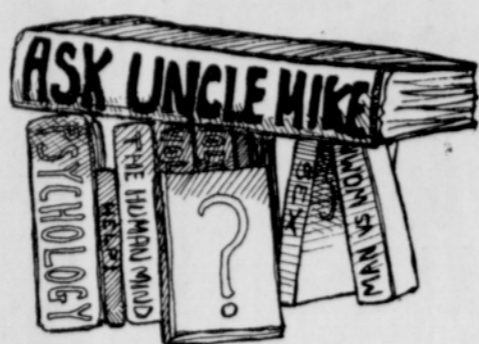


Dear Uncle Mike,

I enjoyed your column a few months ago about how women inspire men to do grand and glorious gestures and to accomplish great deeds. I'd like to think you're right. I haven't met any men so inspired. Please tell me if you know any on the North Coast and, if so, how I can meet them.

Ready



Dear Ready,

Uncle Mike is happy to hear you'd like to think he's right. He does, however, sense a misunderstanding. While Uncle Mike did not read the column in question and has no intention of doing so now, what he thinks he said was that women *can* inspire men to make grand and glorious gestures and accomplish great deeds; not that, with any regularity, they actually do. These are not especially inspirational times. Women, along with the men who usually disappoint them, have, in order to cope with reality, lowered both their standards and their expectations. Disappointment, both specific and nonspecific, is one of several idiot zeitgeists currently playing havoc with human evolution, whatever that is. But we digress.

Generalizing with steel-eyed intent: men define themselves in large part by the extent to which they project themselves into the world outside themselves. If this projection is stunted to the level of crushing beer cans on their foreheads, driving outsize toy trucks and confusing platinum VISA cards with virtue, we have the world one can observe any Saturday at the mall; or, for the real connoisseur, watch on cable tv while eating healthy snacks. This is not civilization; this is a lifestyle, and a stupid and shallow one at that. History bursts at the seams with unpleasant anecdotes about what men will do if left to their own devices. Women, not at all by default, are nature's way of preventing men from being too much in touch with their inner adolescent. As Henry Kissinger admitted, if it weren't for beautiful women, there'd be no sense in achieving power. Yes, it's really, really like that.

The solution fairly bursts forth: if women, for whose praise men commonly risk life, honor and self respect, were to raise the hoop, men would find a way to jump through it. (This is, of course, how the game is presently played but in a spirit of nasty competition.) "Lysistrata" is still performed because it tells a great truth: men will go to war until women tell them they can't. Men will continue to behave like overprivileged children until women stop nourishing inappropriate behavior. Uncle Mike loves men with every accessible portion of his heart but, without women, they're fish with bicycles. As women well know, men are best viewed as potential: energy to be put to some useful purpose. This purpose should not be mutual self indulgence and its accompanying amnesia regarding the existence of anything larger than what we've seen on television. To inspire, one must be inspired. There's always a catch.

As for finding men still capable of being inspired, you have Uncle Mike's sympathy and hearty best wishes. It's a meat grinder out there for everyone. As for finding anything, the best first step is to know what you're looking for, go somewhere you're likely to find it and be the sort of person who knows, not just what it's worth, but also how to care both for and about it. On a purely magical level, Uncle Mike recommends having faith and looking for what the man has rather than what he lacks.

Dear Uncle Mike,

I am 27 and about to be married to a man I love deeply. He is a quadriplegic. I am not going into this blindly and I know it sounds strange but whatever sacrifices I have to make are worth it because he is a wonderful man and I want to make my life with him. What sex we will be able to have will not include intercourse. I am a normal, healthy woman and am considering having a 'fling' before our marriage. I've given it a lot of thought and have gone back and forth but basically I know I want to. I respect your opinion and would appreciate it if you'd tell me what you think.

Call Me Helen

Dear Helen,

Uncle Mike thinks you're a remarkable woman. After searching his moral closets, he can find nothing that would mandate against a last dance with intercourse. Without a victim, crime is a term without meaningful referents. Uncle Mike wishes you and your husband a long and happy life.

Dear Uncle Mike,

My boyfriend and I are moving in together and I could use your help. Could you please explain to him that he has no decorating sense and should leave all decisions regarding color and furniture to me? And tell him that if he thinks I'm going to live with a beer sign on the wall, he's insane. Thank you.

Grace

Dear Grace,

You're entirely welcome.



The Democratic Party can always be relied on to make a damn fool of itself at the critical time. Ben "Pitchfork" Tillman

THE THERAPY PAGE

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