

Editorial

Guilt: post-yuppie motivator

Materialistic New Agers, MacLaine bask in self-indulgence

In an interview published this month in American Health magazine, Shirley MacLaine explains that even the founding fathers of our nation were "spiritually" inspired.

"That's why they put the Great Pyramid of Giza on the dollar bill with the third eye above it. That's why they put 'In God We Trust' on the back - because they had to spiritualize materialism," MacLaine told interviewer Terry Clifford.

And what purer motivation for America's New Age movement than guilt? Guilt about being yuppies, about the move from radically minded hippie to consummate breadwinner, guilt because the battle over social consciousness and the lifestyles of the rich and famous is virtually unwinnable.

The New Age is about toys and about guilt-free living. It is consumer Zen. It is the moneyed path to enlightenment. It is spare time and disconnection. It is reconciliation through positive indifference.

For those unfamiliar with the New Age, perhaps I should explain. And don't ask someone personally involved in the movement because they have a barrage of metaphysical catch-phrases of the Christian theologies. The New Agers seek to escape - to escape those theologies that made them feel guilty, that inspired in them those two great stones in the pathway to riches, pity and compassion.

They will say, "I am God, you are God." I guess this is a step up from the early '70s pop-psychology motto, "I'm OK, You're OK." What can the 1990s hold?

Last week, millions yawned through MacLaine's televised peregrination to enlightenment. In the self-indulgent "Out on a Limb," MacLaine sang, danced and psychobabbled her way through five hours of TV time, rehashing the Sun International Picture's storehouse of Erich von Danikenisms like the Nazca lines in Peru, the mysteries of Maceba Picchu and specula-

tions that incredibly intelligent people from space are among us to give us enlightenment. We see MacLaine meet alien beings, have out-of-body experiences in which she floats to the moon on a kite string of quicksilver, meditate in mineral baths, "be" the flame of a candle, stand on a beach with her arms outstretched screeching, "I am God," and balance a career and an adulterous affair with a British diplomat.

You got your reincarnation, your NDEs (near-death experiences, for the uninitiated), your dream analysis, your mind reading, your *deja vu*, your ghosts and your mediums. All in five condescending hours. My God, I kept thinking, they took off shows like "Manimal" and the "A-Team" for this.

Charles Lieurance



You're probably thinking, well, as long as these New Agers don't start proselytizing and bugging me in airports for money, what's the harm? The rich must have their playthings, right? Why not let them indulge \$150 an hour on aura-balancing workshops, 25 bucks a shot on healing crystals and Windham Hill tapes? Let 'em shell out \$700 for sessions with self-proclaimed channelers who can put them in touch with Atlantean wisemen and ancient mystics. They'll have their fun and then doze off into self-congratulation land along the French Riviera.

Arnold Mandell, a professor of psychiatry at the University of California, San Diego, states in a sidebar to the MacLaine story that perhaps some of the transcendental states of consciousness that New Agers claim to experience result from a failure of the brain-quieting hormone serotonin. Man-

del posits that the hormone's action can be inhibited by "meditation, fasting and marathon running." Yuppies can read this as "spare time, dieting and jogging." Mandell calls this state, "God in the brain." Apparently a healthy checkbook is the path to "God in the brain," judging by the cost of New Age amenities and a recent poll placing most of those subscribing to a New Age lifestyle in an income bracket above \$50,000 a year.

There are practical objections, however, to this lifestyle. Twice in the last week proponents of the New Age pointed out that they do not object to murder and feel no pity or remorse over death. They claim the distribution of food and wealth is as it should be and crime has its place in the order of things. Both MacLaine, in the course of "Out on a Limb," and J.C. Knight, a self-proclaimed channeler who made her trance-state personality Ramtha into a multi-million-dollar business, said on the news program "20/20" that criminals, including murderers, should not be punished and that those who are poor and starving are meant to be that way.

These are not comforting statements coming from the isolated rich, who have become so disconnected from everyday life through security systems, trance-states, out-of-body experiences and sophistic gobbledygook that they have chosen to forget the benefits afforded a society, if not by morals, at least by compassionate social contracting.

