

NUDISM

FROM THE VOLLEYBALL NET TO THE INTERNET



I WAS BORN NUDE, and unless you popped out of your mama's snatch wearing a tuxedo, you were born nude, too. But they wrapped up our naked infant bodies pretty quick, and in the end, they'll likely bury us in clothes.

As a kid of around three or four, I'd sometimes do a little dance after getting out of the shower before getting dressed.

I called my dance "The Nude Dance," and it consisted of a basic two-step with my arms swinging back and forth in front of my wee naked frame. Amused by my naked jig's gleeful innocence, my teenaged brother even wrote a song called "Do the Nude," whose lyrics consisted entirely of the mantra "Do the nude, and a-do the nude" repeated while I danced. Even my parents were amused by my Nude Dance, because I was obviously too young to realize people shouldn't be nude at all, much less *dance* about it.

I grew up fascinated by cheesy nudist culture in the 1970s, dovetailing as it did with long-gone trash-sex phenomena such as streaking (running nude in public—sort of a form of nudist terrorism), wife-swappin' swingers, and male "flashers" in trenchcoats (what the hell happened to *them*?).

As an adult, I've been publicly naked at an all-male health club in Stockholm (keep your wisecracks to yourself), a nude beach in Copenhagen, and sundry "clothing-optional" hot springs across the American West. When coworkers weren't around, I've even had occasion to trudge through the *Exotic* office naked as a porn-peddlin' jaybird. Unless it's too cold, I always sleep naked and spend much of the time in my apartment without one thread of evil textiles to cover my pink skin. I often lift weights nude while looking at myself in the mirror. For lucky naked partners, I will even sometimes perform my hilarious "penis dance," and a good time is had by all.

BUT IT'S TOUGH BEING NUDE in a world where everyone wears clothes. Everyone who's "civilized," at least.

Clothing. You either wear it or you don't. Clothes change everything. Clothes are so anthropologically important, it's silly. Clothing is a social dividing line almost as all-encompassing as gender. More social significance is accorded clothing than just about any other material item. So many invisible walls fall to the ground along with one's clothes. We attach so much absurd importance to clothing to the point where we've convinced ourselves that nudity, rather than clothing, is what's unnatural or deviant.



Nudity. So simple and yet so powerful. The naked body, when revealed, is both more and less than what we had imagined. So much hinges on its suppression. If the world were to suddenly turn all-nude, catastrophic social meltdowns would result. Clothing, since it cages our sexuality, is essential to our idea of being civilized. God may not have always told us that nudity is bad, but the King does. He always does. He needs us to quit fuckin' around, get dressed, and start building the roads.

But mandatory social clothing has only been a very recent blip in human development. It has existed for less than one percent of the entire timespan of the slapstick comedy called Humans on Earth. It wasn't until the loom was invented in China about 6,000 years ago that clothing became an option. Until then, the whole world was a nudist colony.

Nearly all cultures of antiquity, and many world cultures today, practiced public nudism. Most pagan societies incorporated nudity into their rituals. The ancient Egyptians walked around nude, as did as the Greeks, especially in their homoerotic-by-inference nude sporting spectacles. The Greeks were even known to WAGE WAR in the nude. The Roman public baths were all-nude, as were many European public baths throughout the Middle Ages. European families often slept in the same bed naked.

Ferocious, repressive anti-nudity sentiments grew as Protestantism took hold throughout Europe, culminating in the Victorian Age, when people didn't even talk about body parts in mixed company. Even piano legs were often required to be covered, lest they suggest the shamefully seductive female leg.

ALTHOUGH THE PRECISE MEANING ELUDES ME at the moment, there is surely great significance in the fact that the country which invented the modern nudist camp also invented the modern concentration camp.

In 1903, a German named Richard Ungewitter published a 104-page treatise extolling the virtues of mixed-gender public nudity. The same year, inspired by Ungewitter's book, Paul Zimmermann opened *Freilichtpark* (Free Light Park) in Lubeck, Germany. Considered the world's first modern nudist camp, the park remained in operation until 1981. Faithful to Teutonic control-freak tendencies, the park's overlords dictated ironclad laws for its members. Meat was forbidden. So were cigarettes and alcohol. All park guests were required to wake up early and undergo two rigorous hours of exercise under an instructor's whip.

