

# LISA PYTLIK Violent society warps kids

I have two husbands, one wife and one fiance.

Of course, I say this mostly in jest. After all, polygamy is illegal here. In reality, our "family" is bonded by friendship and a common commitment to each other's welfare, not by law. Even so, it effectively provides companionship, acceptance and much-appreciated support.

The one thing our little family lacks, however, is children. Most of us live in the residence halls, and they won't allow cats, dogs or anything that can't survive submersed in an aquarium, so kids are out of the question.

I used to regret this because it meant I had to borrow other people's children to enhance my visits to the circus, the zoo and the roller-skating rink. However, I've recently come to appreciate the fact that our pseudo-family has no children because I've found overwhelming evidence pointing to a rather surprising fact: Children are dangerous.

The March 9 issue of Newsweek, for example, contains six pages of articles about kids, some as young as nine or 10, who carry guns, knives and other weapons to school, parties and the movies. According to these articles, one in five students nationwide reports carrying some type of weapon and one in 20 reports carrying a gun.

Some cities, such as Oakland and Los Angeles, even are giving kids lessons on how to effectively and quickly drop to the floor when they hear gunfire.

Kids aren't only attacking each other with weapons and beating each other up, however. They are also perpetrating sexual violence. Last month, for example, in Longview, Wash., a 10-year-old boy was ordered to wear a monitor while he awaited trial for five counts of first-degree rape and one count of first-degree molestation. His alleged victims were children aged two to six.

Incidents such as these happen often enough to warrant special programs such as the SPARK program at the Children's Institute International in Los Angeles. This program is designed to help kids like "Danny" who, at the age of six, had been separated from his family for having abused his younger siblings and who, a few years later, sodomized a 3-year-old neighbor and forced the toddler to have oral sex.

One of the most frightening things about these children is the lack of empathy they show for their victims. This lack of empathy was illustrated by recent Associated Press interviews of teen-age girls involved in New



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York gangs. One girl described the feeling of cutting someone in a fight as being "like cutting meat."

"It's like you start in and you want to keep on stabbing them," she said. In reference to how she feels after hitting someone, she said that "it just feels good to get a whole lot of anger out of your system."

Stories such as these are made more frightening by the large possibility that these kids will grow up to be adults with more rights and freedoms, but no more ethics or empathy.

Obviously, we need to stop kids such as these and reform them before they do even more harm as adults. But it would be even better to stop them from becoming violent and abusive in the first place.

This should be possible, because kids aren't born evil. Instead, they are inducted into terrorism by a violent cycle. Ninety percent of the children at the Los Angeles clinic, for example, are victims of sexual abuse themselves, and most came from homes ridden with alcoholism and other abuse.

Yet violence is found not only in the home. Violence permeates our society and is treasured as necessary and fun.

In fact, violence is so fun that we will pay money to see it in movies such as "Terminator," to hear it from music groups such as Ice-T and Body Count — who encourage the killing of mothers and the shooting of policemen — and to buy video games that allow us to role-play characters who shoot, kill or beat up other characters.

We also reward military heroes with medals when they do what many of us believe to be the necessary job of killing our so-called enemies, and

we worship sports such as football that involve so much violence that players must wear extensive armor-like padding to avoid getting hurt.

So how do we keep our kids from becoming violent when they are often raised by victim-victimizer parents in a violent society?

It probably won't work to try to pass more laws. Laws regulating the way people raise their children or make their movies would be about as acceptable to the American majority as my polygamous pseudo-family. At the slightest suggestion of laws such as these, people would complain that their civil liberties and basic rights of expression would be violated.

As I was thinking about this problem late one night while watching TV, I drifted off to sleep and began to dream. I dreamed that millions of everyday Americans had realized the importance of children and voluntarily joined a grass-roots organization bound not by law but by a common commitment to kids' welfare.

In my dream, parenting was viewed as a privilege rather than a right, and children were considered individual people with specific, clear rights, instead of the property of their parents.

