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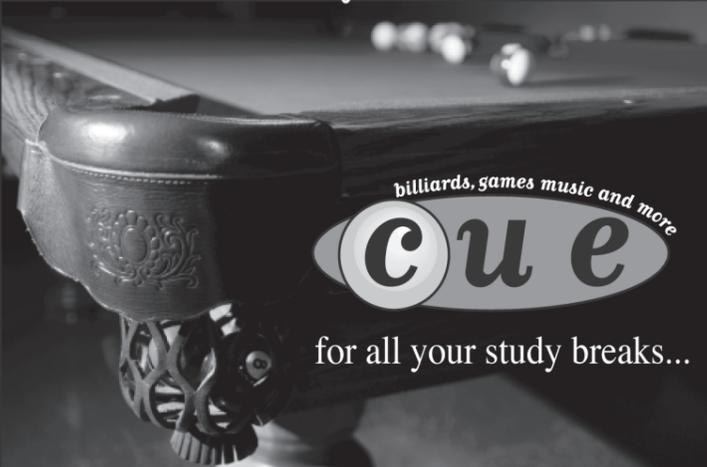
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Working in retail is bad enough without rude customers—don't be inconsiderate



EMILY
MATTINGSLEY

When I returned to school after Reading Week, I was shocked to hear countless stories from my classmates about their trips abroad or week full of partying. Since when did the students who protest against tuition hikes become the same students who can afford to go to Cancun for five days?

I, unfortunately, have no crazy stories from Cancun to tell since, apparently, I'm the only broke student left. Instead, I spent every single day of that precious week working at "Slave-On-Foods" where I'm a grocery clerk—and after working two years in an industry that only takes two months to master, I become bored if I have to work more than my usual four hours per week.

The customers tend to be so clueless and unaware of their immediate surroundings that it feels like I'm being sent out into the wild to help multiple Helen Kellers—and what's worse is that they talk to me like I'm the blind one.

But since my boss told me I'm not allowed to show these customers what I think of them through physical means, I've channelled my energy into constructing a list of the five most annoying things that customers do on a regular basis in the hopes that they'll learn a thing or two about how to co-exist peacefully with the people who help them in their everyday life.

First of all, grocery shopping is a self-serve activity. It's not my job to find everything on your list, especially when you are looking for "that kind of cereal that's in a box with yellow writing on it." In case you haven't noticed, the aisles are labelled so that you can find everything by yourself, and in the extreme case where you must ask me where something is kept, it would be nice if you actually knew the name of the product. Believe it or not, I can't read your mind, and "cereal in a box" doesn't really narrow it down.

I'm not a robot—you can't just pronounce the product that you want and expect me to spit out an aisle number.

When I'm asked to help a customer with a special matter that requires them to deal with me exclusively, they like to ask for my name. They don't ask me a nice way though, but rather in more of a threatening manner. Like, "Alright, Emily. I'll be coming in to get the order on Tuesday, Emily. I will ask to talk to you, Emily." What they're really saying is, "If you mess this up, I will know to blame it on you, Emily"—but just because you know my name, it doesn't mean that I'll get in trouble. Threatening me before I've done anything wrong won't make me want to help you, and if you're rude to me, chances are your order won't be making its way into the store anytime soon.

It also irks me when customers don't give me the full sentence that I deserve. Imagine that I'm going about my work routine, and then, without warning, people randomly walk up to me and start yelling words like "Kleenex." Of course, I know that these people simply want to know where these items are kept, but it annoys me that they can't take the time to form an entire question for me. I'm not a robot—you can't just pronounce the product that you want and expect me to spit out an aisle number. I typically respond "Kleenex? What about it?"—which is usually followed by, "What is your name, miss?"

And though you might assume it, I don't know everything. My job isn't to tell you what kind of supplement you should take for your headache or which cream works best for your itch—besides, do you really want to trust a 20-year-old with those kinds of decisions? They have doctors to help you with your health. Grocery stores are simply the place that you go to buy the products that you need.

Finally, departments aren't interchangeable. I'm a grocery clerk, which means that if you have questions about produce, chances are you will know more about the apples than I will, and if there's a long lineup at customer service, don't look at me like I should be opening up a new till. If I tried, I would get fired, because handling your cash isn't part of my job. I'm trained to work in a specific area, so don't expect me to know how to do it all.

I wish I knew who started the phrase, "The customer is always right," because that person was an idiot. The customer is never right, unless they're agreeing with the workers.

Feminism is something to be proud of



MORGAN
SMITH

women in the media like Oprah and Hillary Clinton, they're either demonized or worshipped and become less like role-models and more distant and mythic figures.

I think one of the reasons I was turned around on feminism was that I had a flesh-and-blood role model in my life that I could understand as a feminist. I'm lucky enough that this woman was my mother.

This past Saturday was International Women's Day. A day that celebrates the accomplishments of women, advocates for women's rights, and promotes feminism in general.

Growing up in the '80s and '90s, I noticed that feminism seemed to be a word associated not with positive activism, but one that was uttered with derision. The term "feminist" seemed to describe an alarmist bitch and had essentially become a dirty word.

What I also noticed was that girls and women weren't standing up to defend the term. There were very few girls that I knew of who weren't outright insulted when they were called "feminists"—you might as well have called them dykes. Girls seemed to accept its new definition as a powerful insult without a fight—and for a while, so did I.

I think that a lot of the reason girls my age didn't embrace feminism the way our parents did was a lack of women in the public sphere that we could look up to, easily relate to, and clearly identify as feminists.

But whether we picture suffragettes in their sashes handing out leaflets or women in the '60s burning their bras on campuses, you can't relate to them on a level other than that of the abstract. And as for the influential

The term "feminist" seemed to describe an alarmist bitch and had essentially become a dirty word.

There are many reasons that Phyllis Smith inspires me. She's warm, caring, and fiercely intelligent, which is reason enough for admiration, but she has also made important contributions to the women's movement in this city and province at large.

It's a well-worn cliché that women have to work twice as hard to get half the respect that a man would in their chosen field, but at least from my outside perspective, my mother never seemed to have that problem.

Or it could be that she just handled it with extraordinary grace and gentility. She has never been one to complain about living in a "man's world" or to chastise the younger generation for not appreciating all that her generation had to fight to achieve—in short, she's never been the stereotypical

feminazi that we all let ourselves be convinced that feminists were.

There was only one occasion that I ever had any inkling that she gave any regard to the patriarchal system we live in. When the new, expanded cable packages introduced The Women's Network, there were gleeful pokes made by many of my junior high classmates who called it sexist. I came home and asked my mother why there was no Men's Network to counter it. Phyllis looked at me and said, "Morgan, every network is the Men's Network."

My mother has also protected women's rights in other ways. In the late 1980s, she represented abortion clinic physician and activist Dr Henry Morgentaler.

She aided the Morgentaler Clinic in acquiring an injunction for a restraining order to keep anti-abortion protesters a minimum distance from their Edmonton clinic. Because of this, she helped women in need receive the services that they required without having to endure emotional abuse.

My mother has helped me in more ways than one. She always presented the world to me as one in which it was simply expected that I would excel because I had every right to.

I never felt at any time that I couldn't do something because I was a girl or that life wasn't fair to me, and I think that this is because I knew that my mother would somehow make it fair for me, like she made it fair for herself.

I hope that one day soon people realize that being a feminist is nothing to be ashamed about. In fact, it's something to be damn proud of.