

WITNESS FOR JUSTICE

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Teach Them about Our “Whole” Lives

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It's been a little over a month since Super Bowl XLV (45). As a young girl, growing up in a small town in Montana, I joined my family as we attended all the high school football and basketball games. My older brother meticulously taught me the fundamentals of football, and I remember listening to college and professional football on our AM radio. These are fond memories. Still years later, I am a football fan.

The Super Bowl was a good game! The commercials were disappointing - too much depiction of men as buffoons and women as sexual objects. But I do love the E-trade tykes! There was one commercial that really affected me in a myriad of ways. It was the one, sponsored by Teleflora, which featured Faith Hill helping a love-stuck young man compose an e-mail to his new-found love. She advises him to write from the heart, and he quickly sends this message: “Your rack is incredible.” Faith is stunned and says, “You sent that?” End of commercial. I apologize if you find this offensive. Personally, I was disgusted, too, but did continue to watch the game.

The next morning, while listening to Mike and Mike on ESPN Cleveland, the previously mentioned commercial was discussed - for my entire fifteen-minute commute. Here's the shorthand version of the conversation: Mike #1: I found the commercial with Faith Hill really disturbing. Mike #2: Oh, why? Mike #1: It contained a word for women's breasts that I can't bring myself to say on air. Mike #2: Oh, I know what you're talking about. Mike #1: My young daughter was watching with me and asked me what a ____ was, and I was so embarrassed. Mike #2: What did you do? Mike #1: I told her to pass the chips.

Immediately upon entering my office, I fired up my computer, found an e-mail address for the Mike and Mike show, and sent them a message. I told

Mike and Mike that I had listened to their conversation regarding the offensive commercial and that I agreed with their assessment. Then (typing with my sexuality educator's fingers) I encouraged them to think about responding to their child's innocent question another way. "Honey, rack is another word for women's breasts, and Daddy doesn't like that word."

I continued my message by saying that a parent needs to start sharing their values with their children at an early age. Parents are the primary sexuality educators of their children. By doing this, sons and daughters will know that you are an ask-able parent, and they will continue to come to you for answers they can trust. Yes, some of the questions can be difficult, but remember - children get their questions answered somewhere - sexualized advertising, TV shows, music, the internet, playground buddies or (fill in the blank).

The next time all the Mikes (or Mollys) hear or see something offensive on television, I hope they will share their values with the child, teen or young adult, sitting next to them on the couch. It could just be the most valuable time they'll ever spend with their child.

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