I seriously doubt that if MacLaine wore the shoes of the victims, she would be so nonchalant about murder, hunger, poverty and other forms of physical degradation.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels and have not charity, my voice is but sounding brass." (I Corinthians 13:1).

Lieurance is a senior English, philosophy and art major and Daily Nebraskan senior reporter.

Financial-aid cuts

Use a scalpel, not an ax.

In his administration's continuing efforts to control government spending, President Reagan's proposed budget for the 1988 fiscal year includes substantial cuts in grant and work-study programs as well as the elimination of the federal government's partial interest-payment obligations in Guaranteed and National Direct student loans.

It's difficult to objectively evaluate the proposal because of the closeness of the subject to so many students' lives. Nonetheless, several factors should be considered by all students.

First, aid to education - especially in the form of loans - is primarily a middle-class aid program. Instead of extending the length of their education and working all the while, many students simply borrow money. It's not obvious that the programs favoring the middle class should be preserved. Especially given a choice limited to financing poor students who would not otherwise go to school vs. shortening middle-class students' length of schooling, it seems obvious that the poor should be preferred.

The second point, however, modifies the first: It is not obvious, even given the current federal financial constraints, that the choice between preferring poor or middle-class students should have to be made. Cutbacks in domestic programs continue apace while military spending receives a position largely protected from the budgetary meat cutter other programs are trimmed by.

One doesn't need to be opposed to a strong national defense to seriously question whether the marginal increase in military protection from the current weapon

systems really outweighs the marginal social benefit that results from sending more lower-income students through school.

This thought almost becomes cynically poignant in light of revelations about costly weapon systems that can't perform even close to the promised specifications.

Students understand that times are tough all over - students at NU especially understand this lesson. Yet in revising the student-loan and -aid programs the federal government should be careful of throwing out the proverbial baby with the bath water.

While there are too many students gratuitously borrowing funds for non-education-related expenses, proposed standards risk denying needy students the money they require. The administration's proposals risk taking an ax to programs where a scalpel would do a much cleaner job.

Finally, U.S. society must face the question: Are too many students going to college for no good reason? All students who can benefit from higher education should be allowed the opportunity to go irrespective of financial ability. Yet with large dropout rates in the first two years of post-secondary schooling, too many students seem to be wasting their time and taxpayers' money in an aborted attempt at a college education. Efforts to insure that students who go to college are prepared for the experience - both intellectually and personally - should be fully supported. Such efforts can help but insure that the education dollar is employed more efficiently. And that means more money for students that can benefit from the expenditures.

Jeff Korbelik, Editor, 472-1766
James Rogers, Editorial Page Editor
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Mike Reilly, Night News Editor
Joan Rezac, Copy Desk Chief

UAAD president criticizes focus of forum coverage

It is unfortunate that so much of the Daily Nebraskan coverage of the forum sponsored by the University Association for Administrative Development focused on LB157. Several other items of greater importance to the future of the university were discussed that day. Near the end of the forum, however, questions were raised about the bill. Sen. Jim McFarland's response led many of us present to believe that he was largely unaware of the function of the support staff of the university.

Guest Opinion

Viann Schroeder, current chair of the Employee Concerns Committee for UAAD, graciously spoke to clarify this for McFarland. The essence of her remarks was that the faculty is at the heart of the educational process, that the support staff also plays a critical role at the university which is largely unrecognized by most citizens (a sentiment echoed by Chancellor Martin Massengale), and that consideration should be given to amending LB157 to include all university employees. Her remarks were largely general and were only incidentally addressed to the bill. Although McFarland acknowledged her

statement, I don't believe he said he would rewrite the bill, as your editorial stated.

UAAD has a 25-year history on the campus of working to promote professional development of its members and to enhance benefits for all faculty and staff. The effects of inadequate salaries resulting from repeated budget cuts are not limited to the faculty. Many creative and talented members of the support staff are also accepting more lucrative offers from other campuses and from the private sector.

Your cutting remark about the director of Publications and Campus Postal Services reveals a serious lack of understanding about day-to-day operations of the university. This person is an integral part of campus activity at the highest level and regularly serves on committees, along with faculty, to contribute to decisions about the future direction of the university.

