

WR115

Allan Martin

Double Standard

Dear Pierce,

I recently read an essay for writing class called “Anti-Male Bias Increasingly Pervades Our Culture” by John Leo. While reading this essay I was fairly unaffected by it, but I know you like to make a big deal out of the tiniest issue. Therefore, I thought you would like to sink your teeth into this one.

The essay by John Leo starts out with a newswoman telling a joke at a fundraiser. The joke was about a brain transplant. There was a \$500 brain and a \$5000 brain. The punch line is the \$500 brain was a female’s and therefore had been used. I personally think this is pretty funny and harmless humor, but a man in the audience at the fundraiser did not find the humor in it. The man booed and was asked why, to which he replied, “Just substitute woman, black, or Jew for ‘man’ in that joke, and tell me how it sounds.” This comment is one I could hear coming from your mouth.

John Leo continues to make the point throughout the essay that male bashing is getting out of control and that it is a double standard. This point of view is one I am sure you will take to heart as well. According to John Leo’s essay, there are plenty of greeting cards designed to have a laugh at men’s expense. One example of a greeting card talks about a woman killing a man. The American Greeting card says, “Men are always whining about how we are suffocating them. Personally, I think if you can still hear them whining, you’re not pressing hard enough on the pillow.” I don’t find anything wrong with the card; as a matter of fact, the only reason the card is on the shelf is because there is a market for it. Should we belittle a company for capitalizing on an opportunity to make money? Should we deny the consumer the product in demand because it gives our male egos a jolt? I don’t think so, but I would like to hear what you have to say about it. John Leo says, “And a greeting card joking about a woman’s murder would be very unlikely, even if surveys showed that millions of males were eager to exchange lighthearted gender-killings greetings.” This quote is comical to me. Do you think a double standard exists in this situation? Or do you think this is more an example of the almighty dollar talking?

There is one section of John Leo's essay I feel is worth considering. John Leo feels that the derogatory statements made toward men are possibly affecting young males. The concern is that males will grow up feeling there is something wrong with being male. When children hear things said, negative or positive, they internalize them. I feel that if a young male grows up in a household where male bashing is common, it could lower his self-esteem. However, as adults, I think we need to be a little thicker skinned. My question is, what is the big deal?

Overall I feel this essay is thought provoking and worth your time to read. I look forward to debating my side with you the next time we speak – that is, assuming you will have an opposing point of view. You haven't disappointed me in the past and I'm sure your opinion of this essay will be no exception.

Yours truly,

Allan

***Instructor's Note:** Although it may seem strange to see a letter in Exit 17, it really does belong in the collection. Historically, letters have been a rich vehicle for exploring challenging ideas. Here the letter an assignment, one that asks students to read a thought-provoking essay and share its key ideas with someone else. In this piece Allan Martin does a particularly skillful job of identifying and conveying John Leo's ideas. He also goes well beyond the assignment by questioning the significance of Leo's complaint and slyly revealing the character of his intended reader. His approach is sophisticated and ambitious, yet the letter is concise and clear. –Beth Sammons*