

Readers discuss minority issue, homophobia, ASUN

Indians' freedom of religion lost in peyote-use ban

Well, here's to you Mr. Andrew Meyer, pre-med, in answer to your letter to the DN on April 26 regarding the use of peyote in Native American religious practices. If you had done your homework, you would know that the Board of Pharmacology for the state of Oregon, in a statement to the State District Attorney, stated that peyote use was not found to have any short- or long-term damaging effects on its users. Personally, I do not think that dangerously addictive drugs should be made available for leisure consumption. However, this is not a case of drug abuse, it is a case of cultural identity. The white pilgrims who landed on the coast of New England were fleeing persecution. Would we now mock our founding fathers and become hypocrites? Hallucinogenic drugs are used all over the world for religious purposes. Addictive drugs such as morphine and cocaine are used for medical purposes. In both of these situations the substances are used in a controlled environment. In this country, we permit the use of dangerous drugs to heal the body. Should we not then permit the use of peyote to heal the soul? I suggest, Mr. Pre-med, that you learn tolerance because I'm sure you will find that in the medical profession it is often the staff that has the highest tendency towards drug abuse.

Sarah L. Carlton
junior
anthropology

White judgment of minorities upsets reader

This letter may turn out to be a response to everything so bear with me. I am about sick of the letters I read in the editorial section of this paper. As a minority (an African American), I feel it necessary to say that the opinions of the majority of Americans just are not making it. In order to truly understand the situations of the minority population in this land, you have to be a minority. The more I read the more upset I get when white people attempt to judge by their standards the legality of what is done by Native Americans, Asian Americans, African Americans and all other minority Americans of color.

First, I would like to respond to Andrew Meyer and all those opposed to the use of peyote by the Native American in his/her religious ceremonies. I am one-quarter Cherokee and my relatives, with whom I speak about the issue, are in awe over the white person's opinion in this matter in that they shouldn't have one at all. To Mr. Meyer and all, peyote was being used before Europe was Europe. Before whites came to this land and carried out the atrocities that they did here as well as in other places. If there is one thing that is certain, one may look at history (what's left of it) and clearly see that one group of people from one place on Earth have historically led a campaign to destroy, dominate and exploit the other people on Earth. As in the case of the Native American, don't they feel that enough has been done? How dare you say that the Native American should be treated as the rest of the Americans base upon your Eurocentric view of what is right or legal. Lots of you white students benefit from the horrors that your foreparents inflicted upon the native peoples of America and elsewhere.

For example, a more recent issue is that America benefits from the bounties of apartheid. American defense is built upon the minerals that African peoples pull out of those mines under domination of a white minority. The diamonds and gold Americans enjoy wearing to the Coca-Cola they drink and the Shell gas they drive with and the college education you are getting with S.A. investitures

are all in some way tied into an oppressive system. The chocolate you eat and coffee you drink come from areas where the native peoples work under white control. People who have tried to control their own nation and economy but run into a white Euro-dominated market where the big bosses raise tariffs in order to keep the competition from South American- and African- and Asian-dominated markets to non-existent levels UNLESS they agree to allow white nations to ship the raw products from the ports of origin or sell out to Euro-corporations. Morality is to demand the truth of what happened in Panama. To hold the government accountable for covering up the deaths of hundreds of civilians (the black civilians of the area) who lived in the neighborhoods surrounding Noriega's stronghold. Then you have the nerve to turn around and base your level of understanding as what is moral?

To Mr. Lovell, I must say that your reference to the unfairness of scholarships is strictly one out of ignorance. Go read your history (oops, I forget that your history is part of what made you ignorant -- nevermind). Instead, let me say that in the past, many groups have had to fight for a piece of the American pie. Years ago, Native Americans and blacks marched and died trying to be included in the bounty of American equality. Every time we cried out for an equal chance, we received rulings which were designed to keep us quiet yet at the bay of white America. Your history, sir, reeks of state odors of intolerance; at every opportunity, it has been whites who have bamboozled or murdered someone else in order to keep down the competition or enforce what they thought was the law. Let me go further to add that there is no "melting pot," just a vat where white males decide what goes in the stew, how much, and in what order. As a Chicagoan, yes, we do have our diverse neighborhoods of ethnicities, however, why don't you go see where the WASPs live. Get a tan and walk through there at any time. As for the Polish people in the city, they are just as white as anyone else. Certainly the Chinese in Chinatown retain their language and culture, but go ask the average Chinese person on the street if they have been given the equal opportunities in Chicago or San Francisco city planning or government. Oh yes, and about the fishing rights in Wisconsin, don't talk about Native Americans decimating the fish population to me after white Americans pushed the bison and some other species to extinction. Four hundred years of taking away land and livelihood, polluting the waters with oil (Exxon et al.), moving human beings across the Mississippi to "barren lands" only to kill them off on oil and minerals were found in those areas, transporting Africans to America to do the work (and then say that we are lazy) on and on and on. . . . Now to cry foul over some fishing rights that Native Americans should have always retained; it may drive the fish population down, yes, but only after the in the area have driven down the population with their sport fishing and uncontrolled waste waters that are dumped from their homes in the area. Not much would have been extinct if the white Americans treated land and life with more respect. So now those whites in Wisconsin rally for their rights? And as I watched the news, it was the whites who were first to start throwing racial slurs. Pitiful, isn't it?

