

Redefining Redneck: How Jeff Foxworthy Killed The Good Ole' Boy

The other night, I was sitting in my hotel room with very little to do. As is common practice when boredom strikes, I turned on the television, and flipped over to Comedy Central.

As usual, they were running some Blue Collar Comedy stuff. You know, the brilliant work of Jeff Foxworthy, Daniel Whitney(aka Larry the Cable Guy), Bill Engvall, and Ron White. Now, I am from the South, and was watching this at a Super 8 in the great state of West Virginia. Perfect.

The only problem was, it was not entertaining in the least. If you were raised in the South, you developed a thick skin. Given recent obesity studies, ours may be thicker than most. You regularly heard jokes about yourself that included inbreeding, low IQs, and fried foods. People assumed that because you spoke with an accent, you were dumb. Most of us shrugged it off, and some of us laughed, as we have a healthy appreciation for schadenfreude.

Unfortunately, some of us accepted all too readily the characterization of us by one of our own. Jeff Foxworthy started it all, with his "You Might Be A Redneck" schtick. This was all well and good, because a Redneck was something you never wanted to be. They were the ne'er-do-wells of Southern Society, consisting of drunks, drug abusers, perpetual welfare recipients, child abusers, pedophiles, and criminals who were the bane of the genteel South's existence. These people gave us a bad name nationwide, so we didn't think much about having a laugh at their expense. We would regret this.

As his "Redneck" albums and tour became more popular, Jeff glamorized the position of the Redneck in society at large. Ignorance was now "en vogue", and the perfect weekend now consisted of an RV, a case of Busch Light, rabbit ears, and NASCAR. Interestingly enough, there is some correlation between the growth of WWE, NASCAR, and the promotion of the Redneck lifestyle. The true tragedy, however, was not the sudden interest in a sad form of existence. The real issue was the way "Redneck" had been redefined.

Before Mr. Foxworthy appeared on the scene, there was a class of people that existed that shared some traits in common with Rednecks, but with key differences: Good Ole' Boys. The "Good Ole' Boy"(hereafter referred to as a "GOB") was a blue collar Southerner. He loved his family, went to church on Sunday, gave directions to strangers, and would pick up a hitchhiker or two. He'd give you his last dollar, even though he didn't have much to begin with. He may have barely finished high school, but he was wiser than your average professor. His family might have lived in a trailer, but it was kept clean, and his grass was mowed. The GOB may have worked two, or even three jobs just to keep his family afloat. He did it without complaining.

Yeah, he liked his beer on a Saturday. He probably watched NASCAR here and there. He might have even enjoyed a little " wrasslin' ". He hunted and fished, wore Carhartts and had a dog named "Blue". That was all fine and dandy, until the word "Redneck" came to define him as well. What started as an inside joke among Southerners would forever lump him in with the worst of our society. While Foxworthy and friends laughed all the way to retirement, this proud, patriotic American would forever be swallowed up by a laughable stereotype.

Now, we are stuck with a generation that are proud of their "Redneck" ways. They are richer than their parents, but no wiser. They have none of the social graces of the now-deceased GOB. They are a mean, base, and willfully ignorant generation, who regularly spurn facts and reason. They see nothing wrong with the way they behave, or treat others. We are all to blame for this, and are accessories to the crime.

Shame on us for allowing what was good in the South to be drowned out with laughter.

Shame on you, Mr. Foxworthy, for killing the honest, working man, and replacing him with the village idiot.

About the Author

At his day job, Kurt Hartman is an OTR Analyst. By night, he is a proud Southerner, crusading against ignorance. His company sells what are referred to, by lack of a better term, [big tires](#). In the pursuit of wiping out ignorance, he would like to inform you that they are also called OTR Tires. Now you know.

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