

Daily **Nebraskan**
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University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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Bigotry in uniform

Military's prejudice snubs Constitution

In a rare decision last week, a military appeals court overturned the conviction of a Marine corporal who served 226 days in the brig for allegedly having sex with another woman.

The appellate court ruled that two officials serving on the jury at Barbara J. Baum's court martial were biased and that the military judge had allowed uncorroborated testimony, according to The Associated Press.

The reasoning behind the ruling is wrong.

Of course a biased trial constitutes overturning the verdict, but the charge never should have been given in the first place.

Even in the homophobic military system, having sex with someone should not be reason enough for court martial or 226 days in the brig.

The Defense Department's official policy states that "homosexuality is incompatible with military service. The presence in the military of persons who engage in homosexual conduct . . . seriously impairs the accomplishment of the military mission."

Sure. If Baum was such a serious threat, why did she make it to corporal?

Are homosexuals a threat because they're homosexuals, or only when their sexual preference is known? Neither. And as much as the military would like to believe otherwise, it follows the latter. Which shows that the Defense Department's policy is paranoid and unrealistic.

The military's policy on homosexuality never should have been implemented in the first place and now is horribly out-dated. Sexual preference is only a threat to *people who are too closed-minded to accept others' differences.*

The court in Baum's case declined to rule on several other arguments raised in the appeal, including that it is unconstitutional to selectively prosecute and punish gay people for sodomy while heterosexuals are not punished for the same actions.

The court should have ruled on that while it had the chance, and gotten rid of the unconstitutional biases aimed at homosexual people in the military.

It's 1990. Gay men and lesbians work alongside "straight" people every day, and are just as capable as everyone else of performing any job.

No decision has been made yet on whether Baum will face another court martial. Hopefully, the Marine courts won't even consider one.

Homosexuals face enough bigotry in society. It's about time our government took a step toward its own constitution by eliminating the prejudice in the U.S. Armed Forces.

-- Amy Edwards
for the Daily Nebraskan

Cafeteria employee outraged

At first I did not want to respond to Mr. Battistoni's editorial (DN, Feb. 15) because it is a very touchy subject to me. I happen to be a part-time employee at one of the "tastebud murdering" cafeterias. In fact, I work at Abel so if this article upsets you, come see me. Just ask for the Captain, Mr. Validine, Lou or Kent, and I will be glad to answer your questions.

Let's set the record straight. The food here is not Misty's or Red Lobster, but it definitely is not as bad as you would make it out to be. Yes, there is a lot of chicken served -- and hot dogs and hamburgers and pizzas. Could this be because these are less expensive items? I think so, Mr. Battistoni. The idea is to serve good meals at a lower cost so you can pay for the rest of your college. There are many items to choose from, plus salads and many different beverages. Try something for me, Mr. Battistoni. Eat at McDonald's or your favorite restaurant for three meals a day, seven days a week, four months straight and tell me you don't start thinking their food is blah!

Now let me explain the raw chicken patty to you, if you will listen. When you are frying those patties and people such as you are bitching to get the food out on the line, sometimes you can't check every patty. You just trust that the fryer is working right and getting things cooked. Of course, if you want to pay more money to housing, then we will hire food tasters, raw chicken testers, and you, personally, can come in and tell us what we are doing wrong.

Just let me end with one final question. Do you think cooking for 1,000 people a day is an easy job? I guess you must. Well, when one of the big guys retires, put in your application. Then you can fix all of the problems.

Oh, by the way, while you are at it could you do something about acid rain, world hunger and the deficit? We peons of the world would appreciate it.

Kent Speer
junior
secondary education



Drug demand is real problem

'War' needs more bucks to rehabilitate, educate, fill free time

President Bush deserves commendation for his greatest accomplishment at the Colombian drug summit last week. He lived through it.

Little else but the simple survival of our president stands out in the aftermath of forming what Bush labeled "the first anti-drug cartel."

Actually, the fact that the president of the world's leading importer of cocaine met with the chief executives of the world's leading exporters of the drug is remarkable in itself.

But beyond that, what was accomplished?

