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THE DREW LAB AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

ECOLOGY, EVOLUTION AND CONSERVATION OF CORAL REEFS

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Not how I wanted to spend spring break

It's spring break and I'm ostensibly on vacation. This means I'm working, but I'm doing so while looking at the ocean and as a marine biologist that's not a bad way to do things.

While checking Twitter this morning I saw an article in the Journal of Proteomics raising a stir. Like many journals JoP has graphical abstracts, essentially a single figure which is supposed to best sum up the science being done. The reason why this article was causing a stir had absolutely nothing to do with the science, rather the authors had decided that a scantily clad woman holding two coconuts would be the best way to describe the science contained in "[Harry Belafonte and the secret proteome of coconut milk****](#)".

What?

There are so many things wrong with this that I'm not even sure where to start. Let's go with the obvious. In a world where women face systematic and personal [barriers to success in science](#) (p.s. not new, check out this one from 1970), representations of women will have a chilling effect on women going into those fields ([here here](#) and [here](#)). That the authors, the peer reviewers and the editors would each ok that image speaks to deeply rooted cultural illness, one that is damaging to the future of science.

Second. If the best image to represent the science is the image of that woman it really makes me question how good of science I would find if I were to (as the figure caption urges) "have a look at the report inside" Good science should stand on its own, and while I have no problem with researchers advocating for their own work, or even using non-traditional means to bring research to the public, this abstract does not really convey a feeling of serious scholarship. To be honest I'm not a biochemist and I do not have the necessary skill set to evaluate the science inside. Let's just say however they're not packaging the science in such a way to make me feel like a lot of serious science went in.

Lastly, the image is copyrighted (image number 79 if you want to go [here](#)). Given the alacrity with which Elsevier goes after its own copyrighted material being posted on the web ([here](#)), I hope they look at their own house too.

Ok, so as I was writing this, the EIC wrote me back, saying.....

Juan J. Calvete
To: jcalvete@ibv.csic.es
Graphical Abstract in J. Proteomics

Dear Colleague,

Thanks for kindly letting me know that a graphical abstract published in Journal of Proteomics is getting unwelcome publicity. Although I, personally, do not think that the alluded images are sexist (as well as I would not consider it sexist if a man were represented), at least this was neither the intention of the authors nor of the editor, I can agree that this kind of images may be inappropriate for illustrating a scientific paper, and consequently have asked our journal manager to remove them. If anyone has been offended, officially apologize for that, and I hope to give settle the case as soon as possible to devote to the lab, which is what should take me up most of the day.

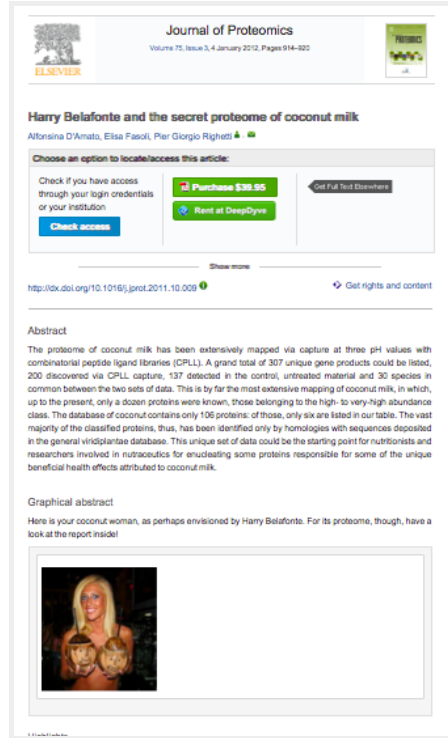
Best
Juan
--

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It's a victory my friend, but one that shows that we have so much work to do.

[Update Isis has a nice write up [here](#)]

*** The editors have taken the article down, however I have a screen shot of it here:



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