

The Gray Lady Has Jumped the Shark

☒ I don't read the New York Times on a regular basis. I may check out a story here and there just to reinforce my belief that, while it may be considered the "newspaper of record," it's still just a part of the lamestream media. I've often hoped they'd call to sell me a subscription so I could say I don't own a bird and, therefore, am not in need of a birdcage liner, but that hasn't happened yet.

While the paper's motto continues to be "all the news that's fit to print," I dare anyone to explain to me why the next story is fit to be told anywhere other than on a third-rate reality tv show.

I heard about the December 17th article appearing in the Weddings/Celebrations section's "Vows" column while watching "Red Eye," which, by the way, is the funniest late night show on television. Anyway, the article describes the recent marriage of former New York WNBC reporter and anchor, Carol Anne Riddell, and John Partilla. The article describes in detail how these two met, fell in love, married, and created one big happy family with their respective children.

They met in 2006 in a pre-kindergarten classroom. Their children went to the same upper west side school. Ms. Riddell described Mr. Partilla's dynamic personality, "He doesn't walk in, he explodes in." Similarly, Mr. Partilla describes Ms. Riddell as a kindred dynamo. "She's such a force. She rocks back and forth on her feet as if she can't contain her energy as she's talking to you."

Sounds great, doesn't it? Well, they both had spouses. The two families became friends, shared dinners, Christmas parties and even vacationed together!

This is the tripe the NYT chose to publish: "But it was hard to ignore their easy rapport. They got each other's jokes and finished each other's sentences. They shared a similar rhythm in the way they talked and moved. The very things one hopes to find in another person, but not when you're married to someone else."

When I read that Mr. Partilla "didn't believe in the word soul mate before" but he does now, I was ready to toss my cookies. When he made that sophomoric statement, did he ever consider his ex-wife, the mother of his children?

The article goes on and details the anguish each suffered and how horribly punished they felt. "Why did someone throw him in my path when I can't have him?" I thought this was the type of drivel daytime soap operas were made of.

We were given the details about how they eventually told their spouses, their separation, their wedding in the clerk's office and subsequent "small ceremony in the presidential suite of the Mandarin Oriental Hotel." According to Ms. Riddell, her "kids are going to look at me and know that I am flawed and not perfect, but also deeply in love. We're going to have a big, noisy, rich life, with more love and more people in it." Wow, I know I'm touched.

Have we, as a society, sunk so low that even the NYT, the supposed "newspaper of record," finds it newsworthy to set forth the sordid details of this alliance? Sure, people split up every day. Some even meet new people while they're married to someone else. But who would reveal, and what newspaper would publish, the intimate details of the destruction of two marriages and two families?

These two, obviously narcissistic, individuals feel compelled to bear their souls and describe in detail their sordid relationship. But what would make the NYT decide to publish this "fairy tale" piece? I'd like it to re-visit these two

utterly selfish human beings in five years to see if their hot monkey love is still in play. My guess: I doubt it.

I skimmed through the 139 published comments. While there were a few “we shouldn’t be judgmental” remarks, and a few good wishes for their happiness, I didn’t see too much support for the NYT publishing the Riddell/Partilla exposition. One woman whose ex-husband left her for a woman she considered one of her closest friends wrote, “to sugar-coat the destruction of two marriages by telling this story in the Vows column, I find appalling.” Ditto.

Like I said, I don’t regularly read the NYT, and I have no idea about Devan Sipher, who starts off his article by asking “what happens when love comes at the wrong time?” But, regardless of my opinion of the NYT, I don’t get why it would stoop to the level of a Jerry Springer to publish such an exposé. After reading about these two self-centered individuals, I’ll venture to guess that their ex-spouses are better off without them. But I’m sure that’s easy for me to say. I wish them and their children all the best.

I get that these two obnoxious people found one another. What I don’t get is why the editor of the NYT thought their shameful story should be told. But, if you do, God bless you.

Political Correctness Abounds

✘ When did all this happen? When did “gentlemen’s club” replace strip joint? Strippers are now “exotic dancers.” “Noncitizen defendants” is the inoffensive way of saying criminal illegal aliens. When someone’s tax credit exceeds the amount he pays in federal income taxes, the money received is now called a “tax refund” instead of welfare. Panhandlers

are no longer called "bums." You shouldn't call anyone a "black sheep" but rather an outcast. Gifted children are now "advanced learners." Can you believe this crap? (Am I allowed to say that?)