Germans referred to the nudist lifestyle as "Free Body Culture." The nudist meme proved infectious, and 20 years later, experts reckoned that 50,000 Krauts were practicing a lifestyle which included marching around naked at least some of the time.

In 1929, a German nudist named Kurt Barthel immigrated to these shores and founded the American League for Physical Culture, whose purpose was to spread the nudist Gospel. Nudist colonies emerged across America in the early 1930s, aided by the 1933 formation of The National Nudist Conference, which later changed its name to the American Sunbathing Association. By the mid-1930s, there were an estimated 80 nudist colonies in America, some of which are still operating. Camps such as the "Sea Island Sanctuary" (founded on Cat Island off South Carolina's coast in 1932) and "Sunshine Park" (established by a Baptist minister in New Jersey in 1935) practiced a cooperative lifestyle with vegetarian diets and lotsa nude sports. But despite nudism's utopian/egalitarian pretensions, membership in many early camps was only within reach of the wealthy.

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LIFESTYLES OF THE NUDE 'n' FAMOUS

Proponents of social nudism, eager to prove that their lifestyle is not solely the domain of utopian cuckoo birds and shady-minded swingers, point to a strong historical tradition of nudism among the famous and powerful.

They reach nakedly back toward antiquity and point to pro-nudist sentiments expressed by classical giants such as **Plato** and **Thucydides**, the latter of whom argued that nudism elevated the Greeks above the fur-clad barbarians.

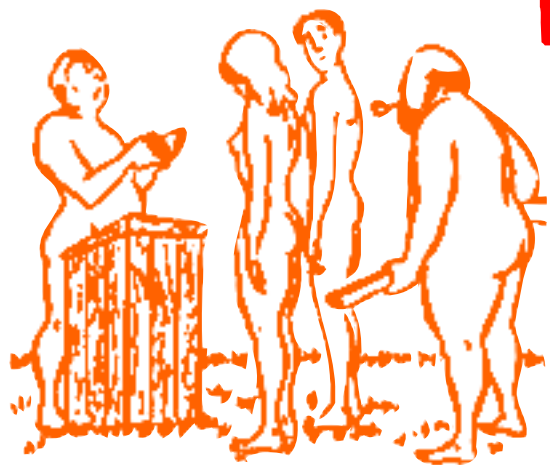
They cite favorable comments and glowing reminiscences of bein' nude amid the work of fruity Jersey poet **Walt Whitman**...Italian ceiling-painter **Michelangelo**...self-absorbed Frenchman **Jean-Jacques Rousseau**...pious back-to-nature goober **Henry David Thoreau**...insufferable playwrights **George Bernard Shaw** and **Eugene O'Neill**...and obsessed-with-giant-white-things novelist **Herman Melville**. They note that throughout **Mark Twain's** *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, considered by many to be the greatest novel written in English, Huck and Nigger Jim [hey, pipe down, that's what TWAIn called him, not me!] raft down the mighty Mississippi' buck-naked, and nobody has a problem with it. They say that even one-man kiddie-book factory **Dr. Seuss** was a practicing nudist who published positive comments about his so-called "naturist" lifestyle.

Many influential American politicians practiced a nudist lifestyle. **Benjamin Franklin**, one of our country's Founding Fathers and a singularly unattractive man, took daily naked "air baths." **John Quincy Adams** was said to have taken a swim sans clothes in the Potomac every day while he was president. **Theodore Roosevelt**, also a habitual presidential skinny-dipper, once swam naked with a visiting French diplomat. *Bully!* Slain chick magnet **John F. Kennedy** is alleged to have held high-ranking meetings while naked in his bathtub and surrounded by assistants, all of whom were clothed. Jowly goat-roper **Lyndon Baines Johnson**, purportedly proud of his endowment, also would meet with his clothed subordinates while he was in the nyood. LBJ also reportedly held skinny-dipping pool parties at the White House and would frequently greet outside guests such as Frank Sinatra while defiantly unclad. Greasy morose tragic clown **Richard Nixon** was also alleged to have held White House meetings without a stitch of clothing on him. And in an intriguing meeting of the political and entertainment worlds, there is also a rumor that crazed-with-world-domination **General Douglas MacArthur** and pro-Nazi cartoon mogul **Walt Disney** once skinny-dipped together at a beach in the 1960s.

