

Reader responds to rebuttals; another angered at ASUN

Ethnocentric logic stresses material aspects of culture

It scares the hell out of me to know people like Jack Lovell (DN, April 17) are still around. It's 1990, but these graduates from the John Wayne School of Native American Studies still believe Indians were better off after being subjugated and stripped of their identity by white Euro-Americans. This ethnocentric logic tends to cloud the truth by emphasizing only the material aspects of culture rather than culture itself.

People like Jack Lovell often confuse the word "inferior" with "different." At the time of white contact in 1541, Native Americans had adapted quite successfully to their environment considering their level of technology. At first, white influx was slow. Indians acquired horses and guns and incorporated them into their culture over a period of time.

That flood of white invaders never stopped though, and they brought other "gifts" with them like diseases which absolutely devastated many tribes. Don't forget the bison, either. They were the most important part of Native American culture and subsistence and were nearly extinguished by white Euro-American hunters. This left Indians very vulnerable, but never "inferior." As for being militarily inferior, I think George Armstrong Custer would disagree.

If reservations were originally created to help Native Americans maintain their culture, that concept didn't last for more than five minutes. The white government would generally look for the worst land available and stick some Indians on it to get them out of the way. There, each "family unit" would be given some land to farm and be forced to act like white people. The concept of a reservation was an idea whose time has never come.

Finally, Lovell seems to suggest that Indian hardships of today are entirely their own fault, and if they'd just act like white people, things would be great. It isn't that easy. Any idiot can see the material aspects of a culture. Sure, Native Americans have taken on some characteristics of white material culture (televisions, cars, bars -- whoopie), but who could forsake generations of tradition, beliefs and religion just to be something he or she isn't? I can't just snap my fingers and say "I'm an Indian;" there's more to it than that.

As for government aid to Native Americans in college, don't you think the United States Government owes it to them after repressing them for so many years? It seems to me the very least they can do. How can anyone in their right mind call it racism?

By the way, "Little Big Man" is one hell of a film.

Keith Richter
sophomore
anthropology

Reader's points massacred by novice rebuttals

When I wrote in last week about the Indians (DN, April 17), I had hoped to provoke a little intelligent discussion about the topic. What I got was neither a discussion nor intelligent. Instead, I received a volley of labels and epithets and an amateur analysis. I will just repeat a few of my points that were massacred by the attempted rebuttal.

Nowhere in my letter did I state that the Indians deserved to be conquered. I said that they were conquered. For proof, I state the Indians no longer control the affairs of North America. The means by which they were defeated may have included the violations of many treaties but treachery always has been and always will be a tactic in warfare.

As for them standing in the path of progress, that was the topic of Brandon Loomis' (DN, April 9) column. I said nothing about that. I said that

reservations are a stupid idea and implied that they are a bastion of apathy and stagnation. I freely admit that this may have changed by now but it is the impression that I received when I last visited the reservation.

When did I say that it was all right to wipe out Native American culture, language, history or tribes? That Indians were "primitive savages?" That their ability to fight justified their treatment by European settlers? Not once in my letter did I touch on any of those topics. Brad Whitaker and Brad Moncrief (DN, April 19) have the audacity to label me ignorant when they evidently lack the skills to read and comprehend a simple letter. In my opinion, this casts quite a large shadow of doubt on the accuracy of their other criticisms.

As for my "most blatant expression of ignorance," I continue to believe that scholarships based on skin color are an expression of racism. What do language, religion, history, traditions and beliefs have to do with it? The scholarship applies to people of Native American ancestry, period. Not Indians who live on the reservation, or speak native languages, or follow the native religions or traditions. A scholarship for that purpose would be understandable; however, the present scholarship is a farce.

The problem that Loomis referred to in his article was one in Wisconsin. The treaty with the Indians had a clause allowing them to have subsistence fishing. The Indians are using gill nets to decimate the fish populations. The fish come from hatcheries supported by fishing licenses. Did the Indians' culture include the extermination of entire marine populations? No. They are using it as an excuse and that is where my problem lies. The Indians are using all the modern equipment that they can. That is just fine. However, they are using the treaties to gain rights above and beyond those of all other Americans. A right given to only one race and denied to all others is repugnant to me, regardless of the reason.

The Indians may not wish to hop in the melting pot, but that refusal should not grant them special rights. The Polish neighborhoods of Chicago and the Chinatowns of large cities retain both their cultures and their languages without additional rights such as those provided for the Indians. I fail to see the difference in their plights.

In conclusion, although a joint letter from a poet and a pseudo-scientist was quite amusing, especially the numerous assaults on stands that I never stated or defended, I hope that future rebuttals have a bit more reasoning behind them. The mere fact that you dislike my stand does not decrease its validity, nor does labeling me a bigot (Moncrief's and Whitaker's implication) refute my logic.

Jack Lovell
senior
engineering

Indian drug use wrong, despite religious reasons

I just had to write this letter after reading the DN editorial on April 18. It argued that the recent Supreme Court decision regarding the Indians' use of the drug peyote was wrong. I beg to differ.

Do you think that if I claimed LSD or cocaine use was a part of my religion, I would be granted special permission to manufacture it for that use? I seriously doubt it. If a particular drug is illegal, it should be illegal for everyone, regardless of religion or ethnic background.

If the Court had decided in favor of the Indians in this case, they would have granted a particular group of people special privileges that the rest of us do not have, simply because of their religious beliefs. As far as I am concerned, that would be discrimination against those of us who do not follow those beliefs, and that would be unfair.

Andrew Meyer
sophomore
pre-med

Director thanks lecture listeners, event supporters

I wish to thank the students, faculty and friends of the university for their support of the numerous events surrounding the visit of Jacques Derrida to our campus last week. They thoroughly defeated the obnoxious opinion that our community is uninterested in philosophy or its problems.

More than 400 people attended Derrida's lecture. Despite the overheated room and the complexity of the talk, almost everyone stayed. Derrida's long career has been founded on the assumption that learning and questioning can go hand in hand rather than fist to fist. It was inspiring to see so many people share at least that much with his work, and so many willing to hear him before reaching conclusions about his thought and

purposes. Derrida's visit brought together many parts of our university to think about the role of violence in our century and in our everyday language. Whatever his impression on us, he was gratified to find so many of us gathered to give these topics their attention.

To all who came to listen and inquire, I offer my thanks. For those who did not, 400 people can tell you what you missed.

Willis G. Regier
director
University of Nebraska Press

Student's insight could give ASUN valuable benefits

How can ASUN feel like they are a responsible unit of government for the university when they open up a

senate seat and don't check out who is eligible for such a position?

I mean the situation with Sandy Haughton, the junior business major that in a fair election won the newly opened senate seat for the Division of Continuing Studies. Haughton was later informed she could not serve as senator because she only carried six credit hours rather than the required 12. Most students in the Division of Continuing Studies can't manage 12 hours plus a full-time job or a load of kids. What is ASUN saying to these students? They don't count in student government?

If ASUN wants to be responsible, they should let Haughton -- a responsible person that handles a full-time job and school -- be a senator. She could only provide valuable insight, and ASUN can finally move forward.

Neil A. Michaud
UNL graduate

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