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First Essay Assignment

Father vs. Provider

Father of eight kids, four of whom are at the age of three, recently became the new topic of conversation for Antonio Cromartie instead of his football career with the New York Jets. The immorality of a situation where a man can father eight children with six different wives began to define a new low across the country. We live in America, a land where contraceptives are at such abundance that you can even buy them in the bathrooms of gas stations on the local interstate. And yet as if having sexual relations with eight women is not enough, this man cannot even manage to use a simple condom while engaging in sex. Wait though, Cromartie plays for the NFL. He can afford these six separate families without breaking a sweat! Who cares if he cannot remember the names of his children as long as they are provided with the things they need, right? Wrong: he is simply a *provider*. Not a father figure or a guardian, although he will try to tell you otherwise. These similar ideas are strongly voiced in the recent controversial article by Mitch Albom, *8 kids with 6 moms? NFL star is shameful** as Antonio Cromartie is assessed for his wrongdoings. Critics are attacking Mr. Albom's racially loaded article, claiming Cromartie is unfairly blamed for thousands of fatherless children, but are missing the crucial objective of his writing: to make known a growing problem of children being born out of wedlock.

Mr. Albom hits the nail on the head when he claims, "Fathering children as if you're watering plants is a growing problem in the sports world, particularly in African-American

* Mitch Albom, "8 kids with 6 moms? NFL star is shameful," Detroit *Free Press*, August 29, 2010.
<http://www.freep.com>

cultures.” What was Cromartie thinking? While fathering children with as many women as one likes may be considered tolerable in under-developed countries of Africa, America has modernized to a point where behavior like this is condemned.* Although the purpose of his article is not to initiate a racial war, Albom argues that data has pointed towards African American cultures as being the primary society to blame: “...the news is worst in that community [African Americans], where, in recent data from the National Center for Health Statistics, 72% of new babies were born out of wedlock, versus 28% among whites and 17% among Asians.” Mitch Albom backs-up his opinions with clear-cut facts, providing solid evidence to support his claim. His intentions are merely to educate people so that they know how severe this issue can be. Even though he is quick to declare that not many people from the black community will listen to the “white columnist bemoaning the issue,” I think Mr. Albom was attempting to influence anyone he could.

The article also seems to put the crimes of thousands on the back of Cromartie. Disputers of Mr. Albom’s article might even claim that he goes over the top. They might ask, “Why should he call out the wrongdoings of one man, when there are so many others that, like him, are fathering children out of wedlock?” Yes, some aspects of Albom’s article do convey the impression that Cromartie is the only man at fault. I think Mitch Albom’s reason for writing like this, though, is quite intentional. Making an example out of someone people around the country look up to can actually make a difference, persuading them into making better choices regarding their children. It is evident, through the way Mr. Albom writes, that he believed Cromartie’s situation was a great opportunity to not only make an example of the nationally-known, football-playing “role model”, but also to take this example to the next level allowing others to recognize

* Only 32 percent of women and 37 percent of men from Africa who reported having multiple sexual partners said they used a condom during their last sexual encounter. <http://www.plusnews.org/report.aspx?Reportid=87204>

the severity of the problem this country faces. Paraphrasing the columnist, he claims that it is our place to be worried over this problem because we share this country, and playing Johnny Appleseed to children that will be uncared for makes our country a more difficult place. Although Albom knows that his critics are stating, "It's not [Albom's] place to say anything," he could not pass up this chance to pronounce his opinion on the growing issue our country has been slow to amend.

Some will even claim Mr. Albom's article should not have made fun of the business of another man's family (in this case families). After all, Cromartie's family does fall under the category of personal. What gives us the right to poke at this aspect of his life? Mitch Albom would claim that since Mr. Cromartie was the one who went on national television and brought this hype upon himself, that could be considered cause enough. Moreover, people who take away from Albom's argument for this reason might not realize the importance of the topic. The goal of Mitch Albom's piece of writing is not to make fun of Antonio Cromartie because it is enjoyable. The journalist is proving that there are consequences when fathering children out of wedlock occurs. Maybe not directly to Cromartie, but to the rest of society, there is. To paraphrase Mitch Albom, children with absent fathers have statistically proven to be prone to higher crime rates, dropout rates, and violence rates.* These are then the people who will eventually have their own children born out of wedlock thus contributing to a cycle of fatherless children. Even though he uses many forms of wit and satire to proclaim this, his last few sentences are no joking matter: "Hey, Antonio. It isn't how fast you remembered the kids. It's how fast you created them. And there's nothing funny about your story. It's sad. Really sad." This really shows why the article was written: to begin the changing of a culture that is ethically wrong, not only because of how it

* 71% of all high school dropouts come from fatherless homes and 75% of all adolescent patients in chemical abuse centers come from fatherless homes. <http://www.children-ourinvestment.org>

drastically affects society, but also because it puts children at an immense disadvantage in their lives.

Antonio Cromartie unfortunately became a subject of debate over the last couple weeks. Some will look past this as a fluke while others will argue that it is his choice to do what he wants as long as he can support the families. I believe the vast majority, though, will agree with Mitch Albom's argument that a father having eight children with six different women is nothing to look over lightly. There is a major difference between a father and a provider, and Cromartie has crossed that line.