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Sticks and Stones?

Hate may never end, but violence must

The words, bleached into grass near the Capitol building, are too large to miss: "Die fag." They send a clear message of hatred to Lincoln's gay/lesbian community. A message too frightening for anyone to ignore.

And yet, while homosexuals continue to be badgered, ridiculed and beaten, a safe majority rests in the shadows, confident in the fact that they are "straight."

What do they care if someone scribbles death threats to homosexuals?

What does it matter to that majority if a group of men -- filled with that same hatred -- should crash a party on a Saturday night to harass a group of people about their sexual orientation?

What does it matter that in the early morning hours following that party, a man lay dead -- the victim of a bullet wound to the heart?

Why should they care about that 27-year-old man with his life ahead of him? Or his family? Or his friends? Or an entire community of Lincolniters who may now be wondering if they could be next?

The hatred against gays and lesbians may never end. To end it, society would have to eliminate ignorance. But the acts of hatred against gays and lesbians cannot be tolerated.

Students, lawmakers, police and judges cannot sit idly by, doing little to protect the basic rights of another individual. Nor can they allow others to get away with the degradation, intimidation and violence that continues -- they need to be punished.

How soon before a bleached scrawl on someone's lawn escalates into the murder of another innocent human being?

-- Lee Rood
for the Daily Nebraskan



Eric Gregory/Daily Nebraskan

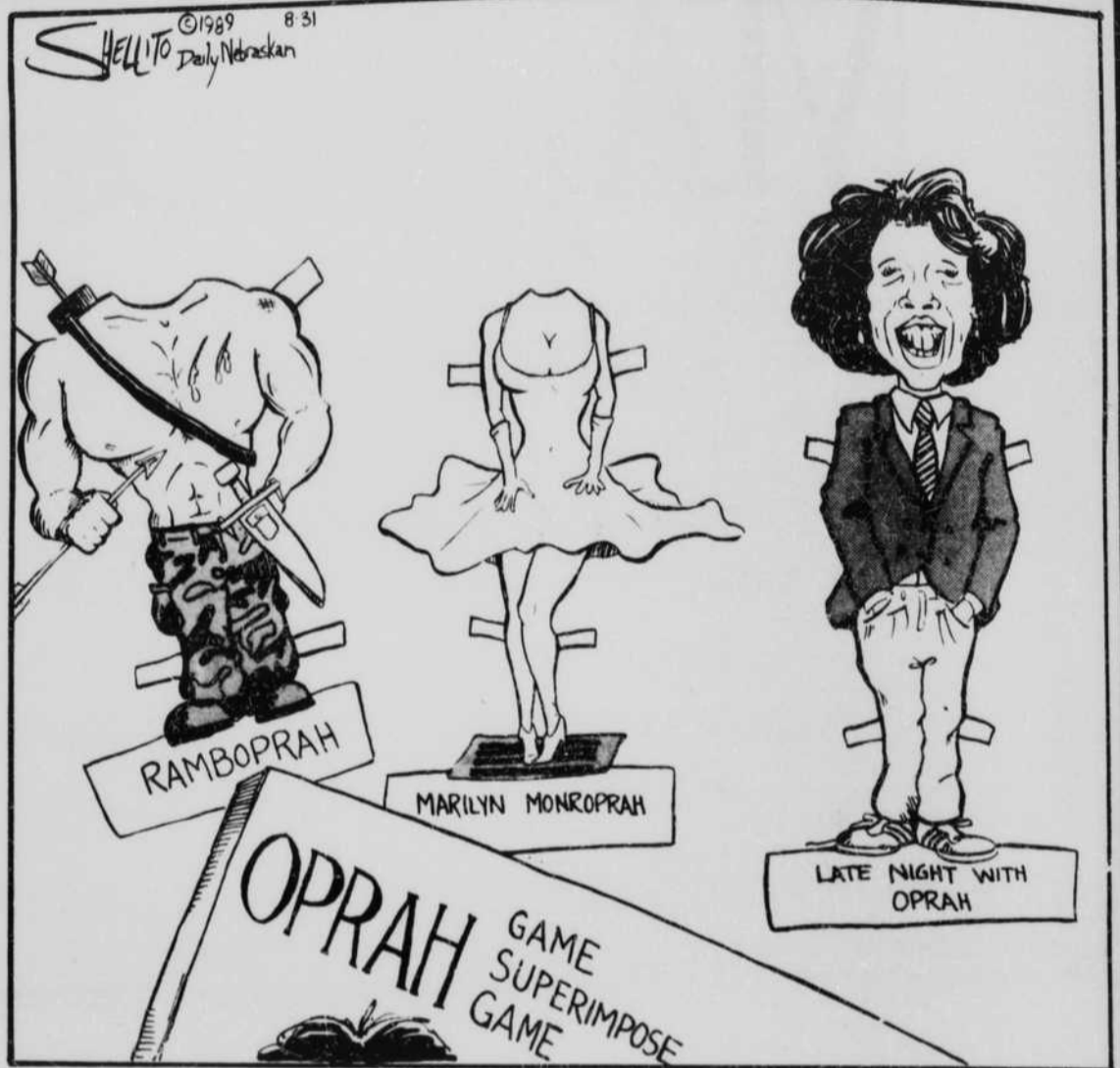
'Big Lips' better than R.E.M.

