

Toxic Masculinity at Intellectual Takeout

Last week was one of those weeks when work and life are “t-boned” over and over and over again. At a certain point, you simply resign yourself to your fate, only asking, “What’s next?”

It was late Thursday night and I had just finished with a pet crisis that resulted in the Foley clan down one chicken and a house full of mourning for the beloved hen, Gianna.

Once the last tears were wiped, discussions of animals and souls ended, and the kids asleep, I checked my e-mail. Right at the top was one from a friend who linked to an article from Intellectual Takeout titled, “[Breaking the Silence on the Toxic Masculinity at Intellectual Takeout](#)”, written by the only female on staff, Annie Holmquist.

Given our organizational structure, I wasn’t aware it had been written, published, posted to our social media channels, and then blasted out to the world through e-mail.

A bit of panic set in.

Dwight, our CEO, and I have always tried to maintain a healthy, respectful office culture, though one still enjoyable and lax for the creative juices to flow. But toxic masculinity?!?

Maybe something happened that I didn’t know about. Maybe, like so many other media organizations, I had a new crisis on my hands and an answer to, “What’s next?”. Maybe heads were going to roll. Maybe my head was going to roll.

The article led with the *Time* “2017 Person of the Year” cover picture featuring a cohort of women labeled “The Silence

Breakers". Then it was Annie's turn:

"I have decided that it is time for me, too, to break the silence about the toxic masculinity that occurs in my office. This is the tell-all of a lone female who is preventing Intellectual Takeout headquarters from 'becoming a frat house.'"

That's a bigger, "What's next?" than even I could have guessed. With blood pressure rising and neck muscles tightening, I read on, noticing that Annie even had "exhibits" of Intellectual Takeout's toxic masculinity – five of them. Words that ought not to be written bounced around my mind.

"Exhibit one is undoubtedly brought about by the environment in which I live. In Minnesota we have this thing called snow. It comes quite regularly and has a habit of collecting on car windshields while faithful workers are holed up in their offices. Once upon a time, I came out to find several inches of white fluff on my car. The machismo of my male co-workers reared its head when a couple of them helped me clean off my car. Clearly, they failed to see that I was perfectly capable of cleaning my car on my own, thank-you-very-much.

Exhibit two is a regular occurrence; in fact, it happens almost every time I head for a door at the same time as one of my male co-workers. They either stand back and let me go first, or they hold the door for me. The nerve! Have they not heard that chivalry is dead?

Exhibit three can be seen when there are boxes to lug around or water cooler jugs to change. Rather than let me practice my weight-lifting skills, my male co-workers have the audacity to do the heavy lifting for me. Are they so intent upon flexing their masculine muscles that they must belittle and mock my strength as a woman?

Exhibit four treads on even more dangerous ground. Sometimes

– dare I say it? – I actually get compliments from them! Don't they know that complimenting a woman's appearance is a subtle form of sexual oppression?

I could go on, but I'll stop with exhibit five. There's a lot of concern that women need to hang out with their male co-workers and bosses outside the office to demonstrate they are on equal footing with their male counterparts. Well let me tell you, my co-workers are falling down on the job on this one. Do they hang out with me after office hours? Noooo. They head home and spend time with their perfectly nuclear families, the ultimate symbol of patriarchy and oppression."

Thank the good Lord; heads will not roll. According to Annie, we actually live what we preach – or, at least, try our best to do so. It's worth noting that of all people, Annie would know since she was the first person to officially join the team way back in 2009

Over the years, we've worked hard to gently critique the underlying roots of so much of our culture's dreadfulness while also presenting a positive, intellectually rooted vision for manhood and, especially, fatherhood. ([If you appreciate that kind of work, we need your help to keep doing it.](#))

As Annie is so good at doing, she touched upon the need to reconsider so much of our culture and society in light of the ongoing news.

"My point – as I hope you've figured out by now – is that many things we label toxic are not always as bad as we've made them out to be. In fact, they're often examples of kind, mannerly men trying to be polite, prudent, and considerate of others.

Now in saying this, I want to make clear that it is not my intention to belittle the women who have come forward with horror stories during the #MeToo movement. I applaud them for

their actions because I know (from firsthand experience) that there are a number of creeps out there who need to stop what they are doing. But sometimes, the ones best able to take care of the creeps and ensure that women are treated with dignity and respect are the gentlemen like those I work with.

It is because of this that I wonder if we need to step back from the #MeToo movement and consider where it's heading. In the rush to out those who have done wrong, let's remember that there are still many good men left in this world."

I'm thankful that Annie not only tolerates, but actually appreciates the "toxic masculinity" of Intellectual Takeout. As a woman, she sees a side of society that we men simply cannot. I am proud, too, that we can be a truly safe space for her to grow as both a person and writer.

The endless stories and allegations of sexual deviancy obviously reveal a crisis: Powerful men, with no moral inhibitions, are a clear and present danger to the well-being of civil society.

Unfortunately, good men largely have stood to the side as the cultural revolution has progressed and the barbarism spread. If I may be included in that group, I would argue that we feel unwanted. We do our best to be gentlemen, quietly raising our families, opening doors for ladies, and carving out small islands of virtue, but overall we feel quite restrained.

As I consider the accusations of absolutely evil deeds by powerful, immoral men, I, like Annie, keep wondering if it takes good men, unrestrained, to keep the barbarians in check.

And if it does, is America ready for such change?