

Editorial

DN ad policy should permit self-description

Last spring the UNL Publications Board added sexual orientation to the list of groups that cannot be discriminated against in advertising. But board members allowed the roommate policy to include only stated preference of men or women roommates.

The policy led to a lawsuit filed last Friday by two gay students whose ads were rejected.

Pam Pearn's ad for another lesbian or someone who would not object to living with lesbians was denied in the fall of 1984.

Michael Sinn, the other student who filed the suit, tried to place an ad identifying himself as gay and also was denied.

The current policy reads: "The Daily Nebraskan will not print any advertisement which discriminates against any person on the basis of race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, marital status or national origin. The Daily Nebraskan recognizes and respects the right of persons to specify a preference of gender when looking for a roommate and will not prohibit stating such a preference."

The current policy was meant to prohibit discrimination on the basis of religious and sexual preferences, but it falls short of the goal.

Even publications board members were not satisfied with the policy they adopted because they knew it probably would not satisfy the university's gay community, said Daniel Shattil, DN general manager.

One solution to the policy dilemma would be to allow people to describe themselves in roommate ads. For example, an ad such as: "Gay man seeking roommate" would discriminate against no one, yet would describe the lifestyle the man prefers.

A self-description policy also could eliminate confrontations between heterosexuals and gays.

A "male/female, smoking/non-smoking" description is too vague to base preliminary roommate selections on.

Roommate selection is a personal decision and people deserve to know as much about their potential roommates as possible. People must know information such as sexual orientation before arrangements are made and uncomfortable situations arise.

Another alternative would be a policy with no restrictions. But ads that include preferences of Christian, Nazi or white roommates would blatantly discriminate.

A no-restriction policy is unacceptable because it would make the Daily Nebraskan a forum for discrimination.

By revising the ad policy to permit self-descriptions, the publications board could avoid a costly lawsuit and set a precedent for other college newspapers.

I SAY START VOLUNTARY
DRUG TESTING IN ALL
AREAS OF SPORTS...
BASEBALL,
FOOTBALL,
BASKETBALL,
HOCKEY, SOCCER

SPORTS
MEDIA...

Aid pleas selfish, not selfless

Remember the Muscular Dystrophy Telethon? Once upon a time, that was the only time celebrities got together to pre-empt our favorite TV shows with live entertainment and pleas to help a worthy cause.

Now we've got telethons coming out of our ears, plus a new special drive every time another celebrity starts feeling guilty. Regardless of their success, such cultural phenomena as LiveAid and FarmAid say some significant things about lifestyle in the 1980s.

The media has been calling it "The New Idealistic Altruism." That sounds wonderful, and I should really feel good about a movement so named. But, as a born cynic (it's a requirement for this job), I have some grave doubts about whether we are as good as we're making ourselves think we are. The celebrity-backed entertainment fund raisers do say several things about our culture, but I don't like what I hear.

First, I see the programs as yet another extension of our epidemic of celebrity worship. It is no accident that such programs are sponsored by your favorite singer, sleazy actress or talk-show host rather than by your next door neighbor or physics professor. Celebrity sells. We'll do anything those guys ask us to do. We give to African relief for the same reason we buy pantyhose or light beer — some joker in a glitter jacket with a Gold Album told us to.

Second, it is very telling that telethons and concerts work where intense

appeals concentrating on the need do not. These programs give us only momentary glimpses of the needs being met, interspersed midst hours of self-centered indulgence. We can't take the gloom for very long; we have to spend most of our time with some good old American entertainment to make us feel good enough to help. The telethon mentality reflects the way we live; we will feel bad for a few minutes, (a very few minutes) so we can feel good for hours.



James
Sennett

Third, this movement is yet another testimony to the fact that we have to be entertained and coaxed into doing anything — especially helping others. We can't even dip into our abundant resources to save children from starving without asking the age-old question, "What's in it for me? Sing for me; dance for me; tell me how great I am to throw my crumbs to the millions. Then maybe — just maybe — I'll consider a small donation." That does not spell benevolence in my book.

