



NIP SLIP

Finally. A full color, partially covered male sex object in ARIZONA ATTORNEY (June 2008, p. 29). My heaving chest, panting breath and flickering eyelashes almost block my fantasies about next month's issue and whatever objectified male body pix I can pin-up alongside my 24" Mac display.

—Joy B. Borum, Family Mediation Center, Scottsdale

SNOB MOB

The Last Word column titled "Are Lawyers Elitist?" (June 2008) proved Mr. Woods is an elitist. Elitist is simply a polite term for snob. Mr. Woods' portrayal of blue-collar workers is reminiscent of Southern masters envying the "carefree ways of their darkies" or the king romanticizing the existence of his lowly subjects.

Come on, Mr. Woods. You really think blue-collar workers don't

think about their jobs when they aren't at work? You really think manual laborers would prefer to be lawyers? You really think working people's lives are not complicated? Have you ever done any domestic relations cases? Landlord/tenant law? Consumer fraud? Personal injury? Criminal law? It is attitudes like yours that cause people to think lawyers are elitists. We are professionals (just like nurses and firefighters), but we are still tradespeople. We work for others, including blue-collar workers, to supply a service.

what they want and we give it to them, if we can. Sometimes clients want things that aren't on the menu—to be made whole again, to get revenge or to repair a business or familial relationship. In that case, the best we can do sometimes just adds up to "chicken fingers"—we can't stop an ex-spouse from harassing the client, but we can get a restraining order; we can't eliminate the crime victim's fear of the dark, but we can put the perpetrator in prison; and we can't make corporations act with integrity and a moral conscience, but we can make them pay a lot of money when they don't.

Until lawyers realize they are nothing more than service providers—journeymen and women toiling for justice—society will continue to call us elitists, and rightfully so.

—Beverly Rudnick, Gilbert

The very way Grant Woods writes about the "simple little people" reveals his elitism. The life of a woman working at Wal-Mart to support her children who receive no child support, who has no health insurance, who has to get food stamps to eat and can't afford gas for her car to get to work or who has to change buses three times is not less complicated than mine. In fact, it is far more complicated in areas that really matter. Add a sick kid or a son in trouble with the law and complications multiply, as does stress. Add being black or disabled or lesbian or elderly, and watch stress skyrocket. Why do you think blacks have chronic hypertension? Why do you think women are more depressed and take more mood-altering drugs? Why do the poor have shorter life spans? Being the object of racism and sexism or being poor extracts a toll from the mental and physical health of the person that most lawyers can hardly imagine. We have choices. They don't. They have to cope. So stop the whining and do what lawyers should be doing—become a tool for justice, become an agent of change.

—Dianne Post

This was one of the more presumptuous and offensive articles that I have read in quite awhile. Although the highlighted box in the column indicates that the opinion is "not necessarily that of the State Bar of Arizona, its Board of Governors, the Editorial Board or staff," it should have

THE LAST WORD by Grant Woods

Are Lawyers Elitists?

The subject of elitism became much discussed in the closing weeks of the Pennsylvania Democratic primary. Barack Obama made some remarks behind closed doors at a San Francisco fundraiser that many people took as condescending and elitist.

This allegation is especially painful to liberals, who generally view themselves as the champion of the poor and downtrodden and think they actually do understand and feel the pain of the common folk. The comments were undoubtedly overplayed, but the discussion should have made a lot of us think: Are we really elitists?

The Democratic race for the Presidency has featured, for most of the race, three couples who all are lawyers. All of them believe that their actions in defending the poor and standing up to special interests show that they seek to lift up rather than put down the common man.

Many of us lawyers feel that way. I am a Republican, but I have spent my career mostly defending the little guy and speaking up for the average working man and woman in this country. So how could Barack and I ever be held up as elitists?

Maybe because, in a way, we are guilty as charged. We respect the men and women who work the manual labor jobs 9-to-5 each day, every day of their lives, but we have no desire to be them. We think we understand their problems and want to help them better their lives, but deep down we think we made better choices and therefore have better alternatives. We studied hard, sacrificed, didn't get into trouble, and used our minds so we didn't have to get our hands dirty. We care about them, but we don't want to trade places with them, because we think our lives are better. I think that, consciously or subconsciously, we have always thought we were on a better track and that we really deserved to be there.

As I've thought about these things since Bittergate began, I've come to the conclusion that we got it wrong. We were always on a different track, but it wasn't necessarily a better track. I thought about this while I was in the 24-7 trial mode, cramming and stressing, and on point for hours on end. Most blue-collar workers don't think much about their jobs when they leave the workplace. Most lawyers can't put it away—not for their spouses, not for their kids, not even for themselves. We make more money, but I'm not sure most of us enjoy ourselves more than most of them. If it is about family and fun, for instance, who would you place your money on—10 firemen or nurses, or 10 lawyers?

Who had more fun last Friday night?

The lives of most working people are less complicated than ours, and I think they win on that point, as well. Complication doesn't necessarily improve things.

They cling to religion because it is an integral part of their lives, not as the result of a comparative analysis of philosophy and history. They are OK with faith. They hunt because they think it's fun. Their lives revolve around their family because that is what is most important to them. A new car would be great and so would a bigger house. But they know what we often forget: Those things aren't really that important after all, especially when getting them requires missing out on the things that really are important.

Go to a picnic in a working man's town in Pennsylvania or Arizona and you won't find too many people tuned out and thinking about what has happened or will happen at work. They will be in the moment, enjoying their friends and their families.

Somewhere along the way for most lawyers, I think, the notion that "what we do or how we live is more important, or better, than the life of the working man" has taken hold of how we truly look at the world. A lot of liberalism stems from feeling sorry for the "little guys" and trying to help make their lives better.

