

JENNIFER ERNISSE

# Grad school becomes standard

This weekend I have the pleasure of voluntarily participating in eight hours of unremitting hell.

The Medical College Admissions Test is one of those necessary but painful segues into a post-graduate career.

I'm sure most of the seniors at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln can empathize with what I will be going through; it is now standard procedure to take these tests in whatever guise — LSAT, GRE, GMAT, etc.

It is not capricious for me to use the words "standard procedure" because going to graduate school has no longer become a trend but rather the first step toward the American dream.

I guess you could say we have come far. We seem to value education so much more.

One of my four grandparents went to college. In those days, a high school education was considered an asset on a resume. Both my parents have college degrees. They met in college. They are both secure in their middle-class jobs.

I am three hours away from a bachelor's degree in biological sciences. Officially, I cannot do anything with this degree. I cannot teach on the high-school level or college level, and there aren't many jobs for me to classify trees and insects or be the next Darwin if I do not further my education.

I am a waitress. I have been a waitress for eight years, and I will continue to wait tables until I get into medical school.

But what of education today? What does it mean to be educated? Obviously, to society, it means going to college for four years.

Or does it?  
How many people will walk off

with their diplomas from this university, or any other, and find the job they wanted and were trained for? Not many, considering the number of people who seriously think about entering graduate school as a way to escape the abysmal job market.

College today means doling out money you do not have. Your investment at a public institution such as UNL is — assuming residency — approximately \$1,400 per semester.

Since college is no longer a four-year but usually a five-year endeavor, that calculates out to be \$14,000 for 10 semesters of college to gain a bachelor's degree.

I do not have that much money to my name, and I am lucky there are such things as scholarships and loans, as are many others.

The U.S. Department of Education in 1989 released statistics saying that the average college senior owed \$7,157 in school loans. Just to add another twist, the same department said that prices at public colleges jumped 26 percent from 1980 to 1990.

Further, a person with a high school diploma adds \$1,036 to their yearly income; a college degree adds \$1,243 to yearly income, a Penn State study says. A little subtraction tells you that a college graduate yearly makes \$207 more than a high school graduate.

The government is going to love students who want the American dream and can't achieve it unless they go to school until they are 30 and then pay it off until they're old and gray.

Now that you're cognizant of the situation and the cost of your college education, ask yourself, what have you actually learned in college?

I learned how to take a test with a hangover, how to get a great resume, where to get cheap prophylactics, how to play every drinking game invented.

Am I educated now?  
And let's consider the flip side —

from where and from whom we get our education. Do you know how much even tenured professors get paid? I would not be surprised if their salaries, compared with other professions requiring a doctorate degree, was not one of the lowest if not THE lowest.

Granted, I have had a few professors who deserved minimum wage. But, to truly educate is to be led to educate yourself.

To those professors who made me read Plato, Kincaid, Marx and Barth, to those who helped me understand the gravity of Darwin's contributions via an exhibit at the zoo, I thank you.

So, hopefully, before our children have to get a doctorate degrees to become gas station attendants, we might want to look at changing our system.

Whether it be to counteract the high cost of college, find professors who are true educators and pay them properly, or raise the standards to get into and out of college.

Not only is it administrators' and government's problem for serving us a substandard education that won't get us a job after five years of schooling, but it is our fault for accepting this as a fact of life.

Without change, people with average intelligence and a desire for a middle-class life will spend a good portion of their working years paying thousands of dollars for an education.

They will spend the rest of their lives working in a job for which they have become overqualified and inherently unhappy with, as well spending a good portion of their income paying for so-called knowledge without any practical training.

Ernisse is a senior pre-med major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

SAM KEPFIELD

# End discrimination, make it legal

With the signing of the 1991 Civil Rights Act, followed by the Los Angeles Riots in April, the issue of race relations simmers just beneath the surface of the presidential election.

The battle for civil rights has devolved into trench warfare. Liberals and self-proclaimed black leaders clamor for justice by enacting more quotas. It is the only way, they claim, that blacks can get ahead in an inherently racist society.

