

Daily **Nebraskan**

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## Fine line questioned

'Fighting-words' policy could be abused

University officials announced Sunday they are considering a change in the student code of conduct that, if carefully implemented, could serve as one more check on senseless slurs against minorities.

Bryan Hill, president of Association of Students of the University of Nebraska, and James Griesen, vice chancellor for student affairs, are looking at ways to make "fighting words," or personally abusive statements, a violation in the code of conduct.

Hill and Griesen plan for the changes to be similar to a policy at the University of California. That code of conduct states that fighting words include those "inherently likely to provoke a violent reaction," including derogatory references to race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability or other personal characteristics.

Words are harassment, the policy states, when they create a "hostile and intimidating" environment that interferes with victims' abilities to pursue their educations or participate in university activities.

Hill and Griesen already are aware of the innate problems with such a policy. Hill said he is not positive if a "fine enough line" can be drawn to stop abusive statements but still allow free discussion of racial issues.

And he's right. Drawing lines between free speech and "fighting words" is a dangerously arbitrary task at best. Any vague wording in the policy could result in abuses far outweighing its attributes.

Taking into consideration the danger of such a policy in practice, the proposed change in the code of conduct may serve no real purpose other than as a vehicle for discussion. That is perfectly fine. Any vehicle for open discussion on racial issues is a plus on this campus.

Yolanda Scott, interim president of D.R.E.A.M., has a good grasp on the purpose and likely results of discussion or even a strict interpretation of such a policy.

"I think that people will become more cautious of words that would be perceived as fighting words," she said. "People will be thinking before they speak."

It goes without saying that a change in the code of conduct will not end racism on campus. Racism is much deeper than verbal communication, let alone "fighting words." This change would serve only as a tiny step in the right direction, but a step nonetheless.

-- Bob Nelson  
for the Daily Nebraskan



## Cuomo not only Catholic sinner

Thou shalt not publicize just one sinner unless playing politics

I've been on the receiving end of many stern lectures this week because of a column I wrote about Gov. Mario Cuomo and the New York bishop who said Cuomo might end up in hell because he isn't trying to make abortion illegal.

One of the rebukes came from an anti-abortion group's telephone hot line. It summed up what other callers have told me:

"Bishop Austin Vaughan simply did what every good priest should do and is obliged to do: warn a public sinner that if he continues in his sin he may not enter the kingdom of heaven. . . . So more power to Bishop Vaughan, who knew that he would be roundly criticized by a bunch of know-nothings but who did not let that stop him from doing his job."

The hot line message went on to explain why I was one of the "know-nothings."

"Royko seems to think that if a bishop tells one of his flock that he is in danger of hell, suddenly that bishop is imposing his morality on all of us. Why such a bad chip on your shoulder, Mike, bad conscience?"

No, my conscience feels OK. I haven't performed any abortions lately or encouraged anyone to have them.

As a matter of fact, it might surprise the anti-abortion group, but I don't think much of abortions. I particularly dislike abortion as a form of birth control.

There are all sorts of birth control methods available to men and women. So I'd prefer that men and women who don't want children avoid pregnancy in the first place and use abortion only in a life-threatening situation.

Unfortunately, Vaughan's church doesn't approve of most birth control methods, so it sort of puts women between a rock and a hard place. His

church doesn't even want the poor and uneducated to be told how to practice birth control. But that's another issue.

To get back to Vaughan's warning to Cuomo. I totally agree that if a Catholic priest believes that a member of his flock is doing something that could send him to hell he should warn that sinner.

I'm sure that before this day ends, thousands of American Catholics will have done something that could,



Mike Royko

according to their faith, prevent them from entering the kingdom of heaven. Goodness, the figure might be in the millions worldwide.

And I think it is the obligation of priests to warn them to mend their wicked ways, as I'm sure many of the priests do.

However, I've been in the newspaper business for 35 years as a reporter, editor and columnist. I've spent much of my working life in or near the newsrooms of three papers.

And not once have I ever received, or heard of anyone receiving, a call from a priest who said something like this:

"Hello, this is Father Shannon. I am calling to say that there is a member of my flock named Slat Grobnik who is a foreman at the Popup Spring Company. Mr. Grobnik, who is a married man, has been carrying on an adulterous relationship with a married barmaid who works near his place of employment. Every Tuesday in the Happy Nooner Motel. If he persists in

this sinful behavior, he might go to hell. So I would like to warn him. Could you please see that this is printed on the front page of your newspaper?"

