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A warning of milk for African-Americans

BY MILTON R. MILLS, M.D.
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Don't drink your milk? may sound as un-American as "don't eat apple pie." Indeed, many health professionals mistakenly regard cow's milk as wholesome, even necessary.

But for better health, African Americans and everyone else should kick the dairy habits, an issue virtually ignored by the newly released Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Of course, for generations, most parents and physicians have urged children to drink up their glasses of milk. To be sure, they generally had good intentions — but they also had been flooded with endless promotions and ads from the financially well-set dairy industry. More recently, it's hard to miss those here, there, and everywhere milk-mustache and Got Milk? billboards, bus ads, print ads, TV spots, and classroom promotions. The milk industry even hit the road with its Better Bones Tour, "visiting some 100 U.S. cities with trucks carrying displays claiming a beneficial relationship between dairy and osteoporosis. Science, however, has been raining on dairy's parade. Observations in South African black townships, with virtually no dairy consumption, showed residents there experience almost no osteoporosis, while the chronic bones disease affects millions in dairy-devouring places such as Scandinavia, Canada, and the United States. In a finding published in the American Journal of Public Health in June 1997, the 12-year Harvard Nurses' Study of almost 78,000 people found those regularly consuming dairy products had no protection at all against hip and forearm fractures. Indeed, women drinking three glasses of milk daily had more fractures than women whom rarely or never touched milk.

Other studies are investigating dairy's links with breast cancer, ovarian cancer, iron deficiency, insulin-dependent diabetes, cataracts, food allergies, heart disease, asthma, and colic. Common toxic contaminants in dairy include pesticides, drug, and antibiotic traces.

A growing number of nutritionist and doctors — the late "world pediatrician" and progressive activist Benjamin Spock, M.D., among them — have, in effect, wiped off their milk mustaches.

From my perspective as an African American, physician, there is another troubling side to dairy promotions, and especially to government recommendations that it be part of every school lunch meal and similar nutrition programs.

While only about 15 to 20 percent of U.S. whites are intolerant of the milk sugar lactose, some 95 percent of Asian Americans, about 70 percent of African Americans and Native Americans, and more than 50 percent of Mexican Americans cannot digest it. Many get quite sick from it. Nature starts to remove the enzymes that digest milk sugar once we have passed the age of weaning. Indeed, one can call lactose intolerance nature's normal warning signal not to "do dairy," akin to the protective pain signals prompting you to snatch your hand away from a hot stovetop. Of course, some advocate taking lactose-tolerance pills or adding small amounts of dairy at intervals throughout the day to "trick" the body into accepting milk, ice cream, and so on. But, if you wouldn't want to trick your hand into not feeling a sparingly painful stovetop. Why would you want to temporarily mask the unhealthy downside of dairy? Being lactose-intolerant really constitutes genetic good luck.

It's bad enough that current federal dietary guidelines encourage meat consumption though they do list nutritionally sound alternatives, such as legumes (beans and peas).

However, the 1992-issued federal Food Guide Pyramid's dairy section "doesn't even bother to list substitutes, through the 2000 Dietary Guidelines for Americans draft does finally mention soy milk. Indeed, healthy dairy-free alternatives such as fortified soy milk and calcium-set tofu have become increasing available in supermarkets, as well as in health food stores and food co-ops.

Calcium, dairy's big "health" selling point, does indeed strengthen teeth and bones. But it's readily absorbable from broccoli, kale, mustard greens, turnip greens, Brussels spouts, pinto beans, navy beans, black-eyed-peas, calcium-set tofu, and, of course, the new fortified orange juice and apple juice products. And none of those haul the health-damaging freight that dairy does.

So, for your health's sake, why not replace cow's milk with soy milk and other alternatives?

Milton R. Mills, a Stanford University-trained physician specializing in nutrition, practices in Northern Virginia and Washington, D.C.-based and volunteers as associate directors of preventive medicine at the D.C.-based Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine.

NAACP welcomes landmark settlement against life insurance company that discriminate against blacks

CONTRIBUTOR STORY
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Kweisi Mfume, President & CEO, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), welcomed the \$206 million settlement of a federal class-action lawsuit against the American General Life and Accident Insurance Co. For overcharging millions of mostly poor, black customers for premiums because of their race.

Mfume said, "NAACP Florida Board Members Adora Obi Nweze and Leon Russell along with Florida Insurance Commissioner Bill Nelson worked diligently

In this process and are to be commended for brining this decades-long discriminatory practice to its deserved end."

