

PATRICK HAMBRECHT

Gays out of closet, still in cage

Monday was Coming Out Day, as declared by Queer Nation, Gays Against Drunk Driving, or some other homosexual Elk Lodge. I tried to celebrate by sending my girlfriend and family greeting cards; no one seemed thrilled. I'm surrounded by bigots.

The topic of homosexuality kills a conversation as only a gender issue can. Other than the UNL Gay and Lesbian Center or the Lincoln Ukrainian Assumption Church of Byzantine Rite, no one can agree on:

1. Whether homosexuality is genetic, chosen or a condition caused by psychological conditioning.

2. Whether being gay provides religious grounds for eternal damnation or is just clean, post-industrial fun.

3. How many gays there are anyway, and what they are doing in the military?

Answers for these questions are scarce and suspect. I could consult the recent best seller, "Is It A Choice?" by Eric Marcus. But since Marcus also is the homosexual author of "The Male Couple's Guide," that would be like consulting Yassar Arafat's "Is Terrorism Right For You?"

A quick scan of The Holy Bible confirms that, indeed, a homosexual will not enter the kingdom of God, but neither will an adulterer, a thief or a liar. Pray hard.

As a way out of this moral dilemma, two of my truth-telling, non-thieving homosexual friends claim their relationship of mutual sodomy is caused by a gland implosion in their brains. This being so, they say God has forced them to become sexual mutants, like being cursed with teenage Frankensteinian hermaphroditism. If it's God's fault, it must be OK. Well, maybe.

If God loved natural things, I say, he would have given self-conceit, lying and envy his blessing; all of which I engage in, naturally, every day. Consistently through the Bible, God asks people to deny themselves and do things that are decidedly unnatural. God may be love, but he ain't necessarily fun.

Whether homosexuality is genetic or sociological provides another argument, one more appropriate for



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medical research journals than politically saturated debates. I don't know how a genetic predisposition to not procreate could make it past Darwin's malicious boot camp of the centuries. But I can't explain why poodles exist, either.

Even more perplexing: Why do proud homosexuals link their sexual identities to a DNA breakdown? If homosexuality is an inherited trait, then it may be an inherited, detectable, correctable trait. The implications of this are obvious.

What heterosexual parent would allow his or her gene pool to be erased when a surgical operation could set junior back to "normal?"

Even an abortion would provide a way out and another chance at the descendant game. If you lived in China, would you want your one allowed child to be a psychologically infertile dead end? Feminists may reverse their position on "a woman's right to choose" when it is the death of gay and lesbian unborn that most women are choosing.

Gay parenthood is certainly possible, but it can't be counted on as a solution. Gay fertilization must necessarily be forced or artificial.

Defenders of the gay gland theory typically support it by saying, "Why would anyone choose to be gay?" but this argument is self-defeating. It supposes homosexuality to be an unavoidable affliction, like leprosy or mental retardation. If homosexuality is a healthy and moral occupation, people should enjoy being gay.

Persecution couldn't stop early Christianity, the Jolo serpent-handlers or political anarchists from flourishing and doing seemingly unnatural things. Why should it slow down Barney Frank?

To the contrary, sociology confirms that persecution and bigoted attacks are selling points for sub-cultures. The more persecution a group has, the more people will want to sign their roster. Inevitably, Colorado's anti-gay rights law and recurring violence against homosexuals will provoke more people to "come out." Common sense denies this, but history says it's so.

If homosexual culture is a scattered glandular effect, then why is it so often a trend that envelopes all of a society? History is full of homosexual tribes and towns. The early Celts were a warrior band of gay men who kept their women on an island and visited them occasionally. Sparta was also a city of bisexuals.

Even today, homosexual societies exist. The Etoro men of Papua-New Guinea believe all women are witches after their sperm and shun heterosexual relationships whenever possible. The men share their sperm with younger boys, believing this rite is necessary for puberty.

Anthropologists say the Etoro developed their sexual habits out of a necessity to thwart overpopulation. Is it not possible that American homosexuality derives from similar factors?

Questioning whether a person "chooses" homosexuality is like asking whether he or she has chosen to be a criminal or chosen to enjoy the foods he or she does. Though we all have choices, the invisible pressures of society keeps our decisions on a short leash. You can walk out of the closet, but you're still in the same cage as the rest of us.

Hambrecht is a sophomore news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

GUEST OPINION

Indigenous peoples still suffer

The United Nations has declared the year that began Oct. 1, 1993, as "The Year of the Indigenous People." The decision was made, in part, to pay homage to those people who, in the 500 years since Christopher Columbus's arrival in the New World, were affected so negatively by colonization and massive social change.

Recent estimates suggest that more than 40 percent of the people around the world do not enjoy basic civil liberties and human rights today. One billion people are poverty-stricken, and more than 100 million people are enslaved. Indigenous peoples comprise one segment of the world's population that faces conditions that are especially stark.