After reading your article about R.E.M. tickets (DN, Aug. 17) and finding the statement, "Good God, no one can tell us that they would prefer big lips over true talent," it became obvious that you don't know the facts, so here are some for you to chew on: R.E.M. has had one No. 1 single and seven No. 1 albums. The Rolling Stones have had 18 No. 1 singles and 37 No. 1 albums. These numbers do not include individual efforts.

R.E.M.'s first and only No. 1 single, "The One I Love," topped the charts for nine weeks, whereas the Rolling Stones' first, "Not Fade Away," was at the same position for 48 weeks.

I thought you needed to know that big lips is true talent.

Jason Henning
Junior
Math



Underground organizations exist in defiance of university rules Groups could cause problems

ATTENTION POTENTIAL LEADERS," read the personal in big, bold type in the last issue of last year's Daily Nebraskan. "We know you have been contacted and it is not from us so don't be misled. Keep working and you may be contacted by the real sub-rosa. The Men of Theta Nu Epsilon."

And so this summer, while hundreds of freshmen went through fraternity rush, a few fraternity upperclassmen began to wait quietly for a rush of a different kind. But the fraternity they would be seeking to join would not be any legitimate, above-board fraternity. This rush would be for Theta Nu Epsilon (TNE) -- a "sub-rosa," or secret society -- and it would be conducted in secrecy.

TNE and its fellow secret societies, Rho Delta (a sorority) and Senior Scroll Society (another fraternity), are underground organizations composed of anonymous campus "leaders" from various fraternities and sororities. They exist in defiance of university rules. And, in the past, the groups have "exert(ed) a great deal of control in campus politics," as a former TNE member once put it.

Few students know that these groups exist. Even fewer care. But they should know, and they should care.

Secret societies historically have caused problems for the university community. And they still may be causing problems today.

Ask most knowledgeable fraternity or sorority members these days about TNE, Rho Delta or Senior Scroll, and they'll quickly change the subject -- like a family member asked about the aunt with the third eye in the middle of her forehead, or like a Sicilian asked about the local Mafia don.

But the few who are willing to talk may tell you some stories. Stories about alleged secret society infiltration of the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska, the Interfraternity Council, Panhellenic, and the leadership of top greek houses. Stories about beatings, threats and reprisals delivered to those who give TNE grief. Stories about initiations where pledges are forced to give up the secrets and rituals of their respective houses, betraying their own fraternity brothers and sorority sisters.

No one knows (or can prove) if these stories are true. On the surface,

they seem outrageous. But the history of the university leads one to believe that maybe they ought to be checked out.

Books and newspapers say that TNE first surfaced on campus in 1895, initially as a social group of fraternity leaders from various houses. However, as a 1962 DN editorial stated, "through the years, it degenerated into purely a drinking and political organization."

Although banned by the university and virtually all fraternities, TNE continued to exert "a great and terrible power and force on campus" through the first half of the century. DN articles from the 1950s refer to at least one act of violence attributed to TNE. Campus walls and sidewalks frequently were vandalized in those years, painted with TNE's trademark red-and-green-eyed skull.

Brian Svoboda

Much more ominous was the power which TNE appeared to wield in the shadows of student life. After a run-in with the group in 1951, then-chancellor Reuben Gustavson was quoted as being "amazed" at the people who were active and alumni members of TNE, expressing shock at "the infiltration of TNE into the faculty, athletics and student organizations."

Now, almost 40 years later, TNE still exists. Indeed, it seems as active as ever. The group's logo was painted on fraternity and sorority doorsteps as recently as last spring. Each of the three secret societies delivers an occasional newsletter, saluting fraternity and sorority members they like and slamming those they don't.

Yet most students don't seem to care. Some people have even suggested that the secret societies and their newsletters strengthen the greek system. "Some said (the sub-rosas) helped open the eyes of the greek system as to their faults and suggested ways to improve," wrote last year's Greek Yearbook in a shockingly non-judgmental article on the

groups. That's ridiculous. There is nothing worthwhile in the sub-rosas' newsletters which cannot be discussed openly and honestly in the light of day. At a minimum, the existence of secret societies destroys bonds of trust -- trust between the greek system and the university community, trust between students and the institutions which govern them, and trust between fraternity and sorority members themselves.

And if the rumors are true that these groups still exert "a great deal of control" in campus politics, they exclude other students from leadership groups such as ASUN, IFC and Panhellenic, preventing these groups from being truly representative bodies and denying students the chance to have a voice in campus affairs.

Long ago, the university's administration, student government and greek system made a conscious decision that the secret societies were wrong -- that they were inconsistent with the ideals of openness and honesty and the interests of the university community. Yet one walks down the street and still sees TNE's skull, Rho Delta's black triangle and Senior Scroll's red 'S's painted on doorsteps for all to see. And one neither sees nor hears a word about the groups outside the DN personals section. What happened?

"We are students of this university," wrote the NU Student Council in 1951. "It is we who must bear the evil groups like TNE. It is we who are the victims of any weakness by administrative officials in dealing with that organization, and who will bear collectively the brunt of its underhanded force on this campus. TNE must not defeat university law and justice at this or any other time. All that is decent, self-respecting and open must win."

ASUN, IFC, Panhellenic and the university administration should make a similar commitment and once again take seriously the threat that secret societies pose to campus life. If the worst of the stories going around campus are true, the secret societies represent an undemocratic, subversive and even criminal force on our campus. They should be shut down.

Brian Svoboda is a senior political science and Russian major, and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.