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EDITORIAL

## Take a stand

ASUN needs to drop debate over prayer

Prayer, for the time being, has been eliminated from the graduation ceremonies at both the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the University of Nebraska at Kearney. That has not eliminated the controversy.

Members of the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska and UNK's Student Senate have protested the two school's decisions with traditional, cultural and legal arguments.

Student leaders disagree with the decision to eliminate the prayers because they might offend some students in the diverse university community.

"You can offer prayers in a way that won't offend anyone," said ASUN President Andrew Sigerson. "The regents need to take a stand on this."

Sigerson is half right; the regents do need to take a stand, a stand that will formally end this debate.

Sigerson called the decision ridiculous because of religion's important place in society and its traditional role in graduation.

But the only thing truly ridiculous about the situation is that ASUN senators continue to drag out this issue. Some students, in fact a majority of students, may not like the fact that prayer has been removed from graduation. But they should understand that its inclusion, and the fact that student leaders are fighting for it, offends other students.

Religion has its place — separately and as a part of a person's education. One religion should not, however, be selected for students of a variety of faiths to share at a graduation ceremony.

Student leaders also continue to argue that the prayers should continue simply because they are a traditional part of commencement ceremonies. That argument is fundamentally flawed. If the world were to operate on the basis of maintaining traditions, it would continually be looking backward instead of moving forward.

OTHERS' VIEWS

## Diversity dollars

Administration progresses on vital issue

Iowa State students have been given tangible proof that the university's diversity dollars are working.

The administration has hired Tom Owns, a graduate student and member of ISU's Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual Alliance, to act as a liaison to the administration and to work toward changing discriminatory university policies.

The need for Owen's position, as well as for increased awareness of discrimination against homosexuals, is undeniable. Contrary to the popular belief that the position serves only as a benefit to yet another special interest group, its merit goes much deeper.

By improving communication between the gay/lesbian/bisexual community and society, many positive things happen. Homosexuals and bisexuals move increasingly closer to the ideal of social acceptance that we call equality. Stereotypes are broken down, along with evils such as homophobia and prejudice that feed on its strength. The worth of the individual is stressed.

The same arguments could be used to justify improving conditions and equality of opportunity for any group that is discriminated against.

The place to go from here is one where homosexuals and bisexuals will feel that their interests as students and people are already protected without the need for a fight, simply because they are tuition-paying, living human beings.

— Iowa State Daily  
Iowa State University

EDITORIAL POLICY

Staff editorials represent the official policy of the Fall 1992 Daily Nebraskan. Policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board. Editorials do not necessarily reflect the views of the university, its employees, the students or the NU Board of Regents. Editorial columns represent the opinion of the author. The regents publish the Daily Nebraskan. They establish the UNL Publications Board to supervise the daily production of the paper. According to policy set by the regents, responsibility for the editorial content of the newspaper lies solely in the hands of its students.

LETTER POLICY

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor from all readers and interested others. Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit or reject all material submitted. Readers also are welcome to submit material as guest opinions. The editor decides whether material should run as a guest opinion. Letters and guest opinions sent to the newspaper become the property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned. Anonymous submissions will not be published. Letters should include the author's name, year in school, major and group affiliation, if any. Requests to withhold names will not be granted. Submit material to the Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### ASUN

Reflecting on this last semester this student is disappointed with the performance of the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska.

As controversy surrounded our campus so far this year — Anthropology-gate, the undercurrent of racism, budget crises, questionable behavior of some of our regents, the discovery of tremendous influence of Nebraska corporations on UNL, etc. — our student government was busy with ludicrous and contradictory issues such as Christian ceremonies being conducted at graduation ceremonies and removal of campaign spending limits.

If ASUN is going to concern itself with the constitutionality of its policies at least it could be consistent.

The actions of ASUN have had the net result of making it a more exclusive body than ever before. This student government is not our student government. I hope some members of the student groups and regularly uninvolved students can unite and wage a major battle against the status quo and make UNL a more stimulating educational environment for all students.