Under the agreement, announced Wednesday, nearly 5 million policyholders or their beneficiaries are eligible to receive some from of relief after being charged higher rates for burial and life insurance policies well after the race-based sales

practices were supposed to have been stopped with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The NAACP is expected to receive \$2 million as part of the settlement that award \$7.5 million in penalties to several states including Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Tennessee, Virginia and the District of Columbia. All 50 states are expected to sign the agreement.

"The inclusion of the NAACP in this landmark settlement means a chance for us to further empower communities and the people most affected by the illegal practices of American General," said Mfume.

Founded in 1909, The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. Its half-million adults and youth members throughout the United States and the World are the premier advocate for civil rights in their communities, conducting voter registration drives and monitoring equal opportunity in the public and private sectors.

America's national culture on border

BY JACOB G. HORNBERGER
FOR THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

People who rail that America's a national culture" is by immigrants never explain which national culture they are referring to.

I recently visited my hometown of Laredo, Texas, which is located on our nation's Southern border. In grocery stores and department stores half the signs are in Spanish and store employees greet people in Spanish. There are few pizza parlors and even a Chinese restaurant, but they can't compare to the many restaurants selling enchiladas, menudo, chaluapas, and tacos.

Laredo, which today has a population of 155,000, was founded in 1755 by a Spanish officer named Don Tomas Sanchez de Barrera y Gallardo, who named the town Villa de San Augustin de Laredo, after a town in Spain. Today, San Augustin Plaza is located a short distance from Laredo, after a town downtown international brides, which connect the city to Nuevo Laredo, Mexico (population 300,000).

One of the major downtown streets in Laredo is named Hidalgo Street, after Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, the father of Mexican independence. Another is Iturbide Street, named after Emperor Augustin Iturbide, the first ruler of independent Mexico. During my recent visit to Laredo, I noticed that the street in a brand new residential subdivision had been named after coastal cities in Mexico, such as Puerto Vallarta.

After Texas won its independence from Mexico in 1836, Laredo refused to recognize Texas rule and for a time served as capital of the Republic of the Rio Grande,

Which consisted of a coalition of three northern Mexico states and southwest Texas which were themselves revolting against Mexico rule, states and southwest Texas, Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo at the end of the Mexican war in 1848, the war by which the United States acquired the northern half of Mexico, Laredo officially became part of the United States. (At the same time, Nuevo Laredo, on the other side of the

Rio Grande, was founded by Mexico citizens who wanted to remain in Mexico rather than live in the United States.)

The long-established culture in Laredo has been one in which people informally converse with each other in either English or Spanish (or Tex-Mex, a peculiar blend of languages in which the conversant slip back and forth Between English and Spanish, sometimes even within the same sentence). The local Spanish television channel and the English-languages ones. Generally people are indifferent to the particular language being spoken, and everyone is accepting of those who speak only English, sometimes even marrying them (as my mother did).

But even the English-only crowd speaks a little Spanish when they visit what was once Mexico. After all, when was the last time you heard anyone say that he personally saw St. Anthony and, after traveling through the Pass, visited St. Francis, and ended up visiting the Angels (San Antonio, El Pasco, San Francisco, and Los Angeles)?

Oh, did I mention that for more than 100 years, Laredo has had the largest bash in the county celebrating George Washington's birthday? Sixteen fun-filled days every February, including a grand parade with George and Martha Washington and their Court in Colonial garb on floats, the Society of Martha Washington Pageant and Ball, the Princess Pocahontas Pageant and Ball, Noche Mexicana, Caballeros Cocktail Party, Streets of Laredo Jamboozie (including such musical groups as "Tommy and the Tomcats" and "Javier Molina & El Dorado,") fireworks, street parties, and a fantastic Jalapeno Festival (including, of course, a Jalapeno spitting contest).

If those who are dedicated to preserving America's "national culture" are referring to the culture in Laredo (which really is located inside the United States), they'll find plenty of support among the citizenry of this great American city located on the banks of the Rio Grande.

Mr. Hornberger is founder and president of The Future of Freedom Foundation (www.fff.org) Fairfax, VA.



Just think: Your son is bright, healthy and headed for college one day you love the direction your career has taken. You're doing a lot of the things you planned and even a few you didn't. Living life to the fullest is easy when you have family behind you. American Family Mutual Insurance. Call and talk to one of our helpful, friendly agents. You'll find out why we're consistently rated A+ (Superior) by A.M. Best, the insurance rating authority. Then, go on. Dream. Plan. What you do next is up to you and we'll be here to help you.

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