The leaders agreed that each country may use its own military to wage the "war on drugs" within its own boundaries.

The leaders agreed to call for a worldwide drug summit in 1991.

Bush admitted that dealing with the demand for cocaine in the United States is a priority. He owes it "to the children of America," he said.

And, finally, the leaders agreed to begin talks on developing more lucrative alternative products to cocaine growth for farmers in the Andean nations.

Talk, talk, talk.

They talked a great deal, but leaders forgot the well-worn axiom: "Put your money where your mouth is."

Bush especially seemed reluctant to deal in the real issue behind the talk -- financing.

I'm anxious to hear how our president plans to save the country for America's children for free. I'm dying to know how Peruvian farmers will expand their exports without the United States investing in Peruvian imports.

Reducing the United States' demand for cocaine, in particular, will require money. There's no way to get around that. American dollars must be invested in programs dealing with America's drug problem -- programs such as public drug rehabilitation clinics, increased government support for education and public awareness campaigns.

Drug rehabilitation clinics do work. Even if the success rate is less than 100 percent, there is a success rate. And that's important.

But rehabilitation works only if clinics have well-trained personnel and more-than-just-adequate, humane facilities. (Not boot camps.) Personnel and facilities cost money. And

realistically, the federal government is the only corporation that can afford to invest in rehabilitation clinics that are affordable for low-income drug users, with or without insurance.

Once clinics are operating, continued federal assistance will be essential to maintain the staff and facilities and to keep the patients' fees reasonable.

More government financing is also necessary for public education. I be-



Jana Pedersen

lieve this support in particular must include expansion of funding for extracurricular activities.

Why should we -- in light of recent studies revealing the "horror" that American students aren't learning everything "educated" persons should know -- expand this area?

Simple. If American students won't invest their time in studying, give them something else to focus on. Teach them what they need to know outside the classroom. Who says that education must be confined to four walls, desks and a blackboard? And regardless of common belief, extracurricular activities involve far more than just athletics.

Student government, newspapers, debate, computers, speech, Future Farmers of America, science club and all the rest offer students things that can't always be learned in the classroom. And participating in sports, at the very least, teaches students discipline and how to work with others.

Giving students something that they enjoy doing may spark interest in school and give them less time to seek out other forms of recreation such as drugs.

Finally, public awareness campaigns about drugs must change. I'm sorry, but the "Just Say No" attitude doesn't cut it. Eggs frying in a pan makes a neat visual effect, but no one really believes that "this is your brain."

Anti-drug public service announcements should take a lesson from those promoting AIDS awareness. They need a lesson in realism, in cutting to the

chase, in giving the facts.

And I think I've seen a turn for the better recently with testimonial commercials that really make me think. I just hope the trend continues.

But producing realistic campaigns and distributing factual information on a broad basis costs money too.

Add that to federal support of rehabilitation clinics and increased funding for schools, and we've got quite a bill.

So, where will this money come from?

An obvious source is the "war on drugs" itself. The strategy behind this war is wrong. Dead wrong.

The whole attitude behind the name "war" implies the need for a change of focus.

Come on, America. Our battle against drugs is not a war. A war involves people battling each other, not people battling a problem. People need to work together to combat this problem. People fighting people won't solve anything.

Standard argument: We must fight the people who supply the drugs.

Wrong. The suppliers aren't the problem. It's the users.

We can throw all the drug lords and pushers of the world in jail. But as long as there is demand for drugs, new drug lords and pushers will rise in their place. That's a fact. A fact that the Bush administration needs to realize. Now.

Instead of putting so much money into chasing drug suppliers, let's put it into dealing with the problem itself. One drug supplier in jail means another opening for someone to become very rich off the real problem. Taking away the real problem of demand takes away the opportunity for suppliers.

It just makes sense.

I'm no idealist. I know my ideas aren't the only ones or the best ones to deal with the drug problem in America. But we do need a change of focus -- away from the "war" on suppliers and onto the real problem of demand for drugs themselves. The key to changing the focus is changing where our money goes.

Until that happens, Bush can talk about forming all the anti-drug cartels he wants. It's still just talk.

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