

Readers differ on war topics, voice opinions on sexism

Thin skin prompts reader's allegation of sexism in DN

J.M. MacMillan desperately needs to lighten up (DN, Feb. 26). Despite the warning bells that may be clanging for the politically impeccable, this continuation heading was neither the carefully premeditated ploy of a male-dominated newspaper to undermine the integrity of UNL women nor an oversight of a villainous sexist ignoramus.

It was an abbreviation — nothing more or less, containing no oppressive hidden meanings, not written because the "She Said" side was deemed less important. The incidence of such "offensive" abbreviations stems most often not from sexism, but from journalistic procedure practiced by both men and women.

MacMillan's letter, though short, revealed that, despite David Dalton's hopes, our campus is not removed from those who act as watchdogs for any small word or phrase construable as sexist. Yes, discrimination does exist — the UNMC incident is a particularly grotesque example — but discrimination can't be and shouldn't be as rampant as to lock the most innocuous abbreviation into a presumption of guilt. MacMillan's ideas unfairly push all speech into the camp of the committed bigot, leaving even the most unbigoted people stammering to justify their slights against political correctness.

Since I am a woman, why was I not offended by the "He Said" heading? Aside from the reason that I didn't notice it at first, I wasn't offended because the heading could have been offensive only to those with skin much thinner than mine. A man's or a woman's attestations of strength are no good when an incident like this reveals his or her fragility. Sexism does exist, but "He Said" is not an example of it.

If your integrity as a person was indeed undermined by the heading, MacMillan, then the problem isn't with the heading — the problem lies under your thin skin.

Maren Chaloupka
junior
political science

UNMC officials missing point of sexism charges

As women graduate students at this university, we too would like to express our support for Carey Nesmith and Jo Falkenburg, the first-year medical students who spoke up about sexist practices in the medical school. We would also like to comment about some of the arguments that the male administrators at UNMC have made. The point is NOT that the female students have a chance to learn certain procedures later in their education. The point is that male and female students don't learn the procedures in the same way at the same time and that female students are dismissed from class while male students can stay or leave. The point is NOT that female students can set up times outside of class to learn the procedures. How feasible is it for someone who goes to school all day and studies all night to set up additional time with an instructor to learn something that they should learn during class time with the men? Not only that, but the women would have to find a volunteer to be the "patient" for their instruction, which seems ridiculous. The point is NOT that male and female students are uncomfortable with disrobing in front of each other and doing the procedures. I'm sure that with a minimum of effort, that problem could be taken care of. How about a room partition so that men could be on one side and women on the other? I bet there might even already be one there. Perhaps the instructors could find some volunteers to be "patients" so that both sexes could learn procedures that are generally performed on the opposite sex. It is our understanding that people are often paid by UNMC to do just that.

It is fairly clear to us that learning the rectal and pelvic exams is not the

difficult part of the training. The difficult part is getting used to and comfortable with examining private/sensitive areas of the body. If this is the case, then the male students have a definite advantage down the road in their training. And one more thing. It is obvious that there are more males than females in medical school. Women are only beginning to overcome sexism in this country. There are a lot more women in medical school now than there were even a decade ago. The first-year medical school class is about two-thirds male and one-third female. Can you seriously say that it is OK for one-third of a class to be barred from learning a procedure? What kind of education is that? What other discrimination is going on over there at the medical school?

All of the medical students should learn the same procedures in the same manner at the same time and be able to make the same choices to participate. It is simple common sense.

We can only hope that Carey and Jo are not being harassed for doing the right thing. Unfortunately, the chances are that life has been very difficult for them lately. Hang in there, Carey and Jo!

Jeri Thompson
Jane Howard
Tamara Daily
Renee Michael
Michele Krueger
graduate students
psychology

Claudia Price-Decker
administrative technician
psychology department

Columnist shouldn't criticize military for war

This letter is in response to Lisa Donovan's column regarding opposition to the troops (DN, Feb. 19) and the debate it has engendered. I must confess I did not read Donovan's column. I did, however, read the couple of letters that followed it. While I admit at the outset that I'm not the most intelligent guy in the world (I'm also probably "irresponsible, impudent and narrow-minded as well"), I don't think I'm so out of touch with what the average American thinks about the war and one's duty to serve one's country.

You see, Lisa and Chas Baylor, we average Americans don't have the luxury of your education, your sophistication or your time to sit back and reflect on the morality of war. The soldiers in Operation Desert Storm are fulfilling what they basically believe to be their unqualified patriotic duty. Even if these "pawns" had access to the same information that lead you to the conclusion that this was an unjust war, they likely would not have availed themselves of it, being more concerned about such trivial matters as putting food on the table. These average Americans serving in our armed forces, lacking your obvious, keen insight, may even believe this war is based upon a just cause. Does this belief exculpate them in your eyes?

While the soldiers may lack the sophistication necessary to objectively evaluate the justness of the cause for which they serve, George Bush, on the other hand, is sophisticated, educated, and has had the time to reflect. If you must blame someone, at least blame those who really are responsible. Blaming the soldiers for the war makes as little sense as blaming the messenger for the message.

