

Daily Nebraskan

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University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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EDITORIAL

Smoke policy faulty

Football fans have more say than students

Good in theory, poor in implementation — that's the best way to describe the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's new campus smoking policy.

The new "Tobacco Free Campus Policy" effectively bans smoking inside university buildings as well as within 10 feet of all structures.

On paper, the new policy, which is scheduled to take effect Aug. 1, looks good, especially for the majority of the UNL community that prefers to refrain from cigarettes.

A popular argument from smokers is that it infringes upon their rights to smoke.

But this policy is not about smokers' rights. It's about the rights of non-smokers, which are violated every time somebody decides to light up in the presence of those who want nothing to do with smoking.

This is especially true when the latest national health reports say that second-hand smoke can be a cause of serious health problems to both smokers and non-smokers alike.

John Snelling, a leader in the protest against the ban, illustrated the smokers' viewpoints when he said "anybody that wants to smoke should be able to smoke. In days of old, they use to make colored people go to the back of the bus — after Aug. 1, we won't even be able to get on that bus."

To compare a serious issue as racial discrimination to that of smokers not being able to cure a nicotine fit whenever and wherever they want helps show how ridiculous the reasoning behind the protest of the ban is.

But when the smoke is cleared, literally, the only thing that appears more ridiculous than the protest of the ban is in the way it is to be implemented.

First of all, banning smoking inside UNL buildings is justified, but when the ban continues 10 feet outside of the buildings, the policy's credibility becomes weakened.

What is the difference between having someone smoke 12 feet from a building instead of the prohibited 10 feet away, and how could this even be regulated?

This part of the new policy helps make the smokers' claims of infringement upon their rights a bit more validated.

Secondly, and the ban's most important issue, deals with who the university says is its most significant people — no, not the students, the football fans.

When the original policy was released in May, it included a ban on smoking at Memorial Stadium, and this caused an uproar from smoking season-ticket holders who opposed not being able to have a cigarette while their beloved Cornhuskers were lighting up opponents.

But the policy was altered to allow smoking in designated areas inside of the stadium, therefore sending the message out that football fans have a better chance of altering university policy than UNL's own students do.

UNL's intention in the new tobacco policy was noble, but until the large question marks can be worked out of it, the policy's effectiveness will go up in smoke.

KIM STOCK

Political correctness masks issue

About a year ago, a friend and I were having a discussion about life and this whole cosmic experience, when during the discussion I referred to my race as "Oriental." My friend looked at me with a shocked expression on his face and quickly denounced my name calling and told me, "Kim, we no longer use the term 'Oriental,' that's too outdated. The correct term you should use is 'Asian.' You better remember that because you don't want to offend someone."

"Oh, thanks for the advice," I said with a confused look on my face. As I walked away, I couldn't help but wonder why it mattered if I say "Oriental" instead of "Asian." Who am I going to offend but myself, and if I don't care what I call myself, why should anyone else? Besides, what does he know about it, he's not even 'Asian.'

But in my pursuit to maintain political correctness, I consulted another Asian friend about what we should be called. "Melissa," I asked her as she was reading a book in the hallway, "someone just told me that we aren't supposed to call ourselves 'Oriental' because that term is outdated. Instead we are to be called 'Asians.' What do you think?"

My friend looked up from her book long enough to say, "Yeah, I've heard that before, my brother told me the same thing. But if you ask me, it doesn't matter to me too much if I'm 'Oriental' or 'Asian.'"

I had to agree with her. As long as someone doesn't just assume I'm Chinese, (I'm Korean), or call me colorful names such as "gook" or "chink," whatever someone calls me is cool with me.

Who started the trend of political correctness? Was it created in Seattle by the long-haired, hippie bands who made millions from singing P.C.? Or, was it created by politicians who wanted to sidetrack people with proper terms, so their constituents wouldn't be aware of the growing deficit or the



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fact that Desert Storm wasn't really as much as a success as they believed. Or, was it created by the National Council for Pork who wanted to remind people not to ignore "The Other White Meat."

The idea may have started off as a good intention, but what has been created from that good idea is a social monster that causes all of us to walk on pins and needles every time we open our mouths. From political correctness, we have been misled into believing several myths about the social ills P.C. solves. Besides the people who are caught up in their own pool of correct terms, most people don't care too much what term is used for their affiliation, whatever that may be.

As Lenny Bruce, a popular comedian in the 1960's, said "words are just words. But, it's the person who says the word that decides what meaning the word takes on. If we could repeat the word 'nigger' until we got so sick of hearing the word that it lost its meaning, than that word could no longer cause a little kid to go home crying because he got called a 'nigger.'"

Notice that since the surge of P.C. has come about, everyone has become a minority. Not only are racial minorities the "minority," but all women, short people, bald people, people who like tuna sandwiches with ketchup and even white men with blonde hair have joined the minority bandwagon begging for special considerations because of the trend to be classified as a minority. Political correctness has become so "en vogue" that I'm surprised it doesn't have its own magazine, similar to "Cosmopolitan" that lets its followers know what terms, like fashions, are "passe" and which terms are "new and innovative."

But the saddest aspect of political correctness is that it misleads people into believing that something is being done about the issue at hand, as if a proper term can solve a problem. For example, because we call a certain group of people 'Native Americans' instead of 'Indians,' we feel all happy and warm inside because we are now finally acknowledging who discovered this country first. But we forget that Native Americans have the highest rate of teenage suicide, that the people living on the reservations are one of the poorest groups in this country and that media and films continue to romanticize Native Americans in the past and refuse to acknowledge them as the currently-striving group of people that they are.

Why haven't we addressed these issues? Have our superficial, politically correct terms really helped these people? The truth is they haven't; political correctness is what makes us feel good about our vocabulary progress and feeds our own egos.

Maybe one day we'll be able to refer to people as people and leave the technically correct categories to scholarship applications and politicians who still believe we care about names.

Stock is a sophomore secondary education English major and a Summer Daily Nebraskan columnist.

WHAT DOES UNL THINK?

"What do you think about the new smoking policy on campus?"

"It's a great idea. Smokers are annoying because they aren't doing themselves any favors. It bothers me that a lot of them throw their butts directly on the ground. With a right comes the responsibility and they haven't lived up to it. I'd like to see the ban enforced."

Jeff Faling
junior
business

"I like the ban. I don't want the smoke around me. If people want to ruin their own life, that's their choice. But I don't want them to ruin mine."

Sean Fitzgerald
junior
computer science

"I think the ban is not fair. I feel you should have at least one space for everyone to smoke in the buildings. I'd like it if the food court area could be better ventilated."

Lionel Tay
senior
management

—Compiled by Courtney Mathieson

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