Of all the euphemisms that are around today, the one that drives me insane is "single mom" which describes any woman who's raising her children alone. It's overused by those who want to pull on my heartstrings because of some woman's plight in raising her children by herself. For example, Mary is a single mom who has to work two jobs to pay the rent, etc., etc., etc.

Before my heart starts bleeding for someone, I want to know how they got in their predicament in the first place. Call me cruel and uncaring. That's fine. I just want to know how this woman came to be a mother raising her children on her own. Is she divorced? Is she widowed? Is she an unwed mother? I want to know this before I start pouring out my limited reserve of compassion.

Is she divorced? Is the father paying child support or is he a dead beat dad? The father might have left the wife for some dumb reason and is a real s.o.b. That's truly unfortunate but I'd hope she'd be taking his sorry butt to court and getting every court-ordered penny of child support out of him.

Is she widowed? The dad might not have had life insurance and left the wife unexpectedly to fend for herself and her children. I'll save my compassion for people in this category. Women who did the right thing, got married, had children, and for whatever reason, are left with the children after their husband dies. My mother died when I was eight years old. I never referred to my Dad as a "single Dad." My Dad was a widower raising two little kids. He did all the right things and deserved the status of "widower."

Is she an unwed mother? Well, then, where's the father? Does

she even know who the father is? Is he paying child support? If not, why not? Has she gone to court to enforce a judgment of child support?

For me, the bottom line has always been when did it become socially acceptable to be an unwed mother? I've no idea. Back in the 60s, I went to a lot of weddings. But if a baby came soon afterwards, "we" all started counting backwards the number of months since the wedding. No one was ostracized but we were all aware of the fact that the couple "had to get married." That's the way it was done.

On this subject, I'm unapologetically old school. When I was looking for a photo to accompany this article, I plugged in "courtship, marriage, children" and a photo of Elizabeth Barrett Browning popped up. That tells you something. We're not talking about a generation gap or being old-fashioned, we're talking a whole other century and not the one we just left behind ten years ago!

While there may be growing numbers of financially independent women and older and single women deciding to have children on their own, as reported in the Washington Post in May of 2009, I know the sharp rise in unwed mothers is not in this demographic. I'm going to say, and I'm sure the statistics would support my conclusion, that the upswing in unwed mothers is among poor, young women, of all races, who have no education, no career, and no future and who simply don't have a clue how difficult raising a child can be even if they were married. (By the way, I'm not supposed to use the word "races.")

This entire subject is mind-boggling to me on so many levels. Unless a woman is the victim of rape, it's her choice to have unprotected sex. So much for all that free birth control we're funding through Planned Parenthood and all those years of sex education in schools. It's really working, isn't it?

In the Washington Post article, an astonishing statement from one woman was, "he's a good dad and a good person, but he's just not right for me." Are women so desperate for affection/attention/love, they'll go to bed with a man without even knowing whether "he's right for me?"

The Post article mentions the old adage, "first comes love, then comes marriage, then comes baby in the baby carriage." Well, fine, the article says this no longer holds true. Does that mean there is no continuum today on how relationships develop? Do women today have so little self-worth that they'll risk creating a new life with someone they'll, in all probability, not even remember in five year's time?

You meet someone, you give them your number, they call, you talk a few times, you go out for coffee, you decide whether the person's worth your time for a second date. You have a few more phone calls. You find out about the guy's background, his family, his education, his career. You have a third or fourth date. In today's world, with all the risks involved, how does sex come before all this?

Doesn't any woman nowadays wait to find out who a man is before they have sex with him? Don't women know that in any relationship they have the ultimate power and control over the situation?

Now, I'm sure some of you are saying, "Gosh, she's so out of touch." Well, I may be almost 60 years old but I've never behaved in such an irresponsible way as to bring an illegitimate child into this world. (Oops, I don't think I'm allowed to say that either.)

And while I'm on the subject, the only other term I despise more than "single mom" is "baby mama." After reading the negative connotations of "baby mama" in the Urban Dictionary, I haven't a clue why any woman would allow a man to call her his "baby mama."

From a purely grammatical point of view, is "baby" a noun or adjective? Shouldn't it be "my baby's mama?" The implausible meaning of "baby mama" would mean the baby is a mother. Bottom line, the use of the phrase "baby mama" is not only offensive but ridiculous.

I don't get any of this, but if you do, God bless you.