

# Sexist language must be changed

Language is the most powerful tool we have. It is with language that people are educated and educate others. But just as language is cogent, it is equally manipulative. With a keen command of language comes the ability to plant ideas in the sub-

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## Janet Ward

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Nowhere is this manipulative power more evident than in the nature of sexist language.

For years words like *man*, *he*, *brotherhood* and *founding fathers* have been labeled generic words, meant to encompass all humanity.

But psychological and historical research has produced evidence to the contrary. For most people, these so-called generic terms seldom, if ever, convey a female image.

These masculine images are implanted during childhood. When asked to draw pictures of specific generic professions, school children gave unsettling, but not surprising results. The pictures of salesmen, mailmen and chairmen of the board were almost exclusively pictures of males. When illustrating the phrase "man in society," the pictures were of a male in a crowd of people.

All through our lives we have been told women are a part of mankind. Most historians use the word man in ways that obscure women's contributions to civilization. The list of text books with titles like "The Condition of Man" and "Man and the Universe" seems to be endless.

Discriminatory language starts in children's books and continues throughout our entire education. Even in a liberal college atmosphere, most books are written, purposely or otherwise, to imply that men are superior or more important than women. Every year, subliminally introduced, distorted and sexist views of women are reinforced in young minds.

Yet, people trying to explore and change the sexist nature of our language are increasingly met with accusations of triviality, if not nonsense.

Those who object to these changes are overlooking the power of words and their far-reaching

effects on perception and identity. Sexist language is like a dioxin. It builds and builds, and the damage being done is potentially irreparable. Women can't break out of stereotypical roles and enter into new fields if our language doesn't change to fit our changing culture.

George Orwell once remarked "silly words and expressions have often disappeared not through my evolutionary process but because of the conscious effort of a minority." It would seem that together men and women could promote conscious actions to speed up the elimination of sexist language.

We will never be truly equal until our language recognizes women as people, not as an appendage of men, not a subspecies of man. In the words of Anne Barrett, "Baby" has not come a long way until she ceases to be called one."

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4:30 a.m.	4:45	5:50	5:55	10:15	7:00
7:05 a.m.	7:15	8:30	8:35	11:30	11:45
9:45 a.m.	10:00	11:15	12:25	1:35	1:45
1:50 p.m.	2:05	3:15	4:45	6:00	6:20
3:45 p.m.	4:05	5:15	6:45	8:00	8:15
6:30 p.m.		7:45	8:45	10:00	10:15
8:40 p.m.		9:50	10:00	11:15	11:30

Revised Schedule July 5, 1983

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Unsigned editorials represent official policy of the fall 1983 Daily Nebraskan. They are written by this semester's editor in chief, Larry Sparks.

Other staff members will write editorials throughout the semester. They will carry the author's name after the final sentence.

Editorials do not necessarily reflect the views of the university, its employees or the NU Board of Regents.

The Daily Nebraskan's publishers are the regents, who established the UNL Publications Board to supervise the daily production of the newspaper.

According to policy set by the regents, the content of the Daily Nebraskan lies solely in the hands of its student editors.

## Letters Policy

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor from all readers and interested others.

Letters will be selected for publications on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit all material.

Submit material to the Daily Nebraskan, Nebraska Union Bldg., 1400 B St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448.



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### Post times:

Wednesday-Friday 3 p.m.

Saturday & Sunday 1:00 p.m.

Beginning October 31 (after standard time resumes) Wednesday-Sunday 1:00 p.m.

No racing Monday or Tuesday