People also believed in the importance of parenting and in improving as a parent, and it was suddenly politically incorrect to have children without taking parenting and communication classes, no matter how good a parent one was naturally.

I also dreamed that middle- and upper-class people gave up their inherent right to ignore the thousands of children whose families were living in poverty. They began to "adopt" these families, offering them help and support both emotionally and materially.

People began donating money to education. The wages of elementary teachers and college football coaches were reversed.

All forms of discrimination, whether meant seriously or in jest, were scorned in both public and private, especially when their expression might influence children to adopt similar views.

But then, while I was in mid-sleep, the sound of a gunshot from my television awakened me, and I realized it had all been a dream. I still lived in Violent, U.S.A.

My pseudo-family and I are planning to move off-campus this summer but, thank goodness, we still are not planning to take on the responsibility of children. We're going to adopt some cats instead.

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

## Speech, debate teams praised

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln speech and debate team is one of the oldest co-curricular activities in the university. The squad remains, for the most part, anonymous to students, staff and faculty because the Daily Nebraskan consistently fails to cover the endeavors of the squad. I would like to make the UNL community aware that the team took first place in its division at nationals this year. Overall, the squad placed 19th among more than 150 schools in the nation. Individual successes include: Pamela Epp, semifinalist in extemporaneous speaking; Janet Richardson, semifinalist in persuasive speaking; Sara Goecke, semifinalist in prose interpretation, quarterfinalist in poetry interpretation and quarterfinalist with Zack Moore in duo interpretation. Our national tournament capped off a tremendous year in which we won more than 200 trophies. I am very proud of the Cornhusker forensics team. Congratulations to all members.

Ann Pettus  
director of forensics

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## Abortion moral, not theological, issue

In her letter, Elizabeth Ball ("Reproductive freedom essential," DN, April 27) addresses the issues of abortion, morality in the law and separation of church and state. I'd like to suggest answers to the questions she raises.

First, the reason that abortion is a dilemma is that not everybody agrees as to whether or not the life in the womb is a person with rights. A parent cannot terminate the life of a child once it is born, because everybody agrees that the child is a person with rights, but no such agreement exists where the unborn child is concerned. Unfortunately, neither side in the debate is addressing this point where the disagreement lies. Those who favor legalized abortion can only call it an issue of a woman's choice because they have already decided that she is the only person involved. By the same token, those who oppose legalized abortion can only call it an issue of murder because they have already decided that not one, but two people are involved.

This leads to the issue of morality in the law. Ms. Ball asks why we should "cram" moral and ethical beliefs into the law. The fact of the matter is that much of our criminal law is based upon moral and ethical beliefs. Why is wife-beating illegal in the United States when it is perfectly legal in other countries? Why do we have laws designed to prevent swindling and to enforce contracts? Because we, as a nation, have a moral and ethical belief that these things are wrong. When we consider the legalization or prohibition of abortion, the question is not whether or not we should have moral and ethical beliefs in the law. The question is which moral and ethical beliefs to put in the law.

This brings us to the issue of separation of church and state. Ms. Ball is quite right in saying that not everybody believes in the same religion or God. The founding fathers very much wanted to avoid a state church, such as England had. They very much wanted matters of theology kept apart

from matters of government. This is why the government cannot require you to profess a belief in God or any other deity you may choose. The government cannot determine which doctrine is acceptable and which is not. There is a difference, however, between determining theology and determining right and wrong. To use the example of slavery, many Christians opposed it because their religious beliefs told them that it was wrong in the eyes of God. They didn't simply throw up their hands and say, "I don't want to impose my religious beliefs on someone else." They recognized that this was not a theological issue but a moral issue. The same holds true for those who oppose legalized abortion, and those who feel that prohibiting abortion is a violation of church and state need to ask themselves if they would prepared to say the same about prohibiting slavery.

Brad Pardee  
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