

THE RAINBOW COALITION

Ethnic strife erodes identity

By Biljana D. Obradovic

The other day I went to the hospital to visit a friend. I brought some poems to read to her, to make her feel better, but every poem I read was depressing, and instead of cheering her up, healing her wounds just a little, I felt as if I had opened the ones that were hidden inside — I made her cry, but I didn't have any happy poems.

Like any art, poetry, too, asks of the poet a great many sacrifices. Perhaps more than any other art, it asks of the poet to go deep inside and explore the humanness within us and to show those who do not have time to stop and think what emotions exist within us, what they mean, to help understand each other, bring us closer to one another — even though we are so far away, so alienated in the fast-paced world of today, in which most of us have not time for anything but work.

I came to the United States in 1988 in pursuit of this great art of poetry, because this is the only country in the world where creative writing as a field has been so developed, and because the language I am most comfortable with, as far as writing is concerned, is English. My native language is Serbo-Croatian, or so it used to be called, but most of my education was in British or American schools.

When I came in 1988, I had come from a peace-loving country, a country that had been since 1961 the leader of the Non-Aligned Movement, which numbered the majority of countries in the world, except the countries that belonged to the East and West blocs. Yes, we were communist, but our system was modified, and we were not an Eastern European bloc country. We were free to travel and had enjoyed prosperity in comparison to most other communist countries.

We were proud of our Southern Slavic heritage, proud of our beautiful Adriatic Sea coast with its 1,000 islands; of old cities, such as Pula with an ancient Roman amphitheater as big as the one in Rome itself; of Dubrovnik, a city-fortress that had never been taken over by another

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government; of our beautiful lakes; of the famous karst topography; of the natural caves; of the blue Danube; of the Sava river; and of the famous Byzantine monasteries, 700 years old and protected by the U.N.

We had pride in our numerous natural resources — the Yugo car that put us on the world car-market map (even though, like everything else, it turned out to not be such a great car for its price); our national basketball team and its great players, such as NBA players Drazen Petrovic and Vlado Divac; our famous Red Star of Belgrade, the No. 1 soccer team in Europe and the world last year; and the caring, hospitable, brotherhood-loving and PEACEFUL nation, compiled of six republics, called Yugoslavia.

I remember the first week of my stay in Richmond, Va., and Virginia Commonwealth University, where I began my M.F.A. studies in creative writing-poetry. My adviser took me to an alley at night and warned me not to wander there at night by myself. I could be raped, mugged or murdered, he told me. I could not understand, as my home town, Belgrade, was not like that. The streets there were safe, with almost no crime whatsoever. I had to adjust to this new way of life.

I locked my apartment always and never went out unescorted at night, and I felt imprisoned. Most international students cannot afford to buy cars. I did not even have a license, as I had used public transportation back home. I walked to school in Richmond or used the excellent escort service (which unfortunately doesn't exist at UNL).

I adjusted, but I looked forward to

going home to my peaceful country in the summers, when I could enjoy my freedom of movement and not be imprisoned.

In 1991 I graduated from VCU and came to UNL to earn my Ph.D., and I did not go home that summer. I did not even look forward to it. I could not go, because my country, my people, were at war with each other.

My world out there turned upside down. Everything that I had known, was taught and took for granted, disappeared in one year. One republic after another declared its independence, and my people killed one another. Thousands died, thousands lost their homes. The beautiful cities became full of crime or were turned into ashes. The centuries-old cities were bombed. The beauty turned to despair, hatred, death, hell.

My male friends fought, often against their will. My classmates lost limbs, lost homes, lost their futures, lost hope. Everyone became aware of their differences, ethnic backgrounds, religious beliefs (when most had been atheist); Catholics fought Eastern Orthodox, Croats fought the Serbs, and my native language, Serbo-Croatian, became an ironic unity that had to be artificially divided into two parts, the unity of two dialects split.

I had come to this country to find myself, to understand what I stood for — and today I am at a loss, not knowing where I come from, or where I will go back to one day.

Will the bloodshed stop? Will we ever be able to look into each other's faces and forgive for shedding our brothers' blood?

