

Ignorance is deadly

Education vital for AIDS prevention

Today's youth often are criticized for ignoring good advice — but where AIDS is concerned, ignorance is proving more and more deadly.

A recent congressional study has revealed startling increases in the number of teen-agers and young adults with AIDS.

In 1989, 5,524 cases of AIDS were reported among Americans age 13 to 24. By 1991, that number grew to 8,949, according to a report by the Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families.

Those numbers include only the cases that have been reported. Many more teen-agers and young adults are HIV-infected and don't even know it.

Because most college students fit into that age group, news of AIDS' rapid expansion should hit close to home.

In fact, separate studies have estimated that either 40 or 80 UNL students could be HIV-infected. While one UNL official thought those numbers were high, they are the only plausible estimates available.

And with HIV, which can be present in a person's system for years without being diagnosed, estimates are the only way to gauge the potential impact of AIDS, which remains an incurable, fatal disease.

Unfortunately, news reports continue to indicate that Americans — especially young Americans — just aren't getting the message.

The congressional report indicated that 5 percent of the budget for AIDS education last year was spent on teen-agers. The report also said more should be done to educate American youth about the disease.

But Suzie Miller Schoen, a Lincoln caseworker for the Nebraska AIDS Project, said the best way to teach youth about AIDS was not what usually was done. She said youth must be made comfortable with their sexuality so they could ask tough questions and deal sensibly with the answers.

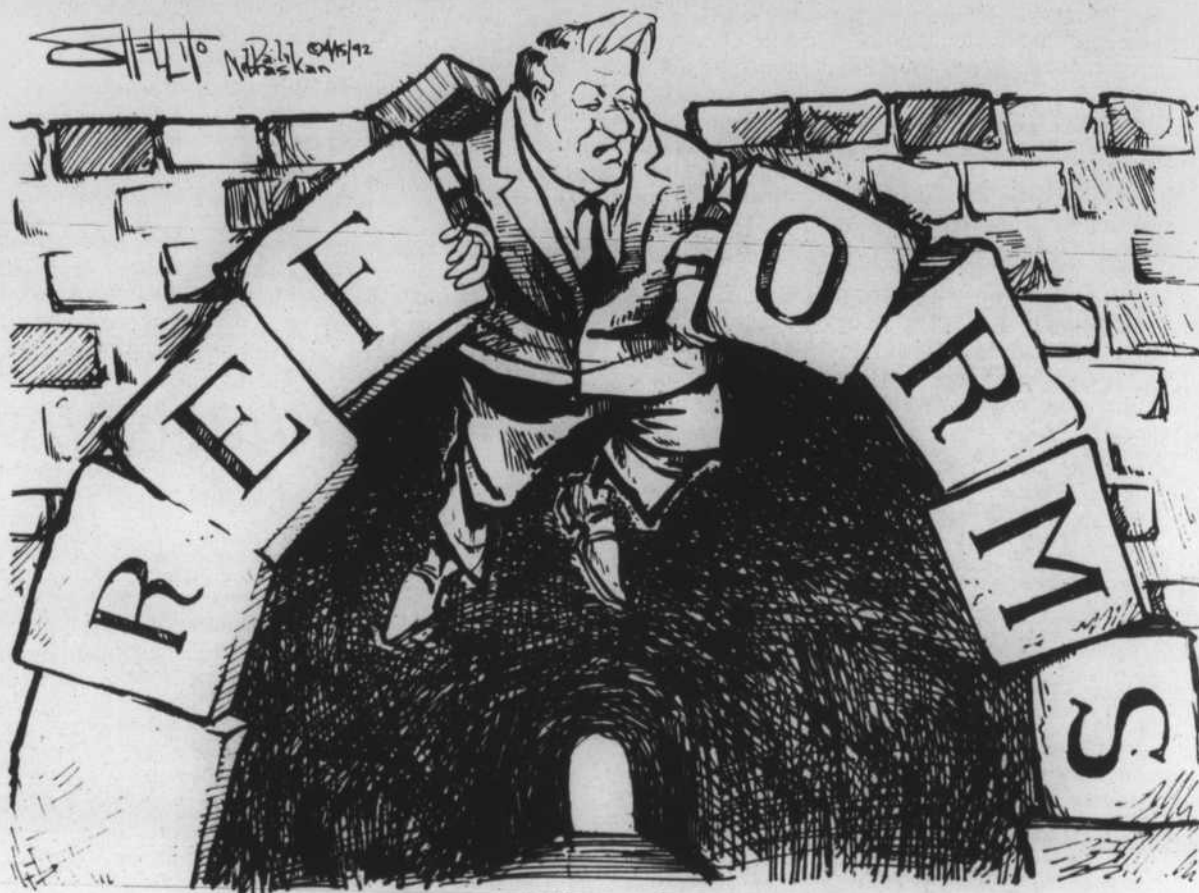
While abstinence from both sex and intravenous drug use is the only sure way to avoid the AIDS virus, abstinence is not accepted by everyone, especially youths.

That's why Miller Schoen and others who teach AIDS education emphasize the use of latex condoms and clean needles. It's the realistic approach to dealing with a very real problem.

The rise in number of youths with AIDS should send a message to Congress that more funding of such down-to-earth educational practices is needed.

Of course money must be spent on research, medical care and the like for those who already have the disease, but a comparable amount also should be geared toward education.

If education today is able to prevent the spread of AIDS in the future, less of tomorrow's money will have to be spent on after-the-fact measures.



KIRK ROSENBAUM

Politics is vengeful domain

Vengeance always has played an important role in the politics of our fine nation. The 1980s, in particular, were littered with casualties such as John Tower, Don Regan and anybody else who was in Nancy Reagan's biography.

