Decades after this discovery, there are still a handful of such mountain dwelling tribes going about naked or nearly naked in broad day light. Some even go about their different occupations in their state of semi-nudity (Tkbesb, 2014).

SOCIO-CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS

As the saying goes, what goes around comes around. It is rather interesting that the nakedness of the ancient times seem to have been reenacted by the so-called 'celebrity nude fashion trend'. Well known celebrities now appear naked in the full glare of cameras and the viewing world; all in the name of fashion. Unfortunately, their roles in the entertainment world make them role models and in this regard, their fans copy their way of life. Consequent upon this, clothing and dress pattern is headed back to the time of Adam and Eve; with a lot of young people craving for absolute nudity.



Fig 2: A celebrity attending a music award ceremony depicting modern day form of nudity

THE ARGUMENT

One should however not be quick to judge and conclude that nudity is an act of immorality, but we must take a step back and remember that decency only starts from what you wear but doesn't really portray total morality. On the contrary, modern laws of decency do tag people going about exposing their body as offensive nudists. Of greater interest, is the fact that covering the body parts is not sufficient for

morality as those who dress 'offensively' may have different reasons ranging from the hot weather, or simply adorning themselves with what makes them draw attention or feel good and comfortable. It might therefore be unfair to classify everyone as being immoral when each individual might have different reasons for their actions.

Obviously, the world at large is turning around as dress code has become a controversial issue. Despite the saying "Dress the way you want to be addressed", youths are no longer interested about the impression their mode of dressing leaves in the minds of the public; so long as they are satisfied with their looks. They believe that whatever they are wearing does not



Fig 3: A young Guinea Bissau lady depicting the ancient form nudity

really indicate their moral status. Immorality of course, does not only have to do with one's mode of dressing but in one way or the other, have a role to play in it. Even churches are not spared as people come to church dressed almost naked; not considering the fact that the church is a place of worship and not a party or a fashion parade ground.

On the other hand, one's culture may have a role to play in decent dressing. We get to see the Muslim

women all covered up with their Hijab. They dress to cover their body as a sign of decency; believing that their body is not meant for the public.

Decency entails conforming to the generally accepted standards of respectable or moral behavior with care wearing enough clothes not to embarrass the public or be embarrassed. It is much more proper to cover precious body parts, as they are not meant for public display. Indeed, one's outward appearance is a visible and a silent proof of character (Riggs, 2009; Keywo, 2014).

Conclusively, Irrespective of the divide –claims and counter claims, the crux of the argument remains the fact that dress choice-decision making must not fail to reflect germane religious and cultural identity and must not also sacrifice overall decency and moral sanity on the altar of naturism, human right and social freedom.

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