

**ANDY FREDERICK**

# Urge to censor hurts everyone

I've got the feathers. Who's got the tar?

Yes, once again, someone has dared to create that which is not 100 percent acceptable to 100 percent of the world.

The culprit is Michael Jackson, of course, with his new music video, "Black or White."

Jackson's 11-minute plea for racial harmony is under fire for being "tasteless," "obscene," "disgusting," "violent" and "inappropriate for children's viewing."

After Omaha's KPTM aired the video Thursday evening, hoards of people — 18 to be exact — called the station, most of them to complain. The station has been apologizing profusely ever since. It was duped, it said. It didn't have a chance to preview the video, which it surely would have refused to air if it had.

The people complaining about the video seem to be upset with Jackson's crotch-grabbing, and they are more than a little steamed by the way he seems to encourage vandalism by beating the hell out of a car with a crowbar, then throwing its steering wheel through a window.

It makes you wonder; doesn't it? For one thing, people should not be surprised to see Jackson grab his crotch. It's not like he hasn't done it before. And it's not like it's the first objectionable thing to be shown in a music video.

I know that a great many people in Lincoln — including some of the complainers, I'll wager — subscribe to cable television. And with basic cable comes MTV, which has been showing videos like Jackson's latest — or worse — during prime time for the last decade.

Second, I find it hard to believe that Jackson's video is the worst thing these people have ever seen in prime time.

Why is the content of Jackson's video so emotionally disturbing to KPTM? Is the station saying that it has never aired anything that contains violence or sexuality?

Let me grab the ol' TV listing. Lots of little children are home Saturday, their eyes glued to the TV, so let's see what was on KPTM that afternoon.

Starting at noon was "Three O'Clock High"; "A bully challenges a California high school student to a 3 o'clock fight in the parking lot." Pretty wholesome so far.

At 2 p.m., "Biloxi Blues." The 1992 Video Movie Guide says the film is rated PG-13 for "sexual themes." Of course, it's sure to have been watered down for television, but we all know that it still won't end up being anywhere near the equivalent of a G rating.

At 4 p.m. was the old family view-



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ing favorite, "Mad Max." For those of you who haven't seen it, "a leather-clad lawman with a sawed-off shotgun hunts outlaw bikers in a barren future." Is it more objectionable for Jackson to smash a car with a crowbar than for a car and the man driving it to be crushed under a semi?

As Jack Weston says to Alan Alda in the movie "The Four Seasons," "Why can't you listen to WHAT I'm saying instead of HOW I'm saying it?"

People are so traumatized by Jackson's crotch-grabbing and car-smashing that they completely miss the point of the song — skin color should not keep people apart. I swear, if one of our founding fathers had grabbed his crotch during the signing of the Declaration of Independence, we'd still be part of Great Britain.

Whenever something on TV manages to send a few censorship-loving people into a frenzy, the natural reply of the sensible is to say "turn it off."

But the problem with that sort of philosophy, people say, is that parents cannot always be watching their children, controlling what they see or don't see. So if something "bad" is shown on television, kids are going to see it regardless of whether their parents want them to. Therefore, the only solution, they say, is to keep TV clean.

But what is so bad about "Black or White"?

Let's consider the crotch-grabbing first. If it's so offensive, people shouldn't watch baseball. Let's be honest. We all have crotches. And who doesn't grab theirs from time to time? Is it really so terrible?

I have yet to meet a pathetic, lowly, miserable wretch of a human being

who has explained failure in life by saying, "It all started when I saw Michael Jackson grab his crotch." Crotch-grabbing looks rather crude, but otherwise it is completely harmless. No child is likely to be corrupted by it.

And what about Jackson's auto-bashing? I have to be honest. When I saw the video, I thought, "That's rather irresponsible of him."

After kids watch "Three O'Clock High" and "Mad Max," plus about 20 viewings of "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles," Jackson's video may very well be the straw that breaks the Yugo's windshield. Kids might get it into their heads that vandalism could be fun. But that's where parents come in.

As afraid as some people might be to admit it, parents do have responsibilities. I do not understand parents who would rather scare television stations into adopting censorship rather than taking a little time to talk to their children.

