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Opinion alarming

Students need a voice in governing UNL

OK, boys and girls, it's time for "Sen. Langford's Neighborhood."

Can you say "Out of touch?"

I thought you could.

In debate over the inclusion of a student regent or student trustee vote in the proposed higher education restructuring in Nebraska, state Sen. Lorraine Langford of Kearney had some interesting insights about college students.

Langford said she doesn't think students belong on the board of trustees because they aren't interested in policy decisions. Student worries only include how much books cost and when the library or union opens, she said.

"They are not worried about the courses taught and how much those courses cost," she said. "Decisions like that have to come from more mature minds."

Langford also said senators who favor the student vote are young and obviously haven't raised children. Because of this, she said, those senators don't realize that students between the ages of 18 and 20 "make the worst decisions in the world."

In other words, students don't care, and if they did care, they are too stupid to care correctly. And, if any senators believe otherwise, they haven't raised children.

It seems Langford doesn't realize that many 18- to 20-year-olds on this campus already are supporting themselves. They already are making the decisions of adults.

Along with making adult decisions, these "children" also are bright enough and motivated enough to live and succeed at a large university. Passing calculus or chemistry takes more than an interest in library schedules.

And what about the 26th Amendment to the Constitution that allows 18-year-olds to vote? Maybe Langford should lecture Congress about "mature minds."

All this discussion seems to forget that 50 percent of the 22,065 UNL students are 21 or older. Many of those students are holding down more than one job and supporting families of their own while going to school.

It's frightening that even one state senator has such a twisted perception of college students. What is more frightening is that Langford may be voicing the beliefs of other state senators.

One of Langford's not so "mature minds," Sen. David Bernard-Stevens of North Platte, said students have been responsible for some major revolutionary changes in the world because they're young and willing to take risks to get things done.

"Part of the problem we have as adults is that we fail to give our children enough credit," Bernard-Stevens said. "If we ask and expect responsibility and maturity, we'll get it."

Bernard-Stevens realizes that what Langford considers to be "the worst decisions in the world" often are decisions that have led to a much better world.

A truly "mature mind" knows that substantial thinking begins long before middle age.

Students need a voice in governing their school.

Langford's ludicrous and offensive arguments have made that fact even clearer.

-- Bob Nelson
for the Daily Nebraskan



Students must combat racism

Racist distinctions flourish in society despite good intentions

I learned all about revolutions of rising expectations in freshman Western Civilization. Revolt or rapid progress -- like the French Revolution or the climax of the Civil Rights Movement -- comes on the heels of developments that make conditions seem favorable to change.

I believe this theory completely. But I also learned, in freshman astronomy, about Newton's equal and opposite reactions. That is, I think that when change seems to be going our way, we forget that anything can go wrong. We therefore ignore or belittle problems in society, thinking that they can't possibly be as bad as they are. I'll call this the stagnation of rising expectations.

Such is the current state of our world. Communism seems to be dying, and better yet, relations between communists and the Western democracies have improved.

Last year, only Nostradamus' kin would have expected the Berlin Wall to come down during our lifetime, yet, now we expect a unified and peaceful Germany -- soon. America is in the middle of an incredible revolution of rising expectations. As unbelievable and wonderful things keep happening, we'll keep pushing for more. And in the process, we'll brush aside the bad stuff, allowing it to fester.

Some scary things are happening in this country, and, believe it or not, in this city and even on this campus. I'm talking about racism, a word that seems so outdated and moot to most white Americans that most white Americans probably stop reading with this paragraph. I'm going to say it anyway.

On Thursday, someone hung fliers around campus advertising a meeting today -- at 3:30 p.m. outside of Andrews Hall -- for a group called the "White Organization of Concerned Students." The fliers asked for "white Caucasians only."

Wow. Last year, I would have bet lots of money that I wouldn't live to see the Berlin Wall open. But I also would have bet that no flier such as this could ever hang on the wall in the Nebraska Union. I was naive, and so is much of this campus and this country. We can ignore this. We can treat

it as a joke. We can try to hide it by denying rights to free speech and assembly.

But instead, we should be outside Andrews Hall at 3:30. This is something we need to hear.

The DN reported Friday that campus groups like Early Warning! will attend the meeting to combat racism. The editorial said that many student leaders are looking for a confronta-



Brandon Loomis

tion, and that confrontation is not the answer. The more I think about it, the more I question whether we were right.

Violence, at least in my mind, is not the answer. But often, while pondering racial problems, I forget that I am a white man with a white man's views. I hardly feel qualified to prescribe the best remedy for the evil. Perhaps what the White Organization of Concerned Students needs is a good thrashing. I hope not. I don't know.

In any case, I hardly think the confrontation student leaders are looking for has anything to do with violence. They recognize that it is important to confront their enemies simply by being present and showing that racist behavior, while tolerated, will not be accepted. We can and should allow groups like this to exist. Only they can shock us out of our naivete.

But we also can and should work to eliminate conditions in our society which are conducive to the existence of such groups. I changed my mind over the weekend. Confrontation probably is the answer. Every student on campus had better have a pretty good excuse for not being outside Andrews Hall at 3:30. I'll be a few minutes late because of class, but I hope I won't miss much.

It has been suggested that, with the publicity, it is likely that the only people to show up for the meeting will be those who oppose it. That

makes sense to me, but it shouldn't stop us from attending.

I hope no one will take this column as an attempt on my part to portray myself as an entirely enlightened, altruistic liberal. I rarely even pretend to be intelligent. I will acknowledge that I am indeed a product of America: A society which claims and wants to be integrated and egalitarian, but is in fact divided.

I was raised by white American parents in white America, and I went to white schools with white friends and white teachers. Under these conditions, it is virtually impossible for me and, I believe, most Americans of any race to completely ignore color. When I walk down the street and pass a black man, my mind tells me that the man is black. I don't think any connotation goes along with that neurological message, but I am made aware of the fact.

When I pass a white man, my mind tells me that the man is a man. He is like me and the environment to which I am accustomed, so there is no need for my mind to make any further distinction.

Next year, if I come up with lots of financial aid, I will begin work on an advanced degree at a "black" university. That is, 80 percent of the school's population is black or minority. Twenty percent is white. By that standard, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, which is much more than 80 percent white, should be labeled a "white" school. The fact that it isn't shows the double standards and distinctions that flourish even in our well-intentioned society. These distinctions are what must be fought if equality ever is to become reality.

We make unconscious distinctions even if we don't want to. If our expectations for race relations -- and everything else -- have gotten so high that we can't even see that, then we're experiencing a stagnation of rising expectations. We need to expect less from society and more from ourselves. Then, maybe, we or our children can continue the revolution that has been stagnating through 20 years of high hopes.

Loomis is a senior news-editorial major, the Daily Nebraskan wire editor and an editorial columnist.

letter

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Readers also are welcome to submit material as guest opinions. Whether material should run as a let-

ter or guest opinion, or not to run, is left to the editor's discretion.

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editorial

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