

The Real Problem With Target's 'Trophy' T-Shirt

In recent days retail giant Target has been lambasted for stocking and selling a T-shirt for women that features the word "Trophy" emblazoned across its front side. Critics claim the T-shirt and the message help fuel a culture and attitude that objectifies women. There is even an online petition that demands the removal of the T-shirt, which is currently on sale nationwide.

The term "trophy wife" and its negative connotation is common in popular culture today, and I agree that the T-shirt indeed boldly advertises the notion of women as objects. However, one of the most disturbing aspects of this story is that women are the ones buying and wearing the T-shirts! Have they fully bought into their own objectification?

What's the big deal? It's only a T-shirt! Right? Wrong.

If this were a one-time, tongue-in-cheek, promotional sales stunt, then perhaps Target and the women who buy the T-shirts would get a softer reproach. But the message on this T-shirt is a microcosm of a much larger cultural tragedy. The bigger problem is that in America we have a "pornified" media culture that indoctrinates us. Starting at a young age we are bombarded with the idea that women are dehumanized objects made for consumption. We are pounded with the view that a woman's value is solely based on her sex appeal, and that men are insatiable, animal-like consumers of that sexuality. Examples are everywhere and have escalated in recent years.

If you doubt what I say, just take a 10-minute walk through the swarming spring break crowd in Panama City, Florida, or the Mardi Gras crowd on Bourbon Street in New Orleans.

In Panama City you will observe hordes of high school- and

college-age girls half dressed and half drunk. The hats and T-shirts the boys and girls wear are emblazoned with offensive slogans laced with profanity. It isn't surprising at all that public rapes on the spring break beaches have been taking place on a regular basis.

A "Trophy" T-shirt may be mild by comparison, but it carries the same message: Women are objects.

Young boys (and increasingly girls) get their sex education from pornography that is mostly degrading, violent and dehumanizing toward women. Young girls have role models such as Beyonce, Miley Cyrus, Lady Gaga, Rihanna and Shakira who writhe around and gyrate almost naked in order to increase or maintain their fame. So in one sense, that Target would carry the "Trophy" T-shirt is no surprise. It should be expected that retailers would cater to the demand of a hyper-sexualized culture that encourages objectification. But it is also part of the problem.

We need much more than to ask Target to remove this T-shirt from its shelves. What we really need is a cultural revolution where people stand up against the tide of injustice that is the dehumanization and objectification of women. We need people to change their attitudes, hearts and actions. When this happens there will be no market for a "Trophy" T-shirt.

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