My point is that it took the government to force (not that it wanted to) equal opportunity upon a population which remains in the dark on their own history of oppression as well as the conditions of others. If you want to be valid on what you say, then find out the truth of American as well as world history. It appalls me when whites of today say that THAT was in the past. I love everyone, and I did nothing wrong. Well, the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children in this case.

White America needs to get hip on how their forefathers set up a system that benefits them to this day. The minorities are not asking for special rights or scholarships, only justice and to be left alone when they ask to

be left alone. So take off the blinders Mr. Lovell, Mr. Meyers and all. Stop being ashamed to look back and see what happened; most of all stop forgetting. No more white justice -- just white understanding and accountability.

Joseph L. Ryan
junior
sociology

ASUN positions should be open to DCS students

Sandra Haughton's ongoing efforts to obtain access to an ASUN senate seat raises a question. Are Division of Continuing Studies students going to be accepted as a part of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln or do we merely represent a source of revenue which has few corresponding obligations?

The Division of Continuing Studies makes every effort to allow us the opportunity of attending classes and meeting our educational goals. Except at the Bursar's Office, little attention is given to DCS students at UNL. Information about activities, organizations and programs is less accessible to non-traditional evening students. UNL offices are closed when we are on campus. Often, our sole source of current campus information is the Daily Nebraskan. Access to this newspaper is the floor of our classroom where it has been left scattered by the more traditional students.

I was recently forced to seek admission to UNL with the intent to attend regular, day classes. As a DCS student only, I was refused access to an advisor in my college. This perception of DCS students as being outside UNL and our lack of access to services, which traditional students take for granted, illustrates the need for DCS representation in ASUN.

An effort has been made recently to fulfil this obligation. A senate seat was opened for a DCS student, but there was a catch, a Catch-22. According to the UNL charter, only full-time students qualify for this new vacancy. This condition automatically disqualifies more than 99 percent of the DCS students from consideration, leaving only seven eligible students. This severely limited access makes the government of South Africa look like a representative democracy. Consider also the percentage of students willing to seek election. What is the probability that one of these seven students is willing or able to do so? These seven students were contacted about the vacancy after the election and all refused the opportunity.

Ideally, all students should be able to seek election to an ASUN seat, since course load by itself does not represent a person's abilities. Realizing that this is unrealistic, three possible alternatives come to mind:

1) Consider eligible, all DCS students with six or more credit hours. This option would allow a much greater portion of the DCS students to be eligible. At the least, it would put these requirements within reach.

2) Consider eligible, all DCS students with nine or more credit hours. This option is already being used for graduate students and is within reach of many more students than is currently the case.

3) Give three additional credit hours for all ASUN senators. These credit hours would not count towards graduation requirements, but would count towards the full-time status requirements.

We have been silent on this issue until now because most of us were unaware of our recent "inclusion" in ASUN. Those that did know of this saw that they were ineligible by current regulation, thus the reason for Ms. Haughton's single winning vote. Only she saw the sense in challenging this nonsense. She should be allowed to fill this seat until a proper solution can be found. The solution should focus on giving DCS students reasonable access to representation. More of us are becoming involved in this issue and will begin to let our feelings known. Until then, I am encouraged to see that Ms. Haughton has the

support of Phil Gosch. My only hope is that the ASUN student court has the same sense of fairness.

Tad D. Asche
6 credit hours
Division of Continuing Studies
48 work hours

ROTC, housing, code of conduct prompt response

The issues of ROTC, UNL's Revised Student Code of Conduct and UNL Housing have prompted me to respond on behalf of the Gay and Lesbian Alumni/ae Association.

