

Daily Nebraskan

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University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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Verdict needs proof

Doubts surround journalistic aptitude

It looks like Andy Rooney might have gotten a raw deal.

Rooney was suspended last week by CBS for three months, after a racist quote attributed to him was published in the gay magazine *The Advocate*.

Rooney is quoted as saying that blacks have watered down their genes "because the less intelligent ones are the ones that have the most children."

The question is not whether or not the quote is offensive enough to merit a three-month suspension. If Rooney actually made that statement, his sentence was a light one.

The question is whether Rooney actually made the statement. From looking at the case, it would seem unlikely that he did.

First of all, Rooney isn't a prime candidate to make a racial statement. Rooney's first Emmy award was for a script he wrote in 1968 for a television special about blacks.

Also, it seems more than coincidental that the quote attributed to Rooney was published in a gay magazine. Rooney has been under attack recently by gays for an earlier comment that many in the gay community considered to be offensive. Rooney denies making the racial remark and claims that gays angered by the earlier comment decided to charge him with racism. *The Advocate* reporter did not tape-record the statement and Rooney claims the writer "couldn't take notes either."

For a man who has spent more than 40 years under public scrutiny, it seems strange that he would speak to a reporter about anything so volatile as the attributes of a certain race, let alone to make a comment so blatantly offensive.

Nonetheless, with an overwhelming amount of evidence clearing Rooney of the quote, CBS quickly suspended him. There was no proof, but there were plenty of politics.

CBS has been under attack for having an excessively white hierarchy. The network is vulnerable to racially tainted assaults and anyone angry at a CBS employee would know that.

Rooney's suspension sets a dangerous precedent of allowing racial tensions to be manipulated and turned against someone without proof. It is a sad day for free speech when unsubstantiated statements can be used so easily as a weapon.

Because it worked against Rooney, it will certainly be used again. It would be best if proof would play some role in the next verdict.

