

FOR AND About You

By Harriett Muhammad

DEAR HARRIETT: I'm very disturbed about a rumor that indirectly involves me. It's about a could-be scandal that you always think of as happening to the "other person."

I have heard, in the small town I live in, that my cousin, has started prostituting. I don't exactly know how to take this—whether I should go to her or call a family conference or what. I hesitate to discuss it much because my grandmother is quite old and this kind of thing may cause her to become ill. Nevertheless, it hurts that this is happening in my family.

This is not the problem of a juvenile delinquent as she is almost 22 now.

—MISS MORTIFIED

DEAR MISS MORTIFIED: If you want to help your cousin, move cautiously. If you offend her you may cause her to erect a mental wall between you.

As it stands, you don't know whether this is a rumor or is the truth, so until you are sure do not react as if it were true. You probably know what type of person your cousin is — whether or not you can talk confidentially with her or whether she would cut you off and take offense. If you can win her confidence and the rumor IS true, you are in a better position to find out what is behind this recent development (and if you can't maybe someone else in the family can).

And, as you said—she is not a juvenile and if she is in need of reform and rejects it—you can do nothing.

DEAR HARRIETT: I feel you can give me some advice about what to do. My ex-husband and I have been divorced for three years, but we live together with our six

children. He gives me and the children just about everything that we want and he is buying a house for us.

However, he has not asked me to remarry him—do you think that he has forgotten that we were divorced? Do you think I should remind him that we are not married?

—EX-WIFE, Atlanta, Ga.

DEAR EX-WIFE: It could be that he has forgotten you were divorced—then it could be, far from forgetting, he remembers how expensive and time-consuming a divorce can be. If the former is the case, a simple reminding him of the facts should bring the expected results. If the latter is the case — you've got work to do.

If your ex-husband IS hesitating to remarry you because he anticipates another breakup in the future, then it won't do for you to start feeling your cherrios and jump bad. After six children, I'm sure you know your husband, so use the approach you think is best in order to get your message through. Remember—the goal is that powerful piece of paper that can make your co-habiting legally acceptable—can give you and your children security — can give you more peace of mind, and if at first you don't succeed don't let it be said that YOU accidentally-on-purpose "forgot" too.

Something on your mind? Write and tell me about it.

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