

Letter content reflects 'ninth floor' ignorance

Benjamin Franklin once said, "If a man empties his purse into his head, no one can take it from him." Some college students must be emptying wooden nickels into their heads if the letter below is any indication of the contents of their heads.

The letter from the Ninth Floor Society for Deportation of Nigerians is frightening to read. Perhaps the ignorance of the author stems from an unpleasant experience, a sheltered background or a lack in the academic services of this university.

Although we thought it was our obligation to print the letter, we thought that it could not go without some editorial comment.

Clyde Stearns wrote his guest opinion on *Roots* to say that many of the attitudes toward black people during the slave days and reconstruction period still exist today. It's true that prejudices take a long time to heal, but this is ridiculous.

The letter by the Ninth Floor too clearly illustrates that those feelings still fester in today's society.

We hope that this letter represents only a small segment of the "educated" college students on this campus. We go to college to learn more than facts and figures. The hardest tests in the real world are not true and false.

We must open our eyes and look inside each other. The present must not reflect or perpetuate the prejudices of yesterday.



Arthur Hoppe

American complaints chill landlord

Scene: The Heavenly Real Estate Office. The Landlord is happily puttering about, creating still another galaxy, as his business agent, Mr. Gabriel, enters, a sheaf of papers in one hand, his Golden Trumpet in the other.

The Landlord: Ah, Gabriel, do hand me that spangle of stars, the one hanging over that cobwebby jar of moonbeams. I really should dust . . .

Gabriel: Excuse me, sir. But I thought you'd want to know about those tenants of yours on that little planet you love so much, Earth. I'm afraid they're complaining again.

The Landlord (sighing): Not those Americans again, Gabriel?

Gabriel: Yes, sir. Those in the East are demanding you turn up the heat and those in the West want you to water their lawns and be quick about it. Really, sir, sometimes they seem to think of you as their janitor.

The Landlord: Their janitor, Gabriel?

Gabriel: And not a very good one at that. They say you've dumped 14 feet of snow on Buffalo and only a

Gabriel (checking): Yes, here it is: "Landlord agrees to provide one (1) sun to warm planet." But they don't use that much any more, sir. They prefer to bore holes in your earth and burn up your fossil fuels instead. But, fortunately, they've almost used these up.

The Landlord: Fortunately, Gabriel?

Gabriel: Yes, sir. You see they claim you put all the gas and all the oil in all the wrong places so they keep mucking up the oceans and gouging out your mountain meadows to bring it where they want it and even then there isn't enough to . . .

The Landlord: But, Gabriel, why don't they simply harness the free, clean energy of the sun I gave them?

Busy building bombs

Gabriel: Mostly habit, I'd say, sir. Then, too, they don't have the time or money to explore solar power. They're much too busy building thermonuclear bombs.

The Landlord: They plan to warm themselves with bombs, Gabriel?

Gabriel: Not exactly, sir. The Americans plan to warm the hides of the Russians or maybe the Chinese and vice versa. In any event, if they all devoted one-tenth the effort to developing solar energy that they do to developing means of blowing up your planet . . .

The Landlord: Do you mean to say, Gabriel, that the Americans are ten times more afraid of the Russians than they are of blizzards, snow and ice?

Gabriel: It would appear so, sir. (Raising his trumpet.) Really, sir, by any sound rule of property management, these reckless vandals should be . . .

The Landlord: Not yet, Gabriel. Instead, let us visit upon them more blizzards, more cold, more droughts and throw in a flood or two while you're at it.

Gabriel: As punishment, sir, for their blasphemy?

The Landlord (smiling sadly): No, Gabriel, in hopes that they will learn before it's too late that all men are brothers.

