

'Division' disease curses Earth

LISA PYTLIK

Stupid space monsters! Last week, I thought my extensive efforts at discovering life in outer space finally had paid off. I made contact with aliens who called themselves "Ogeaans," and I asked permission to do research on their society over Spring Break. However, those stupid, biased aliens rejected me simply because I was an Earthling.

The Ogeean Spokesbeing (OS) said, "I am afraid that we will have to refuse your request to visit us at this time. We are aware of the diseases plaguing your planet, and, based upon this knowledge, we think your visit would not be conducive to the well-being of our entities."

"But why?" I asked. "The main reason for our refusal is that we fear your human disease of 'Division.' We have observed the symptoms of racism, sexism, homophobia and countless other discriminations that accompany this disease, and we do not wish to risk its transmission from your society to ours."

"We might reconsider your visit if your society were to fully eliminate this disease. The elimination process could be accelerated and achieved, perhaps in as little as five to 10 centuries, if your society would do two things:

"1. Eliminate idle ignorance and apathy.

"2. Cultivate active compassion and understanding."

"What do you mean?" I asked, bewildered by their apparent perception of Earthlings as stupid and heartless creatures.

"It's quite simple," OS responded. "To eliminate ignorance, one must do research. One should study overt Divisionism evidenced by the impact of groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, which purports violent Divisionism not only to adults, but also to children, indoctrinating them through KKK chapters formed in primary schools. One should actively seek and challenge these perversions.

"One also should do research on the 'privileges' one incurs as a result of belonging to a certain Division and be ready either to give up those privileges or share them with others. Examples of these privileges include the ability of heterosexuals to be physically affectionate in public without others staring or forming prejudices against them, and the ability of a people of one race to criticize their own race without being labeled as racist or hostile.

"Individuals can learn to detect



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Divisionism in its more elusive states by improving their perspective-taking ability. This can be accomplished partly by learning about others in a general sense. One can do this by attending multicultural activities on campus, visiting a town where the majority is of a different race or religion, visiting the library and doing research on the historical context of different outlooks or listening to radio and television programs targeted for other populations.

"To more fully see the perspective of others, however, people must break down the barriers of self-imposed segregation and learn about the specific personal feelings and concerns of those from whom they are Divided. For example, one could eat lunch with a group of people of a different race or stop and visit with the disabled person who must sit somewhat separate from the rest of the class because the desks are not 'wheelchair friendly.'

"These activities would decrease apathy, because the racial slurs, generalizations and attacks that ignorant people usually direct toward the people from whom they are Divided suddenly would be directed toward 'friends,' people with names and faces.

"Once the ignorance and apathy has been confronted, new actions must be taken. Those actions must be characterized by compassion and understanding.

"For example, racial, homophobic and other Divisional slurs must not be overlooked. Several members of your

community have done studies that support the idea that slurs lead to the derogation and belittlement of their targets, thus spreading the Divisional social disease. Therefore, these slurs must be confronted.

"Your Earth society does practice compassion and understanding on a small scale. For example, if John Doe regularly greets people by clapping them on the back, and one day John unknowingly claps Mary Smith's sunburn, John will apologize for causing Mary pain. In turn, Mary will forgive John, realizing that the harm was not intentional.

"Mary will not accuse John of acting to spite or oppress, and John will not become defensive and ignore Mary's hurt by saying, 'I am just doing what I always do.'

"On a larger scale, however, we Ogeaans have noticed a great lack of compassion and understanding in your society. Each individual group busily tries to make other groups understand its perspective without stopping to look at and address the others' perspectives.

"This phenomenon is effectively illustrated whenever one group of people angrily accuses another of 'racism' without considering that group's conscious intentions. Usually, the second group then immediately labels the members of the first group as 'oversensitive' or 'liars.' In these cases, neither group is striving for understanding or compassion. They are simply attacking each other.

"To finally overcome Division, Earthlings must amend the ancient idea expressed by the phrase 'doing unto others as I would have done to me,' by adding the phrase, 'if I were them.'

"Best wishes to you in your quest for freedom from illusion and please contact us again when your society has fully healed."

Of course I was outraged by this reply.

"How dare they generalize all Earthlings as ignorant apathists and social-justice couch potatoes," I thought after receiving this last message. "They are narrow-minded fools, and I am not going to waste one more minute of my Spring Break learning about them."

With that thought, I surrendered my previous hope of doing research on their culture over break and forced myself to go skiing instead.

Pytlík is a senior art and psychology major and a Daily Nebraskan staff artist and columnist.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Land's original inhabitants is key question

This is in response to Shachar Argov's letter ("Placing Middle East blame not the issue," DN, March 30). I think I am not the one who is naive but you are the naive one. I am not at all disappointed. In fact, I was expecting a response somewhat similar to yours. I totally understand that your patriotic sense must have pushed you to write in favor of your country, and you should.

I would support the butchering of the kid if he does not whack the

soldier with a brick. Why shouldn't he. He must be taught these things from the day he is born — that he has to fight for his freedom. Everyone has to die one day, so why die a coward. Die doing something good. Your example of air raids has no importance and please don't give me this crap about how the West wants democracy in there. The West totally supports every step the Israeli government takes. It is portrayed superficially that the West wants democracy. And you know it and I know it.

I don't have anything against you as a human being. I might have some grudge as you are from Israel, but forget it — I'll talk to you some day. You sound like an OK person to talk to. Nice hearing from you.

Just answer my question: Who was living there in the occupied territory before it was taken over by force?

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Hunters respect, help preserve nature

In response to the letter written by Fran Thompson "Hunters vent anger on animals" (DN, March 17): I hate to knock your friend Ron Baker off of his pulpit but I am afraid that some of his views are inaccurate and misleading. It is true that does (female deer) reabsorb embryos, but this is only the case when environmental conditions cause them to be lacking in the essential nutrients that enable the mother to stay alive. In addition, deer are not the only animals on this earth that are hunted. In fact, birds are more commonly hunted than deer. I am curious to find out if Fran Thompson knows anyone who says birds reabsorb embryos during times of low food supplies. Fran strikes me as the type of person who keeps the National

Enquirer in business. For your information, hunting is allowed in the United States not only because it is the cheapest way to control population but to control deadly diseases from spreading, to protect livestock and other smaller animals from predators such as coyotes, wolves, etc., and to keep them from destroying pasture land. Hunting also is a means of recreation that is one of the world's largest sports. Also, hunting is not an exclusively male sport. I know several women who enjoy hunting and I have yet to come across one who is intent on "searching for her balls" or her masculinity for that matter.

I also know a few hunters who take their frustrations out on animals. Most

hunters hunt because they truly enjoy the challenge and spending time outdoors. Hunters have more respect for nature than you ever will. I'm sure your perception of a hunter is one who goes out with his buddies drinking beer and raising all kinds of hell. Well, Fran, I have news for you: Not all people do that and the ones who do rarely are considered "hunters" in the true sense of the word. My advice to you is not to judge people and what they do before you know the real reason behind what they are doing. I am not judging you for the things that you do and I ask that you extend that same courtesy to others.

Shane Eversole
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