

Last Updated: 3:29 pm | Saturday, September 8, 2007

We must open our hearts more for hurting mother

OK, I'm officially over my capacity to keep a lid on it. Each morning when I pick up The Enquirer, I'm in prepare-to-tinge mode. Surely, surely they're going to stop already with these lurid front-page stories about the unspeakable tragedy of the Nesselroad-Slaby family.

Friday's front-page photo of what has to be the most unimaginable pain a mother can sustain - of course she's talking about committing suicide. How can anyone consider this newsworthy, or surprising?

Every woman I know - and in my work I meet a lot of women telling the truths of our complicated lives - is experiencing a toxic stew of "there but for the grace of God" compassion for this mother, not to mention horror at the public stoning she's undergoing in the media. Most of us can't even bear to read the details, almost as if tempting fate if we get too close to it.

I know this column is going to draw criticism of how I wouldn't feel this way if the mother weren't of my race, class, and yes - even profession. I was a young, overextended public school teacher and mother earlier in my life, toting a child to day care, along with briefcases full of lesson plans and papers to grade, food for faculty potlucks, diaper bag, lunch bag, etc., etc. Now I'm the mother of an adult son and his wife, balancing the burdens of a society that is not set up for the realities of women who need, want, deserve - to work. Not to mention the fact that society needs the gifts and talents of women now more than ever.

Truth is, any story of any destroyed mother, any dead child - and that includes Iraqi children and mothers caught in the crossfire of our benevolence - breaks my heart. The best we can hope for in the midst of so much violence, intentional and accidental, is that our hearts might break *open* to feelings that will lead us to wiser personal and societal choices and values.

Enquirer coverage of this tragedy has had the flavor of tabloid pandering and will provoke only more heartlessness, which leads to more hopelessness - and violence.

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