That, in effect, is what Vaughan did. If he is genuinely worried about Cuomo's soul, as I'm sure he is, why didn't he send a letter or make a call and say: "Governor, this is Bishop Vaughan, and I'm concerned that you might go to hell," etc., etc.

Instead he blabbed it to a reporter, assuring that it would wind up on the front page of most of America's papers, the network news, in the news magazines and on The Associated Press, United Press International and Reuters wires.

I realize that Cuomo is a prominent person, but I know of many prominent Catholics, including politicians, who have done things that must surely, in the eyes of their church, threaten them with hell's fire.

But I don't recall any bishops or cardinals phoning and saying: "Quick, give me a rewrite. I want to issue a front-page warning to Sen. Bedhopper that if he doesn't knock off his sinful hanky-panky he's going to sweat through one long, hot eternity."

If Vaughan's approach were appropriate, then I urge his church to really do it. Don't stop with Cuomo. How about every archdiocese sending out a weekly news release listing unrepentant sinners? I'm sure that if Slat Grobnik and that barmaid saw their names on Page 1 they would cease and desist.

But until this happens, I have a modest suggestion for Vaughan. Thou shalt not blab about just one guy or you'll be suspected of playing politics, not religion. I don't know if that's a sin, but it's kind of sneaky.

1990 By the Chicago Tribune

## Alternative scene lives, Deeds

Concerning Michael Deeds' article (DN, Feb. 7), "Lie Awake was the reigning Lincoln band for a while." When? Granted, Lie Awake may have been the most popular for a while but I missed their reign. The last time the most popular groups were also important ones, Vietnam was a social issue and most University of Nebraska-Lincoln students were not yet born.

Quit complaining and open your eyes (and ears). Lincoln's local music scene has the same level of talent as cities like Atlanta, Minneapolis and Houston. The biggest difference is that those three cities have people who support original bands. Why don't people go out to see bands like the Leafy Green Things, For Against, Such Sweet Thunder (from Kearney), A Fifth of May (from Omaha) or The Millions?

"Don't bother," Deeds says, "trying for the job if you play 'alter-

native' music." What the hell is alternative music? How can we use that same term again while saying "alternative people" have somehow become conformist. I always thought a conformist was someone who changed to please others' ideas, not someone who did something that somehow became trendy.

Finally, I can stand the smoky atmosphere of Duffy's, the "long-hairs" grooving on each other and the "stabs at world hunger or saving whales" (as if that is something negative) in order to hear some good music. I cannot tolerate some ass spilling his beer on me on an overcrowded dance floor while he mumbles random words from "I Need You Tonight."

Malcom Miles  
senior  
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## editorial

Signed staff editorials represent the official policy of the spring 1990 Daily Nebraskan. Policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board. Its members are Amy Edwards, editor; Bob Nelson, editorial page editor; Ryan Steeves, managing editor; Eric Pfanner, associate news editor; Lisa Donovan, associate news editor; Brandon Loomis, wire editor; Jana

Pedersen, night news editor.

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

According to policy set by the regents, responsibility for the editorial content of the newspaper lies solely in the hands of its student editors.

## Pro-lifer allows no exceptions, hurts cause

Andrew Meyer, you have reached a new low. What you are telling us is that you believe in no abortion for any reason. Do you get calls from other pro-lifers telling you to shut up before you hurt their cause even more? I wouldn't be surprised.

Your letter (DN, Feb. 12) actually says, "A distressingly large number of children are put to death each year under the rubric of 'saving the mother's life.'" First, even the most ardent anti-abortionists allow that there are exceptions, and second, you seem to

forget that abortion is still legal in this country. Women don't need "excuses" to exercise this right. So, where have you been hanging out, Andrew, that you find all these women screaming, "Kill my baby to save my life!?" Gee, what a mamby-pamby excuse in any case.

Lastly and most importantly, Andrew, you have no right to say anything on the matter because you are a man (I'm guessing). Men can't know what abortion is like. Men will never have to go through it. So all that

we men can do is stand back and say, "It's up to you, and I'll support your decision."

Andrew, when the day comes that you actually form a relationship with a woman and actually need to consider such options as these (God forbid), keep all this in mind and then form opinions. Until then, please sit down and shut up.

Michael Jones  
sophomore  
psychology