-- Bob Nelson
for the Daily Nebraskan

Reader defends pro-life position

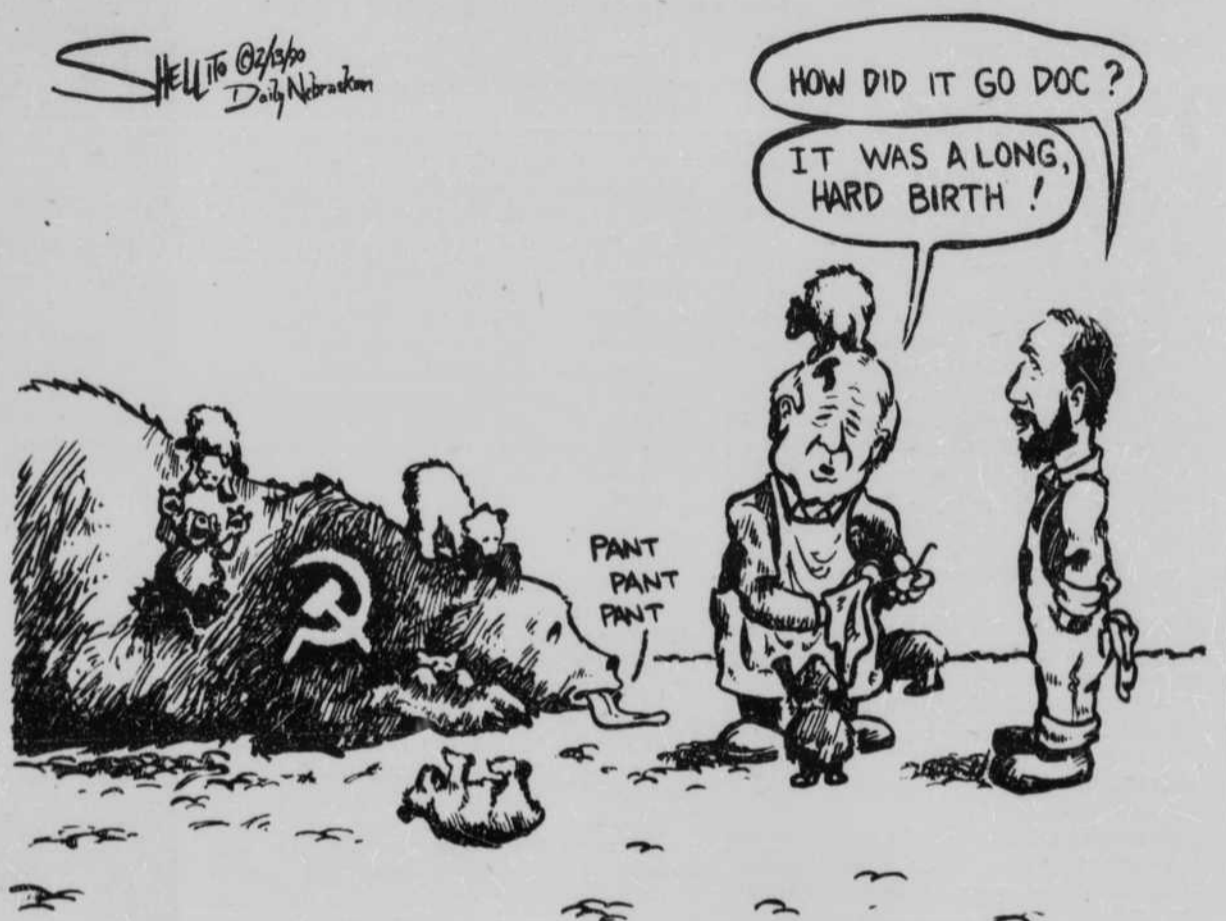
I wanted to thank Henry Battistoni for his editorial column "Hypocrites fill pro-life ranks" (DN, Feb. 8). As a philosophy major, I like it when people understand the hidden assumptions behind their beliefs. As he says, it is contradictory for those who are pro-life not to care about the child after it is born. Fortunately, most pro-lifers do care for them, as is witnessed by their giving their time, money and support to women and children who need help (for example, at the Pregnancy Crisis Center). It is true that some anti-life (pro-abortionist) people also give to the needy. But I think it should be pointed out that they are the hypocrites, caring for some human lives while arbitrarily throwing away (or turning their backs) on other human lives.

Henry also called pro-lifers "fetus-saviors crawling through the city like pestilential locusts." He obviously said this to try to degrade the pro-life position. It reminds me of the 1850s when whites who supported blacks in the fight against slavery were called "nigger-lovers." Henry doesn't seem to notice that the fetuses are human (Websters dictionary), just as others did not recognize the fact

that blacks are human. So yes, I would be proud to be called a "fetus-savior."

At the end of his column, Henry said that the "anti-abortionist proponents do nothing to solve the problems of abortion." In order to solve problems like poverty, Henry wants to abort the problems where they start -- that is, with poor children. By killing off poor children before they are born, he thinks poverty will be wiped away from the earth. This is analogous to the unthinkable situation that a doctor would decide that the best way to win the fight against AIDS is to kill off all the patients who have AIDS! You do not combat a disease by killing off the patient, so why should we combat "diseases" like poverty by killing off the poor? A doctor must try to save the patient and at the same time try to find a cure for the disease. I am glad that pro-life proponents try to save the life of the unborn, while they try to serve the needs of both the mother and child by giving furniture, clothes, food, etc.

Melia Burgeson
senior
philosophy



Animal's death changes driver

New philosophy: Fences, walls feel safe but hide life's beauty

*Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down.*

-- Robert Frost
"Mending Wall"

Last summer as I was driving alone at dusk on a northern Nebraska highway, I was fortunate enough to round a bend and come face to face with a young buck. I call myself fortunate because aside from spending a month thumbing rides while my pickup was under repair and suffering through weeks of the label "Bambi killer," I survived the whole affair unscathed and a little bit wiser.

Unscathed, because, on a whim, I was wearing my seat belt.

A little bit wiser because of what came to me after that night -- the philosophy of fences.

Once my pickup was returned, I soon discovered that driving was no longer the half-minded occupation it once had been.

