

Say WEN!

**By Reg P. Wydeven
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I think today's world is too narcissistic. Everywhere you look, people are taking selfies and posting them online to show the world how hot they are. Sadly, internet users known as trolls will leave horrific comments about these posted pictures, hiding behind their anonymity.

Just like 'selfie' is a new addition to our vernacular, so too now is 'body shaming.' I didn't know what this was until I heard about Playboy model Dani Mathers posting a picture online of a naked woman inside the locker room shower at an LA Fitness gym. The woman was obviously not a Playboy model and Mathers captioned the photo saying, "If I can't unsee this then you can't either."

After learning about the photo, LA Fitness permanently revoked Mathers' membership at all of its health clubs. Jill Greuling, the gym's executive vice president of operations, said, "Her behavior is appalling and puts every member at risk of losing their privacy." In addition, the LAPD is investigating Mathers for possible misdemeanor charges for illegally distributing the image.

As a society, I think we focus too much on looks. Of course, what else would you expect a pot-bellied, balding man who turns 44 next month to say? But while we may be shallow, sometimes it's justified.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recently launched an investigation into the safety of Wen Cleansing Conditioners by celebrity hair stylist Chaz Dean. The investigation is as a result of the agency receiving "the largest number of [safety] reports ever associated with any cosmetic hair cleansing product." According to the FDA, it received 127 consumer-safety complaints against Wen as of July 7, while more than 21,000 had been sent to the company. The agency learned of the complaints received by Wen after inspecting its manufacturing and distribution facilities.

Wen's popular scented cleansing conditioners are meant to be used in lieu of shampoo. The product is endorsed by several celebrities such as Brooke Shields, Angie Harmon and Alyssa Milano. After using the product, however, customers complained of serious skin and hair problems, including bald spots, hair breakage, irritation, and scalp rashes.

In the meantime, the FDA has taken the rare step of issuing a safety alert regarding the hair product. The agency asserts Wen "did not address safety concerns related to hair loss. We do not know if the company has other safety data, and we do not have the legal authority to require a cosmetics firm to provide product safety information."

The reason the FDA has no authority is because cosmetics are neither food nor drugs. The agency has limited power to regulate the \$62 billion industry, which would also include products like baby wipes, toothpaste and deodorant. According to attorney Tina Sigurdson, with the Environmental Working Group, "There's no legal requirement that a company makes sure a [cosmetic] product is safe before they sell it."

In addition to the FDA investigation, over 200 women from 40 states have filed a class action lawsuit against Chaz Dean and direct marketing company Guthy-Renker, which markets the product, in California Federal Court. The women also allege Wen caused severe hair damage, balding and rashes.

Wen maintains that its products, which remain on store shelves, are perfectly safe. The company contends that, "the truth is that there are many reasons why people suffer from hair loss, but using Wen is not one of them."

Too bad I can't sue my kids. I'm convinced they're the reason my hair is falling out.

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