



HERS

OPINION

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DATING OUTSIDE YOUR SOCIAL CLASS

BY C.M. BROOKS

There are those amongst us who would like to believe that there are no social classes in American Society. That somehow social stratification is familiar only to Europeans who have made it an integral part of their lives since the days of feudalism. But class is an important element in our society too. We simply choose to use euphemisms like blue-collar and white-collar in defining class. It is such an important part of our lives that it acts as a determinant in your business relationships, it serves as a guide to your religious denomination, it can dictate who your friends will be, and most importantly, who you will date, who you won't date, and who you will eventually marry.

Most people do not consider dating outside of their social class because their day-to-day lives revolve around people who have similar backgrounds. Most of the people I know have middle-incomes, have college degrees, and work in a white-collar occupation. They also tend to participate in middle-income activities like waterskiing, golf, and so forth. Therefore they are unlikely to engage in a personal relationship outside of their class because their lives are structured in such a way that they are not allowed to meet anyone who significantly differs from themselves.

When I asked a few people that I know if they would ever consider dating outside their social class, surprisingly, all of the interviewees said 'yes' on the condition that they would have to be someone that they considered 'above' them socially and economically. Not only does it seem like a consistent progres-

sion to date someone who has more for these people, but they see those who are on lower socio-economic level as not having the same values, the same experiences, or the same views about life. As one interviewee put it, "My everyday life consists of planning for the future, traveling, meeting different people. How do I relate to someone who is just trying to make it on a daily basis without making them feel uncomfortable because they don't have the same things that I have or they haven't experienced life as fully as I have been able to. Likewise, how am I not suppose to feel a slight measure of guilt when I am around this person because I know that I have been blessed with so many opportunities and luxuries."

For some, dating on a lower-scale could not be a consideration because their families and friends would not allow it. If you are from a nice, upper-middle class family, how do you introduce someone, who has never been to college, doesn't own a 4-door, yuppie-type automobile, and parks cars for a living, to your family as your new boyfriend? I think that it would be a difficult introduction because our families and friends want what is best for us.

A person who doesn't have much is going to be evaluated on what they don't have regardless if they have solid, personal attributes. Questions like, "why are you dating him?", "what does he have to offer you?", are bound to arise and attitudes like these will make it hard for that person to assimilate easily into your class.

Strangely enough, Americans do not have a problem with the middle-class population dating up and down their

respective social scales. You'll hear no fuss made-over someone who is lower-middle-class dating someone who is upper-upper-middle-class. The problem arises when the wealthy step outside of their realm and date someone who is very poor. In this particular situation, it is the role of gender that will determine who will sustain the most public denouncement. If you are a male who is on the lower-end of the socio-economic ladder dating a woman who is "above" you, you will be seen as someone riding on the coat tails of a woman, or it will be said that you don't love her because men are seen as providers and the breadwinners in our society. A man in this type of relationship will always be seen as an immoral person. But if the situation were reversed and it was the woman who was on the lower-end of the scale, it would be acceptable because she is trying to better herself. On the other hand, if the man were wealthy and the woman poor, the assumption would be made that their relationship is based on a sexual attraction. That he is simply using her as a mistress. Why? Because there is such a large gap between their two worlds, that it is perceived that they could not possibly have anything in common, but sex.

As important as your socio-economic standing in life is, it should not be the only factor working in your personal relationships. If you slide the magical lever up and down the entire scale of life, you'll not only meet a larger variety of people, but you will realize that those you once considered 'above' you or 'below' you, are not much different than you really are.

BY: ULLYSSESTUCKER, JR.

My writing partner, HER, recently suggested that we address the issue of dating outside of ones social/economic class, which by the way sounded rather intriguing to say the least. Webster defines "class" as a "social stratum whose members share similar economic, political, and cultural characteristics or the division of society into relative strata or ranks." Is dating outside of ones economic/social class wrong or is it a personal choice?

When I lecture to youngsters around the state of Oregon at various elementary/high schools, I always start each presentation with a game called "Let's Play Stereotyping." It is a game where I ask each student to stereotype my upbringing, family background, and the type of life that I've lived thus far. Some of them label me as coming from a resident of a wonderful house, or even as the owner of a car at 16, and generally speaking, most believed that I've lived a "cosby Family Existence." No way. In fact these students are shocked when they learn that I grew up in poverty, on welfare, and lost both parents before I was fourteen. When they learn that I dropped out in tenth grade, got kicked out in the sixth grade, and scored less than 500 on my SAT exam, they go into shock. They can not believe it because I seem like such a wonderful person. I am, but those are the conditions or circumstances in which I evolved under. People have a tendency to judge others on first impressions or by their attitude. If you interact with others with the attitude or disposition that you come from a de-

pressed urban jungle, then you will be judged that way. Simply because a person comes from the ghetto does not mean that they have to assume those values. There are plenty of people from the ghetto from lower economic backgrounds with terrific values and plenty of class. By the same token, there are upper class individuals who have no class or like some lower class people are stereotyped. The same principle applies to those individuals, who for some reason or another, refuse to date or marry someone without a college education. In this day and age of economic/career competition, a college degree is very helpful, but it does not make the total person. Again, there are some educated fools in the world and some very successful people who did not attend college. Furthermore, there are plenty of people (non-college graduates) who make more money than some college graduates will ever earn.