Conservatives take a more realistic approach, one which is truly color blind: Merit, not race, should be the yardstick by which achievement is rewarded.

It's a choice between equality of results vs. equality of opportunity.

However, as long as black leaders like the Rev. Jesse Jackson, Charles Rangel, Spike Lee and Maxine "Burn, Baby, Burn" Waters alternately manipulate white guilt and threaten more L.A. riots if the Establishment doesn't fork over more money, the issue will remain mired where it is.

Into this fray steps Derrick Bell, a professor of law at Harvard and eminent civil rights lawyer. He is of the liberal bent. He also is black.

His latest book is titled "Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism." The cover story for the September American Bar Association Journal features his book, and an interview, over his most provocative idea:

Legalize discrimination, and license it.

Bell proposes — as a thought experiment to challenge our notions of current law, and I present it in the same vein — a fictional piece of legislation called the Racial Preference Licensing Act.

Under the act, all owners of public facilities and dwellings could apply to the federal government for the right to exclude persons on the basis of race or

color. The license granted would be expensive, but not unaffordable. A tax of 3 percent would be levied on income derived from products sold to the preferred race.

Revenue from the licenses and taxes would be paid into an "equality fund." The fund would be used to underwrite and subsidize black-owned businesses, offer loans to black homebuyers and provide scholarships.

Those holding a license would be required to prominently display a sign declaring the fact that it discriminated against a certain race. If a business or apartment complex did not display such a sign, but discriminated anyway, they could be sued for \$10,000, plus attorney's fees.

To those of the politically correct, liberal mindset, this sounds like heresy. But what Bell is doing has parallels in environmental law, where the government licenses a certain amount of pollution by factories.

Go over the limit, and you're fined.

Or take the fad to legalize drugs. Advocates of legalization claim that having the government or the free market control the drug trade will eliminate the worst excesses — like organized crime's involvement.

It will bring the problem into the public eye, without fear of punishment. The visibility will lead to a more rational solution, even acceptance, of drug use.

Bell's approach, though set forth half-seriously, has its merits. Bell contends that current civil rights laws are based on a law-enforcement model. Namely, that punishment of a lawbreaker sets an example for the community and deters the undesirable conduct.

With discrimination, however, because those of the same race as the lawbreaker, be he white, black, yellow, red, brown, green or purple, identify with him and not with the victim. Any resulting litigation intensifies the problem rather than solving it.

Coercing correct behavior is always a difficult task, no matter how

lofty the goal.

In that sense, civil rights laws "mirror the old segregation laws in that they permit discrimination," Bell said in an interview. "And yet they are worse than those laws because they provide a kind of surface legitimacy."

Using the marketplace to solve discrimination, Bell hits people where they live — their pocketbooks. As Chief Justice John Marshall said in McCullough vs. Maryland: "The power to tax is the power to destroy."

It's an opportunity as well. If society is really as racist as Jackson, Rangel, Lee and Waters claim it is, then think of the money to be made for aiding black businesses, homeowners and students.

By forcing people to 'fess up publicly to harboring some racist sentiments, licensing may do more to end racism than the current laws.

Making racists wear a freely chosen scarlet letter might diminish the sympathy that they now enjoy from the vast, silent masses.

Further, outside of a few places deep in Mississippi or Alabama, no one really enjoys proclaiming himself a racist or being called one. Even David Duke, in his successive bids for senator, governor and president, denied charges of racism.

Bell's primary purpose in making the proposal is to move the civil rights debate, indeed the entire discussion of racial issues, beyond where it is today. It is to make liberals realize that they are just as guilty of stereotyping and race-baiting as they claim conservatives are.

It's time to realize that there is no black agenda, just as there is no white agenda. There is only an American agenda, promoting maximum opportunity for excellence and achievement for all, regardless of race, color or creed.

Kepfield is a graduate student in history, an alumnus of UNL's College of Law and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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