One day on campus, I was walking past that big, red, metal sculpture-thing when I noticed a woman and a small child coming toward me. The woman stopped and looked at the sculpture for a couple seconds. Then she did something amazing. She said to her son, "I don't like it; do you?"

That moved me. An adult had actually asked a child a question — and it wasn't, "Do you have your homework finished, young man?" No, it was a real question — a question about nothing important.

Now, back to the Jackson video. What would be so difficult about a parent saying to a child: "Did you see Michael Jackson's new video? What did you think about it? Did the violence or the crotch-grabbing bother you? Of course, you realize that Jackson paid for that car so it was OK for him to smash it up. And the same goes for his crotch — it's his, so it's OK for him to grab it."

If parents would talk to their children like that often enough, children might actually get the idea that their parents are OK people they can talk to now and then about important and not-so-important matters.

And then parents wouldn't have to worry that if their kids watch the wrong thing on television, they'll turn into foul-mouthed, Ninja-Turtling, car-smashing, crotch-grabbing fiends. And then it would be OK for Jackson and others to express themselves in whatever legal way they wanted.

And then I and other responsible adults wouldn't have to be deprived of everything but that which is suitable for 3-year-olds.

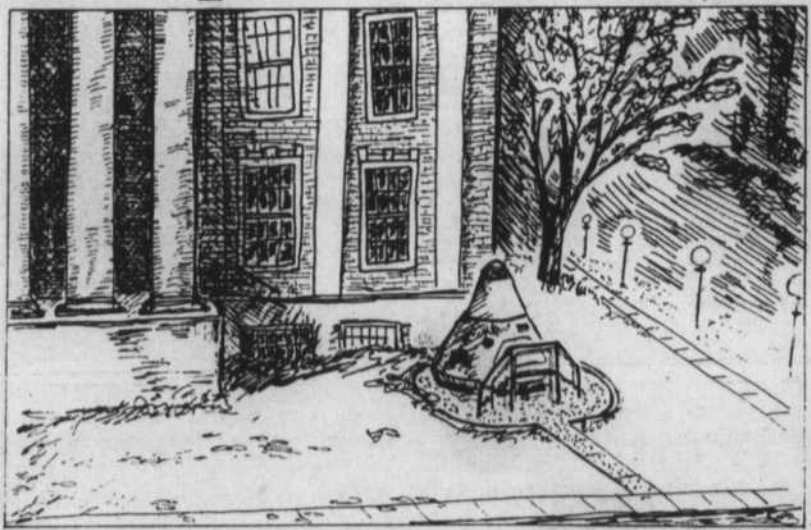
Frederick is a senior news-editorial journalism major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist and photographer.

# UNL bungled Apollo 009 barter

After reading the story on the swap of the Apollo 009 space capsule ("We have liftoff," DN, Nov. 14), I feel compelled to respond. Do University of Nebraska-Lincoln officials have any common sense? Being new to UNL, maybe I don't see the entire picture. But it seems to me that trading a piece of history like the Apollo 009 capsule for an assortment of trivial space junk would be like the Miami Dolphins trading Dan Marino for a bunch of 12th-round draft picks. And just what is UNL getting in the deal? Some old suits? (Who knows where they've been?) An antique computer?

Supposedly, the reason for the deal has to do with the capsule's deterioration due to weather exposure. Now if you had an old Model T Ford, for instance, would you park it on the street where it would be rained and snowed on and eaten away by salt? If you were the administrators, you would. Hasn't it occurred to them in the last 20 years to move the capsule inside? (My, oh my, what a novel idea.) Or at least to put some kind of shelter around it? It's a shame that UNL feels it must give away this one-of-a-kind historical piece for a few trinkets. Just a thought.

David Davis  
graduate student  
animal science



Lisa Pytlak/DN

## Got an opinion?

The Daily Nebraskan is seeking a broad range of viewpoints in its columnists for the spring semester. Applications are now being accepted.

Applicants must be UNL students and must show dependability and solid knowledge of grammar and writing skills.

Stop by room 34 of the Nebraska Union to pick up an application and sign up for an interview. Positions will be announced Nov. 25.

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