

Daily Nebraskan

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University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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Sign up to vote

Officials try to make registration easy

Whether in textbooks, on television or in newspapers and magazines, officials and the electorate will be the first to tell you there is something seriously wrong with the political process.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that there are 1,187,000 eligible voters in Nebraska. Statistics show that 865,726 registered for the June primary, and 392,273, or 45 percent, of Nebraska's registered voters cast their ballots in the June primary.

With the Oct. 26 voter registration deadline imminent, it's time to get out and sign up to vote in the Nov. 6 election.

According to an article in the Omaha World-Herald, Secretary of State Allen Beermann said state officials are taking measures to increase registration and ultimately voter turnout. Such measures include easing restrictions on the use of absentee ballots, publishing application forms in newspapers and setting up registration booths at local grocery stores, banks and various other locations.

On the national level, the Senate failed last week to end a filibuster against legislation aimed at increasing voter registration.

Debate will continue on the bill, which would encourage states to allow people to register automatically when they obtain a driver's license.

Since the bill probably will be debated into oblivion, it looks as though it, along with many registration forms, will be shelved until next year.

And that's too bad. If carefully monitored, an automatic registration law would facilitate the voting process.

In the meantime, the electorate must pick up the slack of an inefficient election process.

Whether casting a ballot is a chore or not, it's our duty to vote.

-- Lisa Donovan
for the Daily Nebraskan



SO ARE YOU GUYS READY TO NEGOTIATE YET?

Things not always black, white

Race doesn't affect all decisions; some based on fact, memory

There are few college students who haven't been to a party that was abruptly ended by police officers answering a noise complaint.

Even fewer of those same students have left a broken-up party not hating the cops for what they did and how much fun they ruined.

Last Saturday night, though, I was fortunate enough to get a glimpse from the other side of the fence. I rode along with a friend who is a Lincoln police officer. I got clearance to ride along for a story I was working on in a depth-reporting class.

It was an eye-opener, to say the least.

Law enforcement is known to be a stressful field, especially for a police officer, but just how stressful is something only the officers on the streets know for sure.

Lincoln police officers ride one to a car, except during field training, when they ride with an experienced field-training officer. But they are never alone -- stress, frustration and fear are their constant companions.

John, the officer I tagged along with, has been a friend of mine since high school. I know him pretty well, but I could tell that once inside the cruiser, he is a changed person -- to an extent.

It's not a change for the worse, necessarily. John just wasn't his normal lighthearted self on the job.

It didn't take long to learn why. After a few routine calls that included serving a warrant for arrest, a possible burglary in progress and various other things, we returned to a party because of a noise complaint.

Normally, the police policy on a second visit is that the party is over.

This time, it was the second visit in less than an hour. While people were shuffling out the back door, arguing with the police the whole time, another officer on the scene recognized one of the guests. He was allegedly a

suspect the officer had chased on foot two weeks earlier. The suspect allegedly had spit in the officer's face and given false personal information.

As the man walked out onto the porch, the officer grabbed his arm and pulled him aside to ask him some questions.

The suspect happened to be black. The action was immediately met by drunken accusations of racism from

ties about the cop's mother, he's "a victim of our white-oriented society."

Unfortunately, in some places, that is the case. In this instance, however, it wasn't.

Another officer involved in the foot pursuit two weeks ago was called to the scene to identify the suspect. He wasn't sure it was their man.

The suspect, who identified himself as "Chris," was taken to the city jail at 9th and J streets to be compared to a photo of the man the officers were looking for. Eventually, it was discovered that "Chris" was indeed the man who fled two weeks ago, and that he had been lying about his name and other information.

"It happens all the time," John told me afterward of the charges of racism. "Not a night goes by that someone doesn't accuse us of something like that. You have to learn to live with it."

Maybe so, if you wear a badge. But those of us who don't -- whether we're white or black -- shouldn't have to learn to live with it. We should learn to be more educated, and realize that race doesn't necessarily affect all of the decisions in our society.

The point is not that police are our best friends, and that whatever they do is right, justified and otherwise just peachy. Rather, that their decisions are not customarily made on racial, sexual or age bias; they're made on fact, memory and knowledge of the law.