Modern celebs known to have practiced social nudism include neurotic chick singers **Alanis Morissette** and **PJ Harvey**...sun-poisoned good-timey musician **Jimmy "Cheeseburger in Paradise" Buffett**, who claims that his whole family practices nudism...superdupersupermodels **Elle MacPherson** and **Christie Brinkley**...forgettable actresses **Lynn Redgrave** and **Bridget Fonda**...and Muslim-slurring animal-rights lunatic **Brigitte Bardot**.



NUDISM

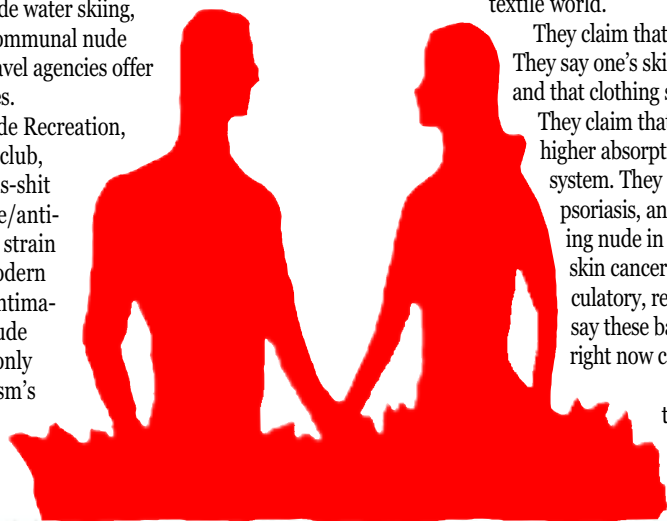


To the clothed world, the nudists might as well have been Martians. Nudist colonies faced frequent police harassment, public ridicule, and evangelical outrage. Even so, pasty white mammaries and wrinkly white penises continued to flap defiantly under the open American sun. In the 1950s, courts decided once and for all that the idea of a cloistered nudist colony harboring consenting adults was perfectly legal.

Utopian nudist-colony culture became diluted (purists would say polluted) by an unwashed influx of free-lovin', hard-druggin', mass-orgy-havin' hippie culture in the 1960s. Public nudism became increasingly sexualized, more of a vulgar mass movement than an underground folk religion. It devolved from its lofty Edenic origins, becoming a haven for seedy swingers and pedophilic predators and thrill-seekers of all stripes. The culture of nude beaches and love-ins and Woodstock and smokin' hash oil naked in redwood hot tubs invaded the pristine culture of astringent nude diets and wholesome naked family living and 500 mandatory daily nude Jumping Jacks. Essentially, the hippies murdered the first wave of American nudist colonies.

The nude establishment (yes...sigh...there really is such a thing) has struggled to resurrect American nudism from the sex 'n' drugs image that has tainted it since the '60s. High-financed, tightly regimented nudist "resorts" catering to upscale couples and families constitute the modern Acceptable Face of American Nudism. Except for the clothing policy, many of these nudist resorts are indistinguishable from high-tech health clubs. They offer nude swimming, nude ping-pong, nude water skiing, nude badminton, nude dining, and communal nude Macarena lessons. Nudist-friendly travel agencies offer nude cruises and nude travel packages.

The American Association for Nude Recreation, currently the nation's largest nudist club, claims 50,000 members. Its bland-as-shit website tries its best to portray a safe/anti-septic/desexualized/family-oriented strain of nudism, with obvious reasons. Modern Nudism equals Big Bucks, and any intimations of nude meth-pipe circles or nude mud wrestling with children would only hurt business. Entrepreneurial nudism's mouthpieces offer stats claiming that the ranks of the American Nude are growing by 20 percent yearly. They cite polls stating that



Americans are growing more tolerant of nudism.

SIDESTEPPING THE IRONY of using computers to go back to nature, nudists have taken to the World Wide Web in order to proselytize their lifestyle and network with similarly nude individuals.

From what I can gather after reading a few dozen of their websites, nudists consider the "textile world" alien to their sanctified world. They view it as a corrupted, predatory, automated, sex-hating, fascistic mainstream *Überkultur* filled with meanies, a world whose violence and neuroses and fast-food wrappers and fall from grace are all rooted in the fact that its members **AREN'T NUDE IN PUBLIC ALL THE TIME**. Nudists use the word "textile" as both a noun (*he's a dedicated textile*) and an adjective (*it's a textile beach*), and it's usually used with some level of pejorative malice. Nudists refer to the textile world's pathological tendency to wear clothes as "clothes-obsessiveness" and "clothes-compulsiveness."

