



ASK DEANNA!
*Real People,
Real Advice*

Ask Deanna! Is an advice column known for its fearless approach to reality-based subjects!

Dear Deanna!

I ended my relationship with my boyfriend because I thought I wanted someone more active, exciting and who could give me thrills. I now realize I had everything I needed in the man I was with. My ex-boyfriend has a good job, making a lot of money and he's dating someone else. I want him back and it hurts me looking at this woman living the life I was supposed to have. How do I approach him and let him know that I want another chance?

Anonymous
Charleston, SC

Dear Worried:

You didn't miss the water until the well ran dry and now you have to look at the life you missed out on. You got what you deserved because you were selfish and only thought about yourself and your agenda. It appears he's happy in his new relationship. You can call him on the phone or talk to him direct. However, you must remember that you left him for another man. If he rejects you, or hurts your feelings, get over it because the pendulum of karma just swung back.

Dear Deanna!

I'm in a dilemma and don't know how to get out of it. I got caught up in my relationship and asked my girlfriend to marry me. I realize now this is the wrong decision and this is not the woman I want to spend my life with. We've dated for a few years and now her wedding plans are in full swing. Her mother has called caterers, ordered dresses, and printed invitations. It's getting out of hand and I'm nervous and scared. How do I end this now?

Wrong Groom
Washington, DC

Dear Wrong:

You need to put the brakes on this ordeal immediately. Many people are going to be hurt but you should prevent financial loss, pain and embarrassment while you can. Be a man and tell your girlfriend the truth and offer to reimburse everyone for money they've spent. Once you've done this, you need to end the relationship. If you choose not to be committed, don't play any more games. You need to close the deal on a good note and keep it moving.

Dear Deanna!

I'm having huge arguments with my girlfriend because she can't seem to get enough of her friends. We have a social life that's active considering our jobs and lifestyle. All of a sudden she wants to go out three nights a week and she's hanging out on work nights. The only time I see her is when she's on the phone making more plans or leaving the house. How do I ask her to choose me or her friends and her new party life?

Walt
Phoenix, AZ

Dear Walt:

There's a possibility your problems are more about the relationship than about her friends. You should offer to join her when she goes out and if she says no, then be prepared to have a conversation. Be direct and ask her why she has the need to be so active, what can you do to improve your social life and be willing to make personal changes. However, if her honesty hurts your feelings don't take it personally but use the feedback to improve your situation.

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Black men must tackle sexism

By Shawn M. Bediako
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Recently, the University of Georgia placed Chi Phi fraternity on two year's probation after a group of seven freshman pledges and a campus visitor showed nude pictures of Black women to passers-by on campus, photographing people's reactions. Public responses to the incident are mixed, with some people questioning whether the incident was actually racially motivated or whether the right to free speech protects the group's actions.

However, my problems with this incident extend beyond mere intellectual banter. As a Black man, my racial identity makes me mad as hell at the fact that seven White boys were brazen enough to show explicit pictures of Black women publicly without fear of consequence. It conjures uncomfortable images of the historical exploitation of Black women by White men that rarely is discussed. As a social/community psychologist, however, I am perplexed by the fact that, to my knowledge, no public statement condemning the acts has come from Black fraternities, Black male faculty, or Black male administrators—at this campus or any other university.

How could Black men be so silent on this issue?

I dare say that there are probably more than a few Black men who are in possession of the same issue of *Black Tail* magazine that the Chi Phi pledges used to "shock" passers-by. These Black men are prime candidates for experiencing cognitive dissonance — thinking that it's wrong to objectify women as sexual instruments, but doing so because they like how what they see makes them feel; therefore, how can Black men conscientiously condemn seven White boys for flashing nude pictures of Black women to others in public when Black men flash the same pictures to themselves in private?

Something seems hypocritical about that, right? Yet, in order to avoid perceiving oneself as hypocritical — which exacerbates cognitive dissonance — one might react like Brandon Hall, president of the Black Affairs Council at the university where it took place, who is quoted in the campus newspaper as asking, "Why didn't

Black men must address issues related to sexism and misogyny by confronting the contradictions between what we say and what we do.

(the pledges) use a more mainstream magazine?"

Hall's comment could be interpreted as insinuating that it would have been less controversial had the "Chi Phi Seven" used pictures of, say, White or Latino women. By making race a salient issue, though, the broader issue of sexism is relegated to the periphery and ignored.

Yes, it is true that the sexist and misogynistic images that are widespread in media reflect an objectifying patriarchy that promotes and justifies an ambivalent, demeaning attitude of men towards women. And yes, it is also true that this is not a problem that uniquely affects Black men — it affects men of all races and ethnicities.

So why am I choosing to focus on Black men's sexism and misogyny towards Black women? Why am I being so hard on Black men? There are two reasons.

First, the ubiquity of sexism and misogyny means that Black men, from all walks of life — athletes, clergy, entertainers, gangstas, intellectuals, laborers, politicians, professionals, and thugs — share a common problem that affects our communities: a problem that we must collectively address. It is shameful that organizations that have a "Black male agenda" or those that have leadership comprised primarily of Black men — such as the Congressional Black Caucus, the National Baptist Convention, the NAACP, the National Urban League, and Concerned Black Men — do not do more to explicitly attack

sexism and misogyny in Black communities.

Second, I press the issue because the silence of both individual Black men and the organizations that supposedly represent Black communities becomes complicit in the degradation of women in general and increases the vulnerability of the image of Black women. Thus, making it easier for those both inside and outside our community to portray Black women in any way they see fit and not face repercussions.

Would the Chi Phi frat boys have so easily flashed those photos if it were clear that Black men and Black organizations would have joined Black women in condemning their actions? Would Christina Norman (an African-American woman and president of (MTV Networks) permit the airing of a cartoon episode that depicts Black women as dogs on leashes (i.e., "bitches") if she thought that doing so would elicit a hue and cry from Black folks? It is crucial to understand that our silence about what people do to us and how they portray us is endorsement to those people that their actions are acceptable.

The intergenerational transmission of sexism and misogyny is wreaking havoc on our young people, our families, and our communities. Researchers note that repeated exposure to crime, violence, and other sub-optimal environments are not conducive for human growth and development. I further propose that repeated expo-

sure to the less than respectful ways that many Black men refer to and treat Black women cannot be healthy for our children's growth and development. It shapes negative attitudes about gender roles, contributes to a poor self-concept, and creates a vicious cycle of unhealthy and destructive relationships that aid in destabilizing our families and communities. This is why I'm writing on the issue. We've got to do something about this.

As a starting point, Black men must address issues related to sexism and misogyny by confronting the contradictions between what we say and what we do. Black civic and social organizations should facilitate a structured dialogue about these issues and make the elimination of sexism and misogyny prominent goals in their organizational aims. At the same time, Black men must be more vocal in challenging instances of sexism and misogyny that are directed towards Black women and Black girls wherever they occur — be it in commercials, television news and network "programs," movies, magazines, music videos, radio songs, or conversations in barber shops, schools, social spaces, workplaces, and, yes, even places of worship.

Black men must, in clear, non-patriarchal terms, confront the negative images of our people that are created and propagated by either corporate media or emboldened White frat boys. We must also take to task and hold accountable those individuals or entities within our community that perpetuate and profit from these negative images.

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