The remark also turns out to be ironically inappropriate. She turned down an attractive job offer from another university last week. Her colleagues (both faculty and staff) can only hope she will turn down future offers.

Fay Moulton
president
UAAD

AIDS virus hits sexual mainstream; heterosexual apathy among reasons

Last week marked the 14th anniversary of the Roe vs. Wade decision on abortion, and many, as usual, aired vociferous objections about the issue. But today we have a problem that's much worse. It is paramount in importance to teenage pregnancy, apartheid, nuclear arms, Nicaragua and famine.

I can understand why many object to abortion, but I cannot understand why some are completely apathetic about saving people who are already leading healthy, productive lives themselves.

I'm talking about AIDS, the fatal disease many refuse to discuss or even acknowledge because the very mention of it conjures up images of the word "gay." AIDS and the word "gay" used to be a sort of grisly doppelganger that invited ridicule and nonchalance whenever the two were mentioned. Five years ago, AIDS was a "gay disease."

That's all rapidly changing. Heterosexual complacency has now helped to spread the AIDS virus to the straight world, where it was once a rare stranger. In Austin, a college town in Texas, the state with the third highest concentration of heterosexual AIDS cases, two enterprising students have started a "condom delivery" service that's giving late-night Domino's pizza deliveries a run for convenience.

In magazines like Cosmopolitan and Esquire, condom companies have started running clever safe-sex ads to promote their products. In one ad, an attractive woman with a solicitous look on her face poses under this slogan: "I enjoy sex, but I'm not willing to die for it."

But according to numerous polls and surveys, few people are listening. In the current issue of Atlantic magazine, journalist Katie Leishman writes that even in San Francisco only 6 percent of the gay population said they used con-

doms. And it has been estimated that even fewer heterosexuals in this country take safe sex seriously.

Two weeks ago, a provocative NBC news special called "Men, Women, Sex and AIDS" was aired. The program focused on the threat of AIDS in the heterosexual world and how the government and society are dealing with it.

The show started with a rather disturbing statement from U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop: "There are now as many heterosexuals carrying the AIDS virus as homosexuals five years ago."



Scott Harrah

This statement was, of course, merely an estimate because few people have taken the HTLV-III test (for AIDS antibodies in the blood) and many carriers of the virus never develop symptoms, although they can still pass it on to sex partners. In the early part of this decade, the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta stated that three main groups were considered "high risk" in regard to AIDS: homosexual and bisexual men, users of intravenous drugs, and residents of Haiti.

Today, anyone, heterosexual or homosexual, who engages in intimate sexual contact and exchanges body fluids like semen or blood with many partners is considered high-risk. The reason? AIDS has finally hit the mainstream because of apathy and the number of women who have had sex with bisexual men

and intravenous-drug users.

The show's first focus was on the straight singles scene. One of the first places they showed was a ski resort in Colorado, a representative of a heterosexual "meat market." Resort areas are considered to be AIDS breeding grounds because people from all over the world flock to them on vacations to find pleasure. They are now considered to be tantamount to the now closed gay bathhouses that used to dot the gay urban centers in New York and San Francisco. And the same apathy and ignorance that finally claimed thousands of lives in the homosexual netherworld of easy sex in bathhouses runs rampant in Colorado, Fort Lauderdale, Las Vegas and other vacation meccas, the show claimed.

The show's reporter went to the ski lodges in Colorado and Utah and asked people about their attitudes on AIDS and free sex.

"Why should I worry?" said one college student. "These girls I sleep with all come from the little town where I go to school."

The reporter then asked a female college student if she would ask a potential partner about his sexual history.

"Are you nuts?" the woman replied. "That's the most embarrassing thing I've ever heard of. If some guy asked me how often I slept around and if I had AIDS, I'd kick him out of bed before he knew it."

The fact is, the show said, whenever one engages in sexual activity, one is having sex with everyone the partner has ever slept with. This is because the AIDS virus is often dormant for five to 14 years before symptoms develop. Also, you just don't know who someone

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