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letters

Grave injustice

Regarding the Feb. 10 guest opinion by Clyde Stearns, we feel a grave injustice has been done. Mr. Stearns, in answer to peoples "lack of emotion toward the plight of the slaves as portrayed in *Roots*, lists several factors overlooked in the television drama. I was tempted to believe Mr. Stearns until he committed the fatal mistake. While listing his "hierarchy of importance" he notes that darkies, spooks, niggers and coons (as they were known in those days) were located below even cats and dogs. Well, Mr. Stearns we hate to disappoint you, but you are wrong. We still call blacks those things today.

Ninth Floor Society for Deportation of Nigerians

Exaggerated statement

I most certainly sympathize with the indignation that Clyde Stearns and every other black American must feel when viewing the history of race relations in our country. In his guest opinion in the *Daily Nebraskan*, dated Feb. 10, Mr. Stearns purported to correct the misconceptions regarding slavery, which the recent television production of *Roots* gave certain people. I agree that the most cruel atrocities suffered by blacks at the hands of the white man were not depicted. However, I disagree with Mr. Stearns' analysis of the "hierarchy of importance." I also disagree with the 100,000 figure quoted as the number of blacks wantonly put to death by whites after the Civil War.

Slave labor was the backbone of the plantation economy, and slaves were relatively valuable property. A plantation owner did not make money by physically abusing his slaves, and they were certainly well above the level of a dog or a wagon in the "hierarchy of importance." I know that sounds facetious, and I do not mean to imply that their niche in the absolute order of things was in any way desirable. Indeed, it was not. But Mr. Stearns lost credibility when he exaggerated his statement to appeal to emotion rather than reason.

This is especially true when Mr. Stearns stated that blacks were killed by the 100,000s during Reconstruction. In his book, *Strain of Violence*, Richard Maxwell Brown showed that from 1882 to 1951, 3,437 blacks were lynched in this country. Of course, even one lynching is a tragic legacy for today's generations, but Mr. Stearns ought to be more meticulous in his research. Alex Haley spent 12 years writing *Roots*.

Van Schroeder

ralph



innocent bystander

slap and a dash over the Sierra. It sounds as though they're accusing you of malfeasance in office.

Going too far

The Landlord (frowning): By me, Gabriel, they go too far!

Gabriel (raising his Golden Trumpet): They're definitely undesirable tenants, sir. Shall I sound the Eviction Notice?

The Landlord (raising his hand): A moment, Gabriel. Check the utilities clause in the original lease. Did we agree to provide heat?

Theodore M. Bernstein

Some go too far in using 'commute'

Trips forth and back. A word that has not gotten very far and hopefully (yes, hopefully) will not get very far in the future is illustrated in this sentence: "The Grahams used to live in Peekskill, north of New York, a 90-minute commute each way." The only dictionary in which *commute* as a noun appears is the *Barnhart Dictionary of New English Since 1963*. That dictionary cites two examples of its use, both of which appeared in magazines in 1968. To some ears, including mine, 'tis an ugly word.

Conjunction superstitions. Calling attention to one of those rectangles of last June in which a paragraph ended with the sentence, "And that, we hope, is that," Mrs. Dorothy Green of Westchester, Pa., writes that she was taught it was incorrect to begin a sentence with a con-

junction. Many of us were taught the same thing and the advice here is to forget it. That is the advice of most authorities on usage, one of whom notes that sentences

bernstein on words

beginning with *and* were in quite proper use as far back as the 10th century and "the Bible is full of them."

The only valid warning is not to begin sentences with *and* so often that the usage appears to be an affectation. All that has been said here about *and* applies equally to *but*. The prejudice against *however* as a sentence starter is stronger, but no more reasonably based.

The test for the proper placement of *however* is that the word should be so positioned that it casts contrasting emphasis on what precedes it. Here is one example of good positioning: "The union has been investing its pension funds in a variety of bonds in normal years. Because of this year's fiscal crisis, *however*, the union has invested heavily in city obligations." A second example: "The jury had been expected to bring in its verdict in the Jones murder case yesterday afternoon. *However*, the foreman of the jury developed influenza overnight and the deliberations had to be deferred." That *however* not only properly begins a sentence, but also could properly begin a paragraph.

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