ASUN was very appropriate in its resolution disapproving of gays/lesbians being barred from participation in the ROTC program. According to ROTC policy, gays and lesbians may only audit classes. In a recent case on another campus, the ROTC cadet, after discovering that he was gay, told his commander and was asked by the program to pay back \$25,000 in money to go to school. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln is not required to have ROTC on campus. As a land grant institution, the only requirement is that UNL teach military science. This could be taught by other instructors. Because UNL's ROTC program is in violation of UNL's policies, I am asking the chancellor, the NU Board of Regents, the faculty senate and the student body to bar ROTC from UNL. Several arguments have been proposed by opponents of gays/lesbians in ROTC: 1) Gays/lesbians are a security threat. They are no more of a security threat than heterosexuals who engage in infidelity. If gays/lesbians could be open, there would be no security threat. 2) Unit cohesiveness and morale in wartime would be jeopardized. Stories of gay/lesbian veterans show that this is not the case. During World War II, there were entire lesbian units in the WAC. 3) Heterosexual males would find it offensive to be forced to sleep with, shower with and expose themselves to someone gay (DN, April 18). This is a complete myth. Gay males and lesbian women are no more attracted to prospective "sexual, intimate" targets than heterosexuals.

The UNL Student Code of Conduct being discussed represents a humanitarian and constitutionally sound approach to anti-minority prejudice. Initially, Section 4.10 should have contained the words, "affectional and/or sexual orientation," instead of covering it up with "individual characteristics." This was homophobic in itself. According to a 1988 National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Report, "Of the 1,411 incidents reported, verbal harassment was the most widespread (accounting for 80 percent of the episodes.)"

The UNL Housing Department may be in violation of various protections currently in place regarding gay/lesbian concerns. First, gay/lesbian couples are not allowed to live in married family housing. Second, persons of the opposite sex are not allowed to stay overnight in dorm rooms, as persons of the same sex are.

Finally, the university is still a "chilly" climate and a relatively homophobic institution, because it does allow ROTC to discriminate against gay/lesbian/bisexual people, excludes the words, "affectional and/or sexual orientation" from Section 4.10 of the proposed Student Code of Conduct, does not allow gay/lesbian/bisexual couples to live in married student housing; lacks a gay/lesbian studies program, a minority affairs office for gay/lesbian/bisexual concerns, funding for the UNL Gay/Lesbian Resource Center, a gay/lesbian scholarship fund, a needs assessment of gay/lesbian students and a homophobia survey of UNL; and allows the NU Alumni Association to deny recognition to the UNL Gay and Lesbian Alumni/ae Association Inc.

Folks, the homophobia continues!!! Being gay or lesbian is similar to being a racial minority in the 1960s at UNL.

Rodney A. Bell II
chairperson
UNL GALA

Discrimination can't be tolerated in today's society

Douglas Shonka, I have some news for you. You may not consider yourself to be homophobic, but your letter (DN, April 18) reeks of it.

I must congratulate you on thinking about the issue, even though you stopped far short of any reasonable conclusions. You realize that if the military accepted homosexuals, many gays and lesbians will come out, thus eliminating the perception of a security risk. This is very true, but "what about those who are very emphatic about concealing their sexual preference?" Mr. Shonka, I don't suppose you thought about this question did you?

Yes, people in our society are very homophobic. Maybe that is the reason why so many homosexuals feel they need to keep their sexual preference a secret. Maybe, they are afraid of losing their job or family, or their military career just because they happen to be gay. Just because society is biased against homosexuals does not justify the ban! Our society also happens to be biased against race, religion, sex and class, but discrimination according to any of these is not tolerated. What makes homosexuals so different? Are they immoral and thus corrupt or easily corruptible? Give me a break!! Love is love, sex is sex; one just doesn't lead to procreation.

What about all those married heterosexuals in the military? They could be having affairs. Doesn't that make them just as susceptible to blackmail as homosexuals. Last I heard, extramarital sex was not condoned by society in general. Maybe, if the military lifted its ban on homosexuals, society might get the idea that it's OK to be gay and discrimination is wrong.

Your other justifications for the ban deal with "unit cohesion" and "the rights of individuals." You're just using the same argument. Just because people are bigoted doesn't mean that society should be.

"The homosexual soldier would be ostracized and abused" because of his sexual preference. That's like saying women should stay home, because they will be sexually harassed on the job. And what about the rights of the straight individual who finds it "offensive" to be around gays? That's like asking, "What about the racist individual who finds it offensive to be around blacks?"

Discrimination involves a lot more than hiring practices, Mr. Shonka, and should not be tolerated in any form. Face it, Mr. Shonka, gays and lesbians are out there. To quote Whoopi Goldberg, "They've been around since air." If you don't like it, maybe you should change your attitude. It would be a nice step toward a free society where gays and lesbians don't have to be closeted and can be just exactly who they are, not who society demands they be.

Joyce C. Melvin
senior
English/sociology

letter POLICY

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