Maybe they should feel sorry for us. ☐

We care about working people, but we don't want to trade places with them, because we think our lives are better. We have always thought we were on a better track and that we really deserved to be there.

Grant Woods is a trial lawyer in Phoenix emphasizing complex litigation, specialty personal injury and government relations. He was Arizona Attorney General from 1991 to 1999.

60 ARIZONA ATTORNEY JUNE 2008 www.myazbar.org

Romanticizing the happy blue-collar worker is elitist and insulting. I have seen manual laborers "tuned out" at family picnics because they were worried about their jobs or concerned about job issues. I have also seen just as many lawyers "tuned out" in court because they were thinking about hunting, fishing or a pair of Manolo Blahniks. Lawyers should realize they are in a service profession. We serve justice and our clients. In the legal arena we work for them; they don't work for us. We are their servants whether they are blue-collar, white-collar or royalty. We are no different than the worker at the fast-food drive-up window. A customer can drive up and order chicken cordon bleu, but the best the worker can offer is "chicken fingers." Legal clients hire us, tell us

also included the individual attorneys to whom Mr. Woods has gratuitously transferred his personal shortcomings.

Although we are all attorneys, first and foremost we are individuals, who bring our personalities, attributes, goals and intentions to the practice of law. In many instances, the only common denominator among us is that we have all passed the bar examination in the jurisdiction in which we practice. Similarly, I have no doubt that the “working class” is equally diverse, and that they would be horrified to learn that they had been typecast solely by virtue of their employment.

The article would have been a lot more honest if the author had been willing to acknowledge that he was expressing his own belief system, however flawed. Furthermore, if his misconceptions truly cause him such consternation and remorse, there are infinite ways to find authenticity and fulfillment that are far more productive than the self-pitying message contained within the article. If the author has chosen to be constrained by his profession, so be it, but please do not impute these restrictions and limitations to the rest of us or romanticize the working class to feel better about his own plight.

—*Celia Rechtschaffen Reed, Celia Rechtschaffen Reed, P.C., Phoenix*

Grant Woods’ “The Last Word” in the June 2008 issue did something that very few things that I read ever caused me to do: Stop and think about what I do for a living.

I belong to three different bar associations (and some sub-bars within them) and spend a lot of time leafing through articles, generally with little anticipation of finding something truly important, but I have to say this is probably the best article I have ever read in a legal magazine.

Mr. Woods takes an item from the news, holds it up to the light to be examined, and comes up with some astute observations about the people who become lawyers and how those choices affect our lives, and those of our families.

Yes, we are where we are because we consciously did those things (studied hard, sacrificed ...). Yes, we did it so we “didn’t have to get our hands dirty.”

Yes, the work does follow us home (and on vacation); we *are* the ones who are, in fact, “tuned out and thinking about what has happened or will happen at work.” Yes, it doesn’t take much to figure out who had more fun last Friday night: the firemen and the nurses.

Yes, there is a notion that “what we do or how we live is more important or better.” That is what sells *Vanity Fair* magazine, “executive” homes, Mercedes-Benz autos, Patek Philippe watches, and a whole host of other things.

It took a lot of insight to reflect as Mr. Woods did. It also took a lot of courage to spread these thoughts out in the light of day. A refreshing change to the usual self-congratulatory pap one sees.

Well done.

—*James B. Jackson*

DEFINE COMMUNITY

I read with interest the President’s Message, “Inclusive at its Core” in the May 2008 ARIZONA ATTORNEY. The sentence which caught my eye was, “Well, we are trying to create a legal profession and a legal system that reflects the community it serves, and that community is becoming increasingly diverse.”

Now, it strikes me that the legal profession should reflect not the community it serves but rather the pool of candidates from which the

profession is formed (or to which other benefits are offered). (I can appreciate the fact, for examples, that felons and illegal aliens served by the legal profession are underrepresented in the legal profession, but this is, I would suggest, because they are similarly underrepresented in the pool of candidates seeking entry into the legal profession.)

A qualified candidate for entry into the legal profession (or for “recruitment, promotion and retention”) should not be denied entry (or such other benefits) merely because there are too many persons of his (or her) particular ethnic or “diversic” background already in the profession, or receiving those benefits, nor should an unqualified candidate for entry into the legal profession (or for “recruitment, promotion and retention”) nevertheless be granted entry (or such other benefits) merely because there are not enough persons of his (or her) particular ethnic or “diversic” background in the profession, or receiving those benefits.

It is disingenuous to hold out the “promise of equal opportunity” while at the same time championing the “increasing recruitment, promotion and retention of minority lawyers.” The point that never gets across, no matter how many times it is made, is that “equal opportunity” does not guarantee equality of results. It takes “fostering diversity” to do that.

—*George E. Reeves*

BAD MEDICINE

I was amused by George E. Reeves’ comment “to call illegal immigrants ‘undocumented workers’ is like calling drug dealers ‘unlicensed pharmacists’” (Soundoff, “Yearn to Breathe Free—Elsewhere,” June 2008). But his analogy is not accurate. Not all legal immigrants are authorized to work in the United States. Thus not all undocumented workers are illegal immigrants. Also, the law recognizes there is a big difference between a pharmacist in a drugstore whose license is expired and someone selling methamphetamine on a street corner.

I realize we are in an election year that requires complex issues to be distilled into sound bites and bumper sticker slogans, but we should not be glib about the important issues confronting us as a society.

—*Beverly Rudnick, Gilbert*

ARIZONA ATTORNEY is proud to provide a forum for members to voice their opinions. Send letters to arizona.attorney@azbar.org.