Recently, a friend told me about a situation she knew of, regarding dating outside of your economic/social class, and asked me my opinion. Her girlfriend is really "head over heels" with this certain guy, but there is a problem. She is a white collar/college professional and he is a plumber. "What do I tell my parents", she asked. The truth! Why she has a problem with this, I do not know. Everybody cannot work for a Fortune 500, as a television anchor, lawyer, or doctor, or CEO for a major corporation. Even if they do get lucky and secure an educational opportunity that leads to such a position, that does not make them a great mate. Money and status is not everything. I can recall my days at the University of Portland when I dreamed

of being on television. The same women, who would not give me the time of day as a broke dormitory dweller, beat a path to my apartment once I secured a position as a producer/host on KPTV-12 just before graduation in 1979. Even as recent as two months ago, I met a woman (at a party) and told her that I worked as a trash truck driver and the tone of the conversation changed dramatically afterwards. "But you seem so intelligent, articulate, and educated", she said. "I read a great deal and I have a GED," I replied. Six weeks later, I ran into the same woman at Lloyd Center and she called me everything but the child of God. She found out the truth, through a mutual friend, that I was a writer/television producer and all of a sudden I was dating material. I refused her telephone number, only to be called conceited and stuck on myself. As a trash truck driver, I was not an "attractive catch", but as a television producer, it was a totally different story. Accept me as I am, not for what you want or expect me to be. Sure, I lied a little bit. Still, I received the cold shoulder when I did not meet her expectations.

In my opinion, dating outside of ones social/economic class is overrated. It doesn't matter what a person has, economically, or what they do for a living. If they respect you, your values, goals, dreams, morals, and intellectual capacity, then all else shouldn't matter. All people have something to share and offer, if they are given a chance. Class or economics is a poor excuse to separate oneself from others and it is ego based. A blue collar can blend very well with a white collar...

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...And Justice For All

by Angelique Sanders



How High of a Price Are We Paying for Commercialism?

This week I wish to stray from my usual governmental complaints and address the topic of commercialism in America.

Commercialism--stimuli aimed at selling a product or concept--seems to be getting out of reason. Lately, I have heard so many political commercials, I've wanted to abstain from taking in media in any form, even the radio. I find the political commercials to be the most disturbing form of commercialism, when I consider that there are many uninformed people that are ready to instantly make a judgement on a political issue--especially one they know little about--based solely on an advertisement that might promote an idea in such a way that, whether the person is "for" or "against", he/she might be willing to go along with it. My presumption that many people are brainwashed this way (and it seems that most people prefer to not leave blank spaces on their ballot, even with faced with the option of voting on a topic they have little information on) must be accurate to an extent, or the politicians and committees would long since have discontinued advertising campaigns.

Political signs are another bothersome way of campaigning. I have never seen a sign that stated anything tangible about the candidate, nor billboards that give you a feel of how the politician stands on the issues. Most simply offer you a picture to identify with and a name to remember. Some-

times bulletin boards are so frequent on the major streets, it's hard to watch the street signs.

Television carries the objective of promoting itself and making money, as any other business. This often means using "gimmicks", so to speak, such as using sex or violence as a means of getting you to watch. I'm sure many mature people watch television, and are unswayed by this. However, I'm equally certain that many uninformed minds (and this is not limited to youth) are captured by what they perceive to be glamorized, such as smoking, drugs, premarital sex, violence, etcetera.

Often, commercialism takes over to an extent such that people who ignore the media are still inundated with a "commercialized theme" of sorts: for example, I doubt there is a single reader out there who does not know who Garfield and Bart Simpson are. I find it likely that more people watched the Halloween television specials than the election debates (I'm sure the Nielsen ratings will back me up on this conjecture).

This is not to say that commercialism is always negative. My spirit (and my advertising dollars!) are with those programs that are making an attempt in the right direction, with informed messages or positive role models. I even must admit that I find "The Simpsons" to be a lot deeper and more intelligent than the overcommercialized image I had of it. I wouldn't say I learned from it, but I would definitely

say that its target audience of the next generation could glean a few good messages from it, if only subconsciously.

I also would like to praise the Oregonian for doing a good job, especially in the last six months or so, of giving minorities of all sorts equal coverage. I've also noticed a rash of underground publications springing up lately, objecting to one injustice or another, as well as some above-ground not-for-profit publications trying to keep on their feet. To the positive media out there, and those involved in it, as well as those who try to watch or read it, I thank you on behalf of all caring, concerned viewers/readers. And, lastly, my advice to EVERYONE (as no one is completely untouched my commercialism): be wary, and be aware. Things don't always live up to their claims, nor do people, and your best bet for staying "safe" in a world of overpromotion and exploitation is to be informed.

This is from an old newspaper clipping, which I believe came from the *Portland Free Press*, and is great for a laugh at commercialism: "Most Americans don't seem to care if our government uses tactics which have previously been reserved for only the most totalitarian regimes on the face of the earth. Until the National Security state prevents Americans from shopping at K-Mart, watching 'Wheel of Fortune', and driving Chevrolets, then and only then will the masses put forth a whimper of protest."

Community Forum on Bigotry and Hate Crimes

Wednesday, Nov. 14 at 7pm

Mallory Ave. Church, 126 NE Alberta

The Tom Metzger trial has revealed the depths of hatred and the extremes of violence that white supremacists stand for. And the shocking fact is that Portland has recorded a 76% increase in hate crimes in the past year and a half. Despite our victory in the Metzger trial our quality of life and the future direction of Portland is still threatened by the growth of Neo-Nazis and white supremacists in the Portland area. What can we do?

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