Matt Burton  
junior  
political science, history

### Independence

How many of you independent students remember the relief you felt when you finally were awarded independent status for financial aid purposes?

Well, on Dec. 8, approximately 2,000 students should have received a lovely letter from the financial aid department stating that new regulations have been defined by the general government on financial independence. Now, you have to be 24 years old, an orphan or ward of the court, a veteran, a graduate student, married, have legal dependents or special circumstances.

To make the circumstances even better, the new law "prohibits the use of a grandfather clause that would have allowed students who are independent under (previous conditions) to retain their independence in future award letters." The result: most of us will now have to come up with some God-unknown-way to pay for school next year.

I can really appreciate all of the assurance I received last year that I would never have to worry about proving myself financially independent

### again. After eight months of worrying about where my future was going and trying to prove independence, I now find myself lost once again, buried in the paperwork of bureaucracy.

What has become of our government when they cut this form of financial aid to students? With the controversy on how students in the United States relate with foreign countries in academia, I fail to see the government's reasoning for leaving quality students with no alternative but to drop out of college. We really need to take a good look at our government and its views on this and similar issues. Maybe it's time to write our congressmen and express our views and frustrations.

Scott Matthews  
sophomore  
electrical engineering

sexual rights or for practicing homosexual acts between consenting adults in private.

These are the realities of the world we live in, which makes it all the more urgent to counter balance the forces of injustice and hatred. Thursday was Human Rights Day, and we ought to take some time to think about the abuses taking place; 1992 is not an especially good time for people who value diversity and human dignity. Be inquisitive and act on the injustices you read about! Make sure you have a say, no matter how small, in the way the world operates.

Ann Towns  
senior  
president of Amnesty International  
at UNL

### Human rights

In 1991, a Filipino man and his 15-year-old son were arrested without warrant simply for belonging to a group in opposition to the government of the Philippines. The boy was forced to witness his father being beaten and tortured with electric shocks and by having his face covered with cellophane into which holes were made so that water could be forced into his nostrils.

In June, Amnesty International issued a report about police brutality in Los Angeles including evidence that higher levels of force are used than allowed in police guidelines. Kicks, punches, beatings with batons and other forms of excessive force sometimes amount to torture, causing more serious injuries or death.

There are unbelievable numbers of political human rights abuses all over the world, and there seems to be a resurgence of religious, racial and ethnic intolerance. The media opts to focus on specific cases, such as the rise of Neo-Nazism in Germany, while neglecting countries that perhaps formerly made headline news but are no longer considered selling material.

For example, when President Amin of Uganda fell in 1979, the worldwide media turned their cameras elsewhere, ignoring the fact that Ugandans have endured much since Amin's fall.

Torture and killings are still commonplace in Haiti, and yet thousands of Haitians have been intercepted by U.S. authorities in international waters and returned directly to Haiti without investigation; this is in violation of international law. President Violetta Chamorro of Nicaragua signed legal reforms on July 8 that will lead to one to three years imprisonment for people advocating homo-

### Civil rights

Detention and torture. Do these words affect you on a regular basis?

For many of us, these words do not. In other countries, some individuals live in a constant fear of political actions similar to these. Human Rights Day was Thursday. We should not only recognize it this day, but every day.

Sometimes I wonder how many people realize that as a free country, we have rights others may never know. It is time to change that. Individuals in countries not so far from our nation fight for their basic civil rights every day, rights that often, we take for granted.

I want students to take a minute to stop and think how your life could be different if the human rights we have come to know and believe in never existed. Did you stop to think? What would it be like?

Would the media be censored? Could you leave your home at leisure and travel to another place at any time? Do you think public and private education would be completely biased? Could you speak your mind if you felt strongly on a certain issue? Would political actions like detention and torture be impressed upon you?

Do you worry about disappearing in the middle of the night for your involvement with a certain organization? Has your life been at stake because you wanted equality?

These questions are the very lives that many live. Ask yourself and others what are human rights. Learn as much as you can and become active in the lives of those whose human rights are violated. Make an effort to recognize human rights not only today but everyday.

Melanie J. Arens  
sophomore  
art