In four weeks I am going back to Belgrade to visit home, not knowing what to expect. I walk through the streets of Lincoln and the UNL campus like a ghost, only I am the one who is scared. I do not have any tears left, the pain is so strong, and yet I hide it from my students, my teachers and my friends. I pretend that everything is fine.

I have learned to adjust here, but what I'll find at home — I do not know.

Obradovic is a doctoral student in creative writing and the president of the International Student Organization.

Coverage of gays distasteful

I think that the gay community has had its share of articles for the past couple weeks, if not for the whole semester. I, for one, do not pay student fees to see homosexuals kissing on the front page, of all places. If you have to print it, put it

in the back somewhere. I hope that in the future the Daily Nebraskan can print some articles with a little more taste.

Joel Carlson
freshman
business

Police conduct abhorrent

On Wednesday, April 8, at approximately 7:15 p.m., I was harassed and intimidated by a police officer of the Lincoln Police Department.

From his police-vehicle loudspeaker, I was ordered to get out of my car and commanded to stand in the middle of the street while being reprimanded by him for backing into a parallel parking spot on the 18th Street side of Hazel Abel Park on 18th and E streets. According to the officer, I was in violation of traffic law for backing into a parking spot and according to him, obstructing traffic from passing. His police vehicle was the only car driving on 18th Street at the time. He reprimanded me from the seat of his vehicle, commanding me to come to the driver's side of his police vehicle and stand in the street. Needless to say, I was in a very vulnerable position of getting hit by motorists trying to pass the police vehicle in either direction. Furthermore, I had my two small children in the car, with the 4-year-old looking on from her car seat.

The officer spoke very condescendingly to me in his accusation of my "so-called" violation and informed me he was giving me a warning this time, but did not want to see this happen again. He suggested I go around the entire block the next time, rather than backing up to park, for I, then, would not obstruct traffic. He then asked me several times if I understood what he said, speaking to me as though I were a child or an individual of low intelligence and ability to comprehend language and semantics.

For the first time in the incident, I then spoke. First, answering the inane question posed to me, and next explaining to him what I did not understand. I told the officer I did not understand why I was spoken to over the loudspeaker with such harshness as if I were a criminal. I also men-

tioned the rudeness and insensitivity his verbal and physical actions displayed, reflecting the problems of communication between police and citizens. As I attempted to articulate my overwhelming disbelief and fear of this entire incident, his gross behavior and his total disregard of police protocol and procedure, he sped away angrily, leaving me standing in the middle of the street.

I returned to my car to find my 4-year-old in a state of trauma. You see, she has learned in preschool that policemen are "good" people — they help us, not harass us.

What occurred to me on Wednesday evening is a very evident message that there are some serious problems that need to be addressed concerning the safety of innocent citizens in the Lincoln community. To be the target of intimidation and harassment in public and at the expense of my children by an authority figure is humiliating, outrageous and unconscionable.

The importance of my experience and my sharing it with your readers is to focus on the severity of this incident of harassment and intimidation in our "Star City" of Lincoln, Nebraska.

As a tax-paying citizen, college educator, student and dramatist in this city, as well as a female who is also a mother, a wife and an African-American, I find this behavior abhorring and demands response. Furthermore, the people of this city and on this campus need to be made aware of the type of officers on our streets. To ignore or trivialize what occurred to me and my children is to condone the behavior of the authorities toward our citizens.

Olga I. Davis
Ph.D. candidate
speech communication

Column on feminism generates reader backlash

Men should deal with limitations

Halligan describes what he thinks the nature of this "backlash" is — a combination of "clear abuse" of women's new institutional power, and men's inability to deal with being a man without dominating or overpowering women and children. For it is in the home environment that men have historically taken out their peculiarly "male" frustrations — on our families. So is this backlash merely sour grapes over some "masculine" battle being lost — bad sportsmanship? Or is this about men having to deal finally in the open about their true human limitations, their inability to control their frustrations before they hurt their partners and families, and their inability to come to grips with their essential masculinity without lording it over others? Maybe we do need a movement — but not, certainly, one that will merely place our familiar power back in our bloody hands. Can we grow up here?

Could we equate a man's fear of being accused of rape with a man's fear of getting AIDS? In both cases, a little caring and an ounce of prevention would keep the man from losing his life, his societal respect, and his friends. So why not take it seriously when women look for caring, don't find it, and make it public?