I couldn't keep my eyes off the sides of the road. Every time I approached a curve, I'd plaster my pupils to the shoulder, expecting a tan mass of fur and antlers to leap out. The familiar black-and-yellow deer crossing signs that had once been so easy to ignore now stood out like the beacons of doom.

To me, Freddie, Chuckie and Jason seemed like Tinkerbells. I was having my nightmares on Highway 81. It was the re-release of Bambi that set me shaking.

Before long I realized how ridiculous I was being. "After all," I told myself, "how often does lightning strike twice?"

To get rid of this unnatural fear, I began to reason the unreasonable and, out of this irrational thinking, came the philosophy of fences.

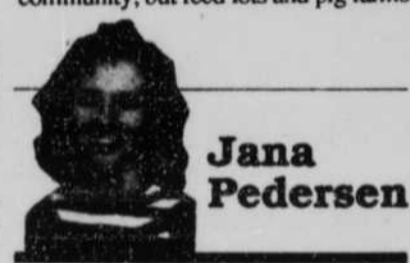
In my mind, I rationalized that I didn't have to worry about deer jumping out in front of me where there were fences alongside the road. I

honestly told myself that fences would keep the deer away. They won't come beyond the barbed wire, I thought. At the time, I didn't even consider the ease at which these barriers could be conquered by my high-flying friends.

So I drove along in comfort with fences on either side of me, content to believe I was secure.

One problem -- with fences came feed lots and pig farms.

No offense to the agricultural community, but feed lots and pig farms



Jana Pedersen

aren't exactly my idea of the world's most attractive scenery. I prefer piggybacked hills, silken grasslands, trees that brush the clouds.

But when I drove where fences were, I missed out on all that.

Out of this realization came the philosophy of fences:

Fences may seem safe, but they keep you away from the beauty in life.

So, after equipping my pickup with deer whistles, I began to follow my new philosophy. I ventured away from the security of the fenced-in roads, taking the scenic route once in awhile. Living on the edge, I thought.

While passing over country brooks and by groves of evergreens, I began to apply my philosophy in the abstract -- to the Berlin Wall, to the Iron Curtain, to ethnic violence in the Soviet Union, to apartheid. I'd drive for hours, listening to Jackson Browne and thinking about fences and how terrible things could happen in our world and how small and lucky I really am.

Later on, I was awestruck as I watched my philosophy of fences in action.

With my own eyes, I saw Berliners from both sides dancing on the wall. I saw government after government in Eastern Europe succumb to the will of the majority. I saw the Soviet communists relinquish their political monopoly. And finally, just this weekend, I saw Nelson Mandela freed. I saw fences coming down.

Of course, none of these events, especially Mandela's freedom, are clear-cut signs that the fences of the world will crumble. I know that. But at the very least, these events are a beginning, a place to take off from.

Unfortunately, fences still stand. The evergreens flying past my window also made me think about China, Central America and, most importantly, problems right here in the United States, like racism.

I can't judge how much influence Nebraskan university students could have on incidents abroad, but there are problems right in our own backyard that we can deal with. Like racism -- institutional, outright or otherwise.

It's Black History Month. If you haven't realized that yet or haven't done anything about it, do something now. Attend university-sponsored events on black history. Learn about racism. Learn about affirmative action. Learn about people you don't know.

More importantly, try hard to think about the consequences of your actions. Try hard to change whatever it is inside you that laughs at racist jokes or makes racist comments.

If the people of Berlin hadn't tried hard to destroy their wall, it wouldn't have come down. Now it's time for us to take a shot at the walls we've built.

If we work together to tear down our own backyard fences, together we'll find the beauty that's right on the other side.

Pedersen is a sophomore advertising major and a Daily Nebraskan night news editor and columnist.

letter

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

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

Readers also are welcome to sub-

mit material as guest opinions. Whether material should run as a letter or guest opinion, or not to run, is left to the editor's discretion.

Letters and guest opinions sent to the newspaper become the property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned. Letters should be typewritten.

Anonymous submissions will not be considered for publication. Letters should include the author's name, year in school, major and group affiliation, if any. Requests to withhold names will not be granted.

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