These days, many of the Socially Naked tend to shun the words "nudist" and "colony" altogether. Instead, they label themselves "naturists" who congregate with "traveling clubs" or at "resorts." It's a conscious distancing measure from any sleazy/creepy/cultish associations people might attach to both the terms "nudist" and "colony." Just like San Franciscans hate it when outsiders call their city "Frisco," modern self-described "naturists" frown upon usage of the term "nudist colony," because it makes the inhabitants sound like mindless ants.

That's really too bad, and I'm sorry to have to hurt their feelings, but I just can't use the word "naturist" seriously. I don't like the way it rattles off my keyboard or rolls off my tongue. It's pretentious and not nearly as sexually suggestive, in an erotically pre-porno way, as the delicious term "nudist." I prefer to use "nudist," and I'll call those freaky nude bastards nudists whether they like it or not, fuck them *and* their stupid colonies.

Nudists defend their lifestyle with the zealotry of the folk religionists they are. They say that social nudism relieves psychological stress, and they'll show you medical studies to prove it. They'll show you another survey that proves group therapy is more effective when conducted in the nude. They'll cite statistics that say nudists are typically richer and better-educated than your average textile-wearing drone. They say that nudists, rather than being sexual deviants, are statistically less likely to commit sex crimes or incest and engage in extramarital affairs than the sickos in the textile world.

They claim that clothing is a breeding ground for bacteria. They say one's skin needs to breathe, to absorb and excrete, and that clothing subverts many of the skin's natural functions.

They claim that full-body exposure to sunshine insures a higher absorption of Vitamin D, essential to the immune system. They assert that nudity improves fertility, clears psoriasis, and prevents Lyme disease. They say that basking nude in the sun fights many types of cancer, even skin cancer. They say that clothes impede the body's circulatory, reproductive, and lymphatic functions. They say these ball-smashingly tight blue jeans I'm wearing right now could possibly lead to testicular cancer.

The devoted nudist feels, deep in the bottom of the sockless toes he squishes in the grass, that he lives in a fundamentally more moral, equal, and honest world than those in the textile world. Employing desiccated



grey-pubed leftist jargon and pompous, Francophilic gobbledygook amid feely-meely googly Edenic let's-all-mush-together-in-a-gooney-protoplasmic-Love-Soup aesthetics, the nudist theorist proposes a loftier, more

spiritually advanced mode of living which is available to anyone simply by droppin' trou. But don't be fooled—his form of nudism aspires to much *more* than mere triflin' nakedness—it seeks to create a utopian society, to champion the struggle for women's freedom, and to maybe even smash the patriarchy if there's any time left after all that other stuff. He proposes a world which accepts...nay, *celebrates*...the human body, with all its warts, rashes, sagging flesh, ingrown toenails, and swampy ass-stank.

THE NUDIST WORLD, despite all its delusions of philosophical grandeur and human uplift, will forever remain a severely *tacky* world characterized by goofy jokes, by *Elmer Fudpucker at the Nudist Colony* comedy albums, and by zany nudist-camp cartoons depicting a guy who can carry two cups of coffee in his hands and a dozen donuts on his boner. 'Tis a world encapsulated in irritatingly clever catchphrases such as "Skin does not equal sin" and "I've got a brand nude attitude!" and "We are nude, not lewd" and "Grin and bare it!" It's a world filled with an uncomfortably high quotient of pervy weirdlin's who, if it weren't for nudism, would be into, oh, *Star Trek* to satisfy their lonely itch for communal belonging.

In many ways, nudism is also the natural-born enemy of pornography. Nudism proposes that *all* of us should be naked, while porno posits that only a *few* of us should. That's a monumental difference. Porno depends on the general societal suppression of nudity, or it wouldn't be special enough that people would pay for it. Much of the sex industry's wealth is actually dependent upon the mainstream *suppression* of nudity. If nudity were commonplace, it wouldn't be so "exotic," and guys wouldn't actually **PAY** just to see a woman's bare tush.