I mean, sure, women think about whether a rape really occurred. What else is new. Why do you think so many rapes go unreported? Rape puts a lot of doubts in victims' minds. Maybe we men would commit fewer rapes if we would take some of these doubts to heart before we end up in the court. Maybe we men should talk

to survivors of rape, not just justify our actions by talking exclusively to other men (who, by the way, may have been raped, too, or molested as a child, or abused), and learn something.

In today's world, everyone you have sex with controls, to some extent, your destiny.

Oh, and by the way — which is worse for a child — an abusive marriage or an ended one?

Scott Wesely
graduate student
undeclared

Society denies 'full personhood'

I am writing in response to Chris Halligan's April 15 piece concerning the alleged theft by feminists of male masculinity. I was at best disturbed and at worst disgusted by this column. Once again, I believe that the writer has missed the point of the women's movement. Recently, a male friend was sharing with me his feelings of confusion and concern because something he had said in conversation had been labeled sexist. He asked me frankly, "I never know what to say and what not to anymore. What do women want?" I replied simply, "To be considered persons, to be respected."

The issue has been and continues to be one of obtaining full personhood; a status that has been by tradition and law denied women in our culture. But it is not only women who have been denied full personhood. Men have indeed lost something, too — many things — things that leave them handicapped, and less than fully

human. For instance, men have too frequently been denied the full experience of their emotions — often being punished for expressing the simplest of human feelings.

It is not women who have left men "feeling powerless," nor can women give men back some mythical "power of men to be men." Such a statement can be nothing more than a meaningless request to be allowed to remain in a state of suspended emotional, social and political growth. I suppose if one desires to remain infantile, so be it. However, when the devastating effects of existing in a society permeated with sexism are considered, I fail to see how anyone, male or female, would want to continue to deny people the possibility of becoming fully human. Forgive the metaphysical, humanistic language, but it is time to grow up, Mr. Halligan.

Tamara Daily
graduate student
psychology

Divorce blame wrongly placed

Throughout this entire semester, Chris Halligan, I have been reading your baseless, stupid columns; one comes to mind about your belief in Oliver Stone's "JFK." But the column "Feminism robs masculinity" takes the cake.

I consider myself a conservative politically and I rarely agree with feminists on most issues excluding abortion, but sir, your column turned even my guts.

It is baseless to blame women for the divorce rate of the '70s. In reality,

the generations of the '70s realized they got married out of duty because everyone married young then. It was a mutual realization that maybe mistakes had been made because of societal pressure from the previous generations.

I get the impression you like the men-on-men comradery that has developed. Get used to it, because after this last column, I doubt you'll be dating much, if at all, for the rest of the semester. I would certainly question the intelligence of any woman who would date you.

Jeff Stock
freshman
business administration

Male self-image based on delusion

I am writing in response to Chris Halligan's column. OK, Chris, you freely and clearly expressed your form of a man's written point of view regarding women and their actions in bad marriages, sex and providing male support.

What do you expect, women to sympathize with the downfall of the male image? It seems that these days men appear weak, feel taken advantage of, and are not receiving the trust and support they are entitled to. Does being entitled to receive something make one deserving of it?

Men, as you stated, have "an irrefutable fear to even be alone in a room with a girl." Why is this, because the male image expects something to happen in that room? It is obvious that you believe a male loses his masculinity when a woman does not let or want that something to

happen. A woman in control of a situation does not possess "disguised strength" or "cowardice"; the man who cannot express his own masculinity by other means is the one who does. Women are capable of providing support to men whom they can trust and respect.

Lori Frederick
junior
accounting

Insecurity reason men blame women

So, you want to tell us that our country has done some great favor for women by "empowering" us to make choices for ourselves. The choice of words is laughable. You stated that competition in the workforce and the power to remove ourselves from bad marriages were the highlights of the feminist movement.

A true man will be a man whether I challenge him or not. Should men feel their masculinity is threatened by the ladies out there looking for their own piece of the pie, I would suggest that he may have some unresolved adolescent conflicts that make him unable to claim his manhood. Blaming women becomes a feeble attempt to displace insecurity. There are few things more pathetic than a man who needs to see his sisters take second place because he's insecure. Talk about an ego out of control.

Darla Hermance
freshman
psychology