"Chris" was arrested because he allegedly broke the law. He also happened to be black, which had nothing to do with his arrest.

Things are not always as they appear. And you don't need a badge to figure it out.

Green is a senior news-editorial major, a Daily Nebraskan night news editor, a sports-writer and a columnist.



Chuck
Green

disgruntled party-goers who were standing around outside the door.

A woman, who obviously had made one trip to the keg too many, kicked off the festivities.

"Did you see what that cop did?" she said. "They're picking on that guy just because he's black."

A few people standing around shook their head.

"That's true," some other person said. "They just pick out someone at these parties to pick on and make an example out of."

Other officers there heard the comments, but didn't react. They just repeated their orders to the crowd to leave. What else could they have done?

It was sad, but not because people were making blind accusations about something they knew nothing about. The most discouraging part was that statements like that are so common nobody thinks twice about them anymore.

If a white police officer arrests a black man, the cop is labeled "racist." If the black man lies to the police, spits in an officer's face before he runs away and spouts obsceni-

Art answer lies in awareness

A few words, if I may, about subsidized art.

The conflict seems to involve two rights implicit in the nation's Constitution, the right to self-expression and the right not to have to pay for bad art. The lines of debate on this issue are being drawn between those who feel art should be paid for with taxpayers' money and those who don't.

The people in favor of art subsidy are seeking protection of artists from the demands of a harsh consumer world and a guarantee that art in every form be made available for appreciation by all people, regardless of cultural and economic background. Unfortunately, inadequate funding (and there can never be enough money to support all artists), the whims of those faceless drones invested with the power to distribute grants and the nature of bureaucracy itself insure a differential allocation of funding. This differential freedom is no freedom at all. In the interests of efficiency and job security it leads inevitably to a preponderance of such art as can only be described as flaccid. After all, what right-minded technocrat would lay his job on the line for a picture of Bob Mapplethorpe sodomizing himself with a whip? The greatest threat to "fringe" art is subsidization itself.

The response of many to this problem is to eliminate funding all together. This would leave art to the workings of the free market and, if people didn't want to pay for art, they wouldn't. Anyone actually wanting to see Mapplethorpe and his trusty whip could do so, for a price. This, however, denies exposure of the economically disadvantaged to art and leaves little room for the so-called "starving artists." Art becomes a commercial scheme, a business ploy

for those who can afford it. Here, too, art flounders. Individualism is hardly considered good business. Again, why take chances? Why design extraordinary clothing when everyone is happy wearing T-shirts that say "JUST DO IT" and "RADICAL DUDE"? Why spend hours locked in your room with a guitar, a tape deck and a burning in your soul when people would rather hear the rehashed music of a Mountain Dew commercial?

So, torn between big government and big business (as though there were much difference anymore), what can an aspiring artist/art lover do? How does one wrest freedom of expression from the instincts of that murky pool of conformity Mencken so appropriately called the "booboisie"?

I don't know. The answer seems to lie in an awareness of the extent to which individuals are formed, manipulated and exploited outright by this Juggernaut society we live in. This awareness is hard-won and even relies on a certain amount of luck, because so much "programming" has been done on us by the time we're capable of looking at it at all objectively (and when is that? age 16? 24? 40? 80?). We hardly know where to start. Just as the poorest minorities in the worst ghettos are damned to a certain fate, so are we with our eight hours of work, four hours of television (brainwashing), a little time for mowing the lawn and a good night's sleep. We are scarcely worthy of our luxury and convenience if we lack the strength and perspicacity to fully comprehend their costs and whose ends we really serve.

J.S. Clement
biological sciences

letter POLICY

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor from all readers and interested others.

Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available.

editorial POLICY

Signed staff editorials represent the official policy of the Fall 1990 Daily Nebraskan. Policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board. Its members are: Eric Pfanner, editor; Lisa Donovan, editorial page editor;

The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit all material submitted.

Anonymous submissions will not be considered for publication. Letters should include the author's name.

Victoria Ayotte, managing editor; Diane Brayton, associate news editor; Darcie Wiegert, associate news editor; Emily Rosenbaum, copy desk chief; Jana Pedersen, wire editor.

year in school, major and group affiliation, if any. Requests to withhold names will not be granted.

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