

Dear Vince: a professor's letter to the ODE columnist

I'm writing in response to your controversial April 2 column in the Emerald. Actually, I'd been meaning to write to you about another column you wrote, the one that appeared in the March 5 Emerald.

As I understood you, in that column you raised the question of whether the faculty of the University actually teach students to think critically for themselves or whether "the university is just another piece of the intricate superstructure the system relies on to perpetuate its existence."

I intended to reply to your column, but then it was spring break and you know how it goes. I did want to tell you that I was impressed by that column. I never cut an article out of the Emerald

before, but I cut your column out.

I want to try to explain to you why I have mixed feelings about your spring break column. You're a really good writer who has the ability to create vivid imagery and a visceral response in your readers.

After reading your column, I could almost feel the Pacific surf, taste the frosty lager and visualize the killer sunset at the Grand Canyon. Unfortunately, I also had a vivid image of the woman (the "prey") who engaged in violent sex with your pal Wally. This image is upsetting and offensive to me.

During spring break, my partner Laura and I went on our annual pilgrimage to southern Utah with our two dogs, Cody and Kiva.

The actual things we did were pretty different from the things you described — no beach, no tequila, no other women, but the net effect was the same. We hiked, camped, drank Utah near-beer and soaked up sun and canyon vibes. Like you said — utter stoke.

Commentary

Deb Frisch

Right before we went off into the Grand Staircase Escalante wilderness, we heard that the police had found a car containing the bodies of two of the three women who had disappeared from Yosemite.

This bit of news was even more horrific than our expectations. I remember standing in a beautiful canyon, looking at the coral-col-

ored cliffs wondering why they hadn't found all three women.

Laura and I wondered whether the third woman had been kept for sexual purposes. I felt sick. I also felt afraid. We heard the rumble of a jeep and went and hid behind a big cottonwood tree.

The whole experience of being alone in the wilderness was tainted with fear, even though we had two 80-pound dogs with us.

Given the fear of sexual violence that women live with on a daily basis, I think that it was insensitive and inappropriate for you to describe women as "prey" and sex as "violent" in the Emerald.

I hope it was really just a poor choice of words and what you meant by "prey" was "target of a visceral desire" and what you

meant by violent was "vigorous and mutually pleasurable." But I can't really be sure, and that makes me queasy.

Anyway, I just wanted to say that even though I cringed a few times while reading your column, overall, I appreciated your exuberance, honesty and good writing.

I'm glad you enjoyed the Grand Canyon, although I'm not sure "huge freaking hole" really captures the essence of it.

I hope you go back some day and hike down into it. Get up early, hike all the way in and back in a day (preferably with someone you love) and then sit on the rim and sip an ice-cold Corona. Now that's utter stoke.

Deb Frisch is an adjunct professor in psychology.



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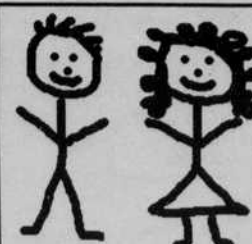
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