The analogy to the Nuremberg trials, I'd like to note, is so completely without merit that I'm surprised someone so dang intelligent would have mentioned it. We, the allies in World War II, tried for war crimes only those German and Japanese military officials who were in positions of responsibility to order the commission of heinous atrocities, or those who actually committed them. We did not hold every soldier of the German army responsible for the policies of Hitler. Moreover, the violations of the Geneva convention and breaches of international law were the heinous atrocities

about which we were concerned, not the mere participation in the war effort.

From all indications, the war in the Persian Gulf has been executed with the utmost deference to the laws of war and compassion for the "pawns" on the other side who were no more responsible for the breakdown in diplomacy than our "pawns." General Schwartzkopf has done one hell of a job, not only to the extent of trying to minimize casualties on our side but also to ensure humane treatment of our adversaries. Do not criticize General Schwartzkopf or I might be moved to violence. He's a hell of a general and a leader for whom I'd be willing to fight and die.

I am no hawk, but I hope my fellow doves have taken notice of Schwartzkopf's demeanor during the briefings he has delivered. The man nearly broke down describing how the small number of U.S. casualties would not seem a miracle to those families whose sons and daughters have died in this war. Moreover, he has stated on more than one occasion that, were it up to him, this war would never have started. He still directed this war, as was his duty, but to accomplish the mission with the maximum possible concern for the welfare of the troops.

This is as it should be. Our military, which is based on the military philosophy of Karl von Klauswitz, is not itself political but is a tool of the political leaders of our country. My point is that if you want to engage in finger-pointing, point at Congress and the President, because, once told to fight, it is not up to the military to evaluate the cause; they'll be too busy trying not to get killed.

Gregory R. Coffey
junior
College of Law

Reader ignorant of U.S. generals; they're not wimps

I'm writing in response to a letter by Chas Baylor (DN, Feb. 27). Obviously Chas is just another peacenik, along with Lisa Donovan and Gary Hanna. Chas said that Gen. Colin Powell could have "quietly protested" going to war, and that Air Force Gen. Dugan made statements about U.S. plans, and got fired because he didn't agree with the war. Boy, do you have a brain, or are you just ignorant?

First, Gen. Colin Powell and Gen. Dugan are career military men. They are not the wimps with whom you associate, like Gary Hanna. Gen. Colin Powell had two combat tours in Vietnam. Now come on, if he didn't think the war in the gulf was unjust, do you think he would have volunteered for two years in Vietnam, which even he declares as a war that we lost? Second, maybe you should do a little more research and thinking before you write letters, because Gen. Dugan was fired because he advocated the U.S. Air Force bombing Saddam, his family and his mistress, not because he said, "No blood for oil."

So you see, Chas, your dim view of the world, along with your buddies, is more totalitarian than my view or Richard Schmidt's. We don't spread lies and make up stories to fit our beliefs, as you have done.

Jonathan Shrier
freshman
Russian and international affairs

Atrocity of war can't be equal to moral action

Before the Persian Gulf war started, I opposed it with all of my being. After it started, I grieved, cried and tried to cope with overwhelming waves of horror at the daily depictions on television. I never wrote a letter to a newspaper or congressman about my concerns although I thought about it. I didn't go to a peace rally, but thought about it. It all seemed so futile.

The day the war ended I finally went to a peace vigil, pushed over the edge by our unresponsiveness to peace overtures. Today the war is over. The

country is celebrating "victory" and I feel nausea. I am nauseated by one of our generals standing on television and gloating over the vanquished, leaving no shred of dignity as a human being for our defeated foe. I am appalled at the "We really kicked butt" jubilation. I grieve the human carnage, destruction of property and rape of the environment. I cannot ever visualize this atrocity as a "moral" action, and I say this fully aware of the government information telling us how bad the enemy was and why we needed to engage in this war.

As far as I'm concerned, the poor and underprivileged have again been the pawns of elitist goals. We call ourselves civilized, but in my view we behaved like high-tech barbarians. I think I may have been afraid to say how I feel for fear of the reaction of pro-war individuals, but I realize that I want to be known for how I see this war regardless of the response. We supposedly were fighting for freedom, so it is ironic that those who oppose the war are criticized for exercising their freedom by opposing war. It seems that war crushes the very things it is supposed to be achieving. To me, war will never be a solution. Man's inhumanity to man is not right or good, and never will be.

Martha Barrett Metroka
graduate student
sociology

Victory over Iraq should silence left-wing voices


And so the thing is done. Done too, I'm afraid, are the fondest hopes of the blame-America-first crowd of the left. As "longtime peace activist" Patrick Lacefield recently wrote in the Village Voice, Feb. 19, "The left in this country is in sorry shape if its politics can only be vindicated by American defeat and disaster."

Casualties mounting in a chronic, inconclusive conflict; continuing, massive demonstrations in major cities; doubts about the competency and commitment of our military forces; and above all, the widespread conviction that America is the principal locus of evil in the world (in short, a reprise of the 1960s). None of these manifestations of "another Vietnam" so breathlessly awaited by some on the left are going to occur. (There'll be massive demonstrations, all right, trying to put Desert Storm personnel on their shoulders.)

So put away your field jackets and clenched-fist stencils, folks, it ain't gonna happen this go-round. And you might consider dropping that silly two-fingered "peace" sign. In six short weeks, it has come full circle to its original 1945 meaning — victory.


Henry Eugene Brass
Lincoln

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