

DAVID REITER

Duke running on shaky premise

The image of David Duke is morally problematic. Lately some people have turned this into a new political weapon, which might be called "the Duke argument."



A moral objection against someone may derive from a source other than what they say. For this reason it is possible to say the same thing a creep says without being a creep oneself.

They begin by asserting that Duke is morally problematic. Then they claim that there is a connection between Duke and some other thing.

The punch line is that this other thing also is morally problematic, because it is connected with Duke.

Some proponents of this argument have taken aim at the Republican Party. But the soundness of the argument depends on the nature of the connection between Duke and the Republican Party and on the real source of the moral objection against Duke.

There are significant similarities between Duke's political doctrine and the doctrine of the Republican Party. If we drew up lists of their official political ideas, the two lists would have a lot in common.

Even Clayton Yeutter, chairman of the Republican party, has conceded that Duke's position is continuous with Republican Party doctrine. When Yeutter was asked how Duke differed from the GOP, the only difference he could think of was that Duke is a protectionist.

But continuity of content doesn't guarantee that the Duke argument is successful.

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So a crucial question is this: Does the moral objection against Duke come straight from his political views, or does it come from some other source?

Certainly some political and social views are morally objectionable. But what about Duke's political views in particular?

For example, is opposition to affirmative action in itself morally objectionable?

The question of whether affirmative action programs are just or helpful is complex. I have heard philo-

sophical lectures on the issue. Even if social justice does require certain kinds of affirmative action, that is not self-evident.

Therefore, it is inappropriate to brand someone a racist simply because he or she disagrees with affirmative action.

The Duke argument against the Republican Party ultimately fails because the moral objection against Duke does not derive from his political views. Then, just what is the source of the objection?

The answer has to do with who Duke is and the sort of campaign he is running. Duke is defending a legitimate political position in a morally objectionable way.

There is moral space for disagreement with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Lots of people who supported the confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas are not racists.

But there certainly are morally objectionable ways of expressing disagreement with the NAACP.

CNN's "Crossfire" showed a clip from Duke's campaign in which he smilingly and enthusiastically assured supporters: "Well, ladies and gentlemen, I can promise you one thing — that this governor will NEVER get in bed with the NAACP!"

This type of behavior is symptomatic of the real problem, which is Duke's failure to make a clear and convincing repudiation of his past involvement with racist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan.

Duke has put forth some effort to do so. When asked about it, he speaks of regretting former "intolerance." He also makes frequent references to being a born-again Christian.

But taking the religious claim seriously does not help overcome the moral problem with Duke. In light of Duke's actual behavior, it only makes the problem worse.

Racism is inconsistent with Christian doctrine. One of its foundational claims is that all human beings are created in the image of God, without restriction to one particular race or nation.

This image-bearing claim provides the backdrop for the multicultural salvation offered in the New Testament. In the Gospels, Jesus commanded his followers to "make disciples of all the nations," and the Apostle Paul declared that Greeks who believed in Christ were the spiritual offspring of Abraham.

There is more trouble for Duke. The New Testament talks a lot about faith in Jesus, but it always connects faith with something called repentance. The Greek word for "repentance" means "change of way." Repentance is a basic reorientation of the deepest commitments of the heart. It is an internal change, but it is supposed to be externally visible.

Thus, Duke's religious claim only aggravates his moral credibility problem. It only ought to raise our expectations that he repudiate his past in a way that is clear and convincing.

Unfortunately, his "repudiation" is neither.

Reiter is a graduate student in philosophy and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

LINDA KAY MORGAN

People of color telling of pain

Sometimes, I can't believe some of the conversations that take place in the Nebraska Union — covering subjects from politics to personal life.



Now, given a chance, people of color will speak until their hearts are content. What they say may appear to be rhetoric, but it actually is the pain and heartaches they were forced to shut up about.

One day while I was walking through the union, I overheard a conversation as someone started to look through the Daily Nebraskan. It went something like this:

"Let's check-out the paper today, to see what the columnists are talking about. Most of the time I find the articles interesting. On the other hand, many are non-stop rhetoric."

"Each time I run across a story written by a person of color, the article appears to be angry and full of hatred toward European culture — why?"

"Why do these people of color talk only about the past and present struggles of their people regarding racism and discrimination?"

For years people of color have been told to be quiet and to say nothing, that if they keep their mouths shut everything will be OK. But everything isn't OK.

A lot of stories about people of color never surfaced and often the truth went untold, leaving what is now a world of lost and confused souls.

The opportunity to finally speak freely was a blessing that far too many people of color were once denied. Even though everyone was entitled to free speech under the Bill of Rights, it didn't hold up so well for people of color. They could speak but only what they were told to speak.

Now, given a chance, people of color will speak until their hearts are content. What they say may appear to be rhetoric, but it actually is the pain and heartaches they were forced to

shut up about.

As an African-American, I often feel that it is my duty to relay the frustrations of and truth about my people, leaving room for us to grow and learn together. I speak of people of color, because I believe everyone needs to become educated about others as individuals before we start to pass judgment as a people.

Do people still find fault with the topics people of color wish to discuss? How often do people find themselves questioning their knowledge of another culture?

If people continue to believe they are well-rounded individuals, yet they lack knowledge of people around them,

the only thing rounded is their thoughts.

I respect everyone's ethnic group, but my utmost respect lies within my own. To educate someone about one's ethnicity shows a sense of pride in oneself.

Many people may not know about themselves nor their history. But what a person does know must be shared. It does no one any good when the only person benefiting from knowledge is oneself.

Many people think they have graduated and have learned all they need to know to succeed. But if people missed half as much information as I have missed, then people are far from being completely educated. A degree does not stop a person from continuing to learn. Individuals only stop themselves.

Think about what audience the person of color who writes in a newspaper is trying to get. One may think the writer is once again faulting European culture. But a person of color sees it as a time to educate, a time to say what people of color have been restricted from saying for so long.

When given the opportunity to speak to a massive audience, people of color address those whose eyes may be closed and could use a chance to be opened.

Although that may come off as being blunt, that is the way to get the message across. A writer can't just look out a peephole to determine what the reader wants. The writer must open the door if readers are to find out.

It's not a matter of how many ears were closed to people of color in the past, but how many are open now.

Morgan is a sophomore advertising and broadcasting major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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