I tend to side with the pornographers. My main beef with social nudism, apart from the oceans of aesthetic cheese, is the undeniable, proven-by-science fact that some people **SHOULD** be hung-up about their bodies. I'm currently seeking evidence for my anthropological thesis that clothing was initially invented not as vain, peacock's-feathers-style adornment...nor for weather-related reasons...nor to hide a sense of naked shame...but solely as punishment for unattractive people.

I *love* my body. Yours, I'm not so crazy about. There are so many people I wouldn't want to relate to on a nude level. If I don't even want to look at them clothed, why would I want to see them with their shit all up-front and in my face? I don't feel so swell about Utopia if it means I have to be naked along with everyone else.

Still, the warm wind feels great on my exposed skin. But for now, I'll raise the fence around my *own* garden of Eden and frolic there. Me and m'woman'll practice our own private brand of Antisocial Dystopian Nudism. I like the idea of nudity for me...but not for thee. Or as a lady friend succinctly phrased it when I asked for her thoughts on nudism, "I don't need to look at somebody else's junk."



MILESTONES IN NUDIST CINEMA

Until the late 1960s, the only **LEGAL** way for Americans to ogle the naked human form in print and on movie screens...well, the naked *Caucasian* form, anyway, since *National Geographic* had no trouble showing dark-skinned "primitive" nudes... was via the purposely non-erotic genre of **nudist magazines and nudist-camp movies**.

Films featuring naked adults frolicking at nudist camps began to emerge in the early 1930s, coinciding with the first wave of American nudist-colony culture. The early films are typically imbued with a pompous, classically naturist, *Triumph of the Will*-style conviction that nudism will bring about a worldwide elevation of humanity. **Elysia: Valley of the Nudes** (1933—foreign-language poster pictured at right) was filmed at a California nudist colony. The film begins with a producer's statement that "Our purpose is to show the benefits derived from bathing the body in the sun and air. Our hope is to show that the rapid growth of the Nudist movement throughout the world is based on health—both of the body and mind." The film's plot (some nudist-camp films have plots, some don't) concerns a newspaper reporter who's assigned to write about a nudist camp and winds up *joining* it. Other early nudist-colony movies include **This Nude World** (1932), a documentary featuring European and American nudist colonies...**Hesperia** (1937), filmed at an Oregon nudist camp that would later become Squaw Mountain Ranch...and **The Exposé of the Nudist Racket** (1938), which melds *Reefer Madness*-style scare-tactic anti-nudist narration with, of course, footage from the evil camps themselves. At one point, the film's narrator makes an unflattering comment about a portly female nudist.



In 1954, New York authorities banned **Garden of Eden**, filmed at a nudist camp, because it allegedly portrayed nude humans in "unwholesome sexually alluring positions." The film's distributor appealed an initial court decision, and in 1957 the state court ruled in the film's favor, with one judge arguing that "nudism in itself, and without lewdness or dirtiness, is not obscenity in law or in common sense." The decision made it easier for wider commercial distribution of nudist-camp movies, and exploitation directors pounced on the opportunity, unleashing countless whimsically naughty "nudie-cuties" for the commercial market in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

B-movie legend Herschell Gordon Lewis produced nudie-cuties such as **Nature's Playmates** (1962), **Daughters of the Sun** (1962), and **Goldlocks and the Three Bares** (1963) before single-handedly inventing the slasher-movie genre with 1963's **Blood Feast**. Recently deceased cult director Doris Wishman was one of the nudie-cutie's savvy exploiters, concocting clever stunts such as transplanting a grindhouse stripper onto nudist-colony grounds and filming her—nothing illegal about that—in **Blaze Starr goes Nudist** (1965) and setting a nudist colony in outer space in **Nude on the Moon** (1961).

Since full-frontal cinematic nudity was considered legally obscene in America until 1968, the nudist-camp films were always careful to artfully conceal the subjects' genitals, especially swingin' weenies. A strong distinction should be drawn between **nudist** films and the **pornographic** films which immediately succeeded them. By definition, a nudist film prohibits any equation of nudity with sex. You'll see nude adults playing volleyball and rowing canoes (known as "canuding" among initiates), but you won't see any remotely amorous activity. When legal decisions allowed for naked onscreen sexuality in the late 1960s, the nudist-camp genre quickly expired, stampeded to death under increasingly bold cinematic eroticism and, finally, hardcore.