Finally, our willingness to give in this way helps us to justify and excuse

our extravagant First-World lifestyles. If we give just a little to help those in need, we don't have to feel so bad about forgetting them all the other times while we spend the world's resources in frivolous ways. It is so very lucky (the hand of God?) that we have these bountiful resources so that we can dip into the coffers and give to those who need. Why, if we didn't have many times more than we needed, it might cost us something to give. That would be sacrifice. That would be true altruism. That would be un-American.

The battlecry of philanthropy is "Give from your abundance — you won't even miss it!" The plea of humanitarianism is "Give from your poverty — give till it hurts. You'll sacrifice possessions and materialism for a true taste of what it means to be a part of the human race."

A new altruism? I don't think so. The money will still spend, and those in need are being helped, and for that I praise God. But it is being done in a most sinister fashion. The selfish extravagances that have contributed to the economic imbalance in the first place are finding a way to relieve themselves of the guilt without having to undergo the radical changes needed to rectify the problems once and for all. And who can question the motivations of benevolence? Well, I just did.

Sennett is a UNL graduate student in philosophy and campus minister of the College-Career Christian Fellowship.

Virtue of Miss Liberty at stake; ad rights prostitute her purpose

I keep in my office a picture of my grandmother and me standing before the Statue of Liberty. The picture shows a boy in short pants, maybe 5 or 6, and an old woman, stocky and strong — a peasant who, like millions of others, first glimpsed the statue as a passenger in steerage. My grandmother steamed into New York harbor an



Richard
Cohen

immigrant and walked down the gang-plank an American. For that, the boy holding her hand has always been grateful.

It is for that reason that I have almost a proprietary interest in the Statue of Liberty. I have been following with a somewhat jaundiced eye the campaign to refurbish it. As almost everyone knows, the statue is under repair in anticipation of its centennial next year. Something like \$230 million will be needed. At the moment, she is girdled with scaffolding and her famous torch rests in a warehouse where artisans are duplicating it.

I know the exact whereabouts of the torch from a newspaper ad placed by the Statue of Liberty/Ellis Island Foundation, the group raising the restoration funds. The ad is yet another plea for donations — "If you still believe in me, help me finish the job" — and includes the standard coupon to check off the amount of your contribution or, if you see fit, the number of your Mastercard, Visa or American Express card. America did not wretch on its promise. Emma Lazarus's "wretched refuse" now carry plastic.

So far so good. But in exchange for pledging various amounts of money, participating corporations have the right to use the statue in their advertising. Thus, American Airlines, one of nine "Official Sponsors," used the plight of the statue to announce that if you flew American, it would make an unspecified donation to the restoration fund. No other airline could make that claim, if only because no other airline gets to use the Statue of Liberty in its promotions. You have to pay for that.

If all this sounds vaguely familiar, it is. It is the same method used to franchise the Olympics — a system that resulted in Subaru becoming the official car of an American team. As with

the Olympics, the federal government is leaving everything to private enterprise. Some companies pledge money; others pledge services. In the Age of the Entrepreneur, such a scheme is supposed to be above criticism — yet another example of Americans doing without big, bad government.

But with apologies in advance to those firms whose interest in the statue is wholly unselfish, let me point out that the Statue of Liberty is not the Olympics — not a game, not a sport, not entertainment — but a genuine piece of the national heritage, our Big Ben, our Eiffel Tower — all of that and more. It should not be for sale — not to an airline, not to anyone. Even in the Reagan Era, there have to be some things the government ought to do for itself.

I suppose that eventually private enterprise will raise all the money it needs and the statue will be repaired. Then everyone will toot a horn to capitalism, the head of the project will be mentioned for the Senate (maybe — who knows? — Time magazine's Man of the Year), and everyone will overlook the fact that absolutely nothing has been proved. I hate to think of what

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