Sometimes called aboriginals, native peoples, tribal peoples, Fourth-World peoples, or "first nations," these populations have suffered acts of genocide, discrimination and lack of equal opportunity in employment for centuries. Despite the fact that human-rights concern has become widespread — particularly since the end of World War II, indigenous peoples have suffered abuses that in many cases are more serious than those perpetrated upon most, if not all, other groups. Some analysts argue that indigenous people are probably the single most disadvantaged set of populations in the world today.

The term indigenous people usually is used in reference to those individuals and groups who are descendants of the original populations residing in a country. In the majority of cases they are ethnic minorities, and as a group they do not control the governments of the countries where they live.

Indigenous populations include

200,000 Aborigines of Australia, 90,000 San — Bushmen — of southern Africa, 75,000 Orang Asli of Malaysia, more than 40 million Adivas — Tribals — of India, some 100,000 Inuit of Alaska, Canada, Greenland and the former Soviet North, more than two million Native Americans in the United States and some 91.2 million members of ethnic minorities in China. The Anti-Slavery Society for the Protection of Human Rights estimates there are approximately 270 to 300 million indigenous people residing in some 75 of the world's countries, or about 4 percent of the world's population.

In the past 500 years literally millions of indigenous peoples have either been killed or dispossessed. Most groups no longer retain their traditional ancestral territories. A large percentage of indigenous populations live below the poverty line. Infant mortality rates are high, while health standards tend to be low. Many indigenous peoples reside in remote areas so they lack easy access to social services and markets.

Indigenous peoples also have been denied access to natural resources. In Africa, for example, wildlife rights are usually restricted by the state, and indigenous people can be arrested for hunting illegally. Penan in Malaysia and Amarakaeri Indians in Peru have been jailed for opposing the actions of logging companies. Mining activities in Brazil have had negative impacts on the Yanomamo, some of whom have died from diseases brought by outsiders.

In recent years there has been a dramatic upsurge in activity to promote human rights for indigenous peoples. Numerous organizations have been formed to enhance the well-

being of these groups, such as Survival International in London and Cultural Survival in Cambridge, Mass. Meetings have focused on the plight of indigenous populations. Investigations of human-rights violations, such as those that occurred in the late 1970s when Ache Indians in Peru were killed or in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh, where genocide has been carried out against tribal people, have been conducted.

More and more calls have been heard from indigenous people themselves for the right of self-determination. Yet even today there are only a few international human rights instruments that deal specifically with indigenous people. For decades, the only international legal statement that dealt with indigenous people's rights was a convention passed in 1957 by the International Labour Organization.

It was not until 1982 that the United Nations established a Working Group on Indigenous Populations under the auspices of the Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities of the U.N. Human Rights Commission. By 1988, a draft of "The Universal Declaration on Rights of Indigenous Peoples" was available for consideration by the members of the United Nations.

It is hoped that the declaration will be put into place by 1993. The crucial test will be whether or not nation-states enforce the human rights instruments as they exist and attempt to better the lives of indigenous populations.

Robert Hitchcock is an assistant professor of anthropology at UNL.

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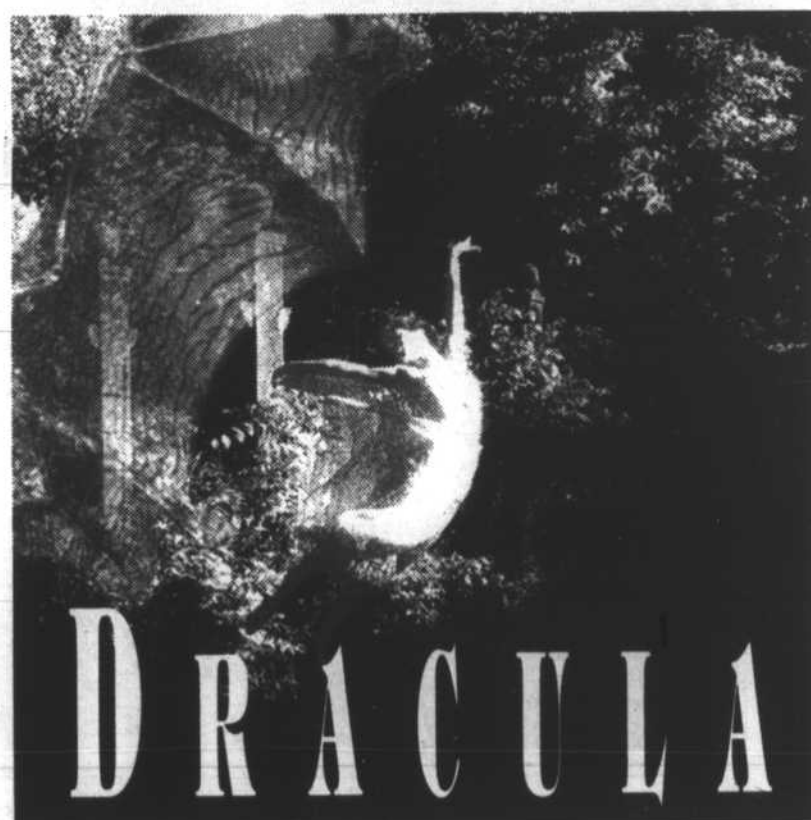
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