The desire for revenge stems mostly from the pain of defeat. Anybody who has ever heard Hal Daub or Dave Karnes speak on the subject of Bob Kerrey has heard the rancor of losers. All politicians in America have at least a dozen of these detractors waiting for them to fall so they can jump the carcass and get some satisfaction.

Equally important in politics are drugs, alcohol and bad craziness. These are the things that doomed the probable presidencies of Gary Hart and Ted Kennedy, among others.

The only man who ever turned all of these things to his advantage was Ulysses S. Grant. When his jealous enemies complained to President Lincoln that Grant was a drunkard, Lincoln replied, "Find out what he drinks and send two cases of it to each of my other generals."

For some reason, people whose names begin with the letter "B" seem especially susceptible to such excesses. Examples that come to mind include Belushi, Behan, Burroughs, Bowie, Bakker, Barrymore, Borgia and Bukowski.

And Brown. Not only James but also Jerry Brown, whose campaign recently was sideswiped by charges of drug parties in his home while he was governor of California. Most of the leaders of the Democratic Party despise Brown and are eager to see him stumble into shame and obscurity.

However, these latest charges won't get rid of Brown, and the people who support him will do so regardless of such claims and revelations. Those who aren't voting for Brown probably would still refuse to back him if he were the last Democrat on the planet.

Rolling Stone magazine's recent endorsement of Gov. Moonbeam won't do him any favors either. It may be a soulless corporate tool and an insult to its founding principles, but Rolling Stone is still perceived as a forum for the long-dead counterculture. Potential voters hardly want to vote for the same candidate as rock stars and degenerates.

Maybe Jerry Brown can get a job working for the magazine after the campaign. He has burned so many bridges and hammered Bill Clinton unnecessarily for so long that there will be no place for him within the



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and the neighborhood sleeps in relative peace.

Vengeance is not always permanent. Even the worst of crimes can be forgiven — Richard Nixon is proof of that. He came to Congress in 1946 and still is around nearly 50 years later, fouling everything he touches like an anti-Midas.

Nixon is nearly as indestructible as Ronald Reagan, and he probably could survive a nuclear winter. News of his expected appearance at the Republican National Convention has some G.O.P. officials weeping tears of joy.

"It's time to recognize Nixon for his important contributions to American life," one of them recently remarked.

Indeed, cynicism and mistrust are among the many virtues that Nixon's administration helped bring to the people. We can only hope there is a place reserved for Tricky Dick that makes Dante's imagination seem tame; but it probably is not on this earth.

There is something disturbing about one of our major political parties trying to deny one of its candidates a voice in its platform while the other party pays homage to the worst thug in modern political history.

But maybe I'm paranoid. Like the bumper sticker says, "He's tan, rested and ready. Nixon in '92." Why not give the twisted ol' boy another chance? He hasn't been showing up on talk shows for nothing, after all. Maybe he's learned from his mistakes.

Nixon probably will have the final vengeance on all those who smiled with glee at his abrupt and shameful abdication nearly 20 years ago. He has come out of retirement after watching his beloved party and his country make too many wrong choices, and he isn't interested in crawling back under his rock.

Neither is Ronald Reagan, for that matter. As the recent would-be attack in Nevada proves, Reagan is more durable than the new model of Terminator, and his battery has a half-life of 1,000 years. With periodic service and replacement parts, Ronald will live forever.

Nixon will need a qualified man like Reagan at his right hand if he is going to recapture the White House. And who knows, a pair of good-hearted California boys might just get this country back on top.

Of course, there might be a few constitutional problems to address, but they'll get around those. After all, they've done it before.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Boycott tax: Don't smoke

All right, Fran, here are some reasons. (For the sake of argument, I will assume that you smoke cigarettes as your article "Clean air act picks on minority," DN, April 13, implied.) Smoker health care is a burden on society that is perfectly preventable. Not only is it a burden on society, it is a burden on every individual who buys medical insurance. Every time a smoker with insurance from the same company as I buy from goes in to get treated for lung cancer, I end up paying for it also. The majority of people who buy health insurance end up paying for you, the minority, to have a little habit.

What if I get cancer from second-hand smoke? (Yes, people DO get lung cancer from secondhand smoke, Fran!) Is it my fault that I have classes in Ferguson Hall and Oldfather Hall where the smoke, for some reason, doesn't seem to stay in the lounges?

Quite a few people litter, but if you look on the grass beside the sidewalk as you walk to class, what do you see, Fran? Cigarette butts, lots of cigarette butts! Then, of course, there is the question of whether or not they were burning when they got down there. More than likely, yes. Is this a fire hazard, Fran? Of course it is! Oh, but you dropped that cigarette and stomped it out, thus eliminating the fire hazard right? Well, just because you may have doesn't mean other smokers have

or do. I have watched people smoke cigarettes up to a building and then nonchalantly fling them, still burning, into the bushes and onto the grass and walk into the building. Is this a responsible action, Fran?

People also fling burning cigarettes from cars along highways and interstates. This can and does cause fires, fires that have to be put out and cause damage. Do the smokers pay for the costs of putting out the fires that they caused? Not directly or exclusively. The taxpayers pay the cost of fighting these fires. When people fling cigarettes out of their vehicles and cause forest fires, they ruin scenic areas and ecosystems for many years. Animals die horrible deaths, Fran, more painful deaths than a hunter's bullet causes.

Finally, YOU choose to smoke. I do NOT choose to be in smoke-filled environments, but I am forced to occupy them regularly. Smoking is a LUXURY (and not a very healthy one at that!). Whether you choose to pay the tax or how often you pay the tax is up to you. You could boycott the tax by not smoking or smoking less, couldn't you? It would be healthy if you quit or cut back on your smoking. I know I would certainly appreciate it!

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