

## Daily Nebraskan

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### EDITORIAL

## Out of focus

### U.S. doesn't need to get involved abroad

An Associated Press article Wednesday said some of the recent embarrassing events in Somalia and Haiti were stimulating an isolationist mood in the United States.

Obviously the scenes of U.S. soldiers' bodies being dragged through the streets in Somalia didn't boost the popularity of the humanitarian efforts. The spectacle of a U.S. warship being held at bay in Haiti is not what Americans view as helping the government of another country. These occurrences show the need for a more cautious foreign policy by the United States.

In the past, the United States needed to get involved in other countries' internal conflicts because we feared the Soviet Union would get involved first, which could cause the spread of communism. But that fear is gone. The United States no longer has a pressing need to get involved in the internal conflicts of countries like Somalia and Haiti.

Apparently President Clinton has acknowledged our limited abilities. "Clearly there are limits to what outside forces can do to solve the severe internal problems of countries," he said. Clinton needs to be sure the U.S.'s role in other countries' problems is warranted. He is on the right track by setting a March 31 deadline for withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Somalia.

Any U.S. involvement in global affairs takes away from the needed focus on American domestic issues. There are too many issues at home that need attention, and all the time spent focusing intra-country conflicts take away from these problems. The threat of communism is gone, and the United States cannot get involved in all these global conflicts if we expect to survive domestically.

### OTHERS' VIEW

Americans need to make educational improvement a consistently high priority on the state and national agendas. While the nation's attention has been focused on budget issues, the national debt and health care reform, educational reform and improvement have once again been displaced from the national agenda.

Last week, Education Secretary Richard Riley called attention to this lack of action as graduation rates, test scores and adult literacy continue their downward spiral. In 1989, the nation's governors set forth six goals for education, all of which were to be reached by the year 2000. Four years have passed, and the state and local governments have not undertaken the task of meeting these with the fervor or innovation that is needed.

Although health care and the national debt are important issues, we cannot afford to attack these problems while procrastinating on education. Every year that the downslide of education continues is another year that we graduate students who are ill-equipped for the 21st century. We cannot ignore these students' future, for it is our own.

There are many ideas for reform and many that have been shown to work. While almost any educational reform will be controversial, we must be open to debate and pledge to act. Contact your local, state and national lawmakers and urge them to take the lead in educational reform before another year is wasted.

— University Daily Kansan  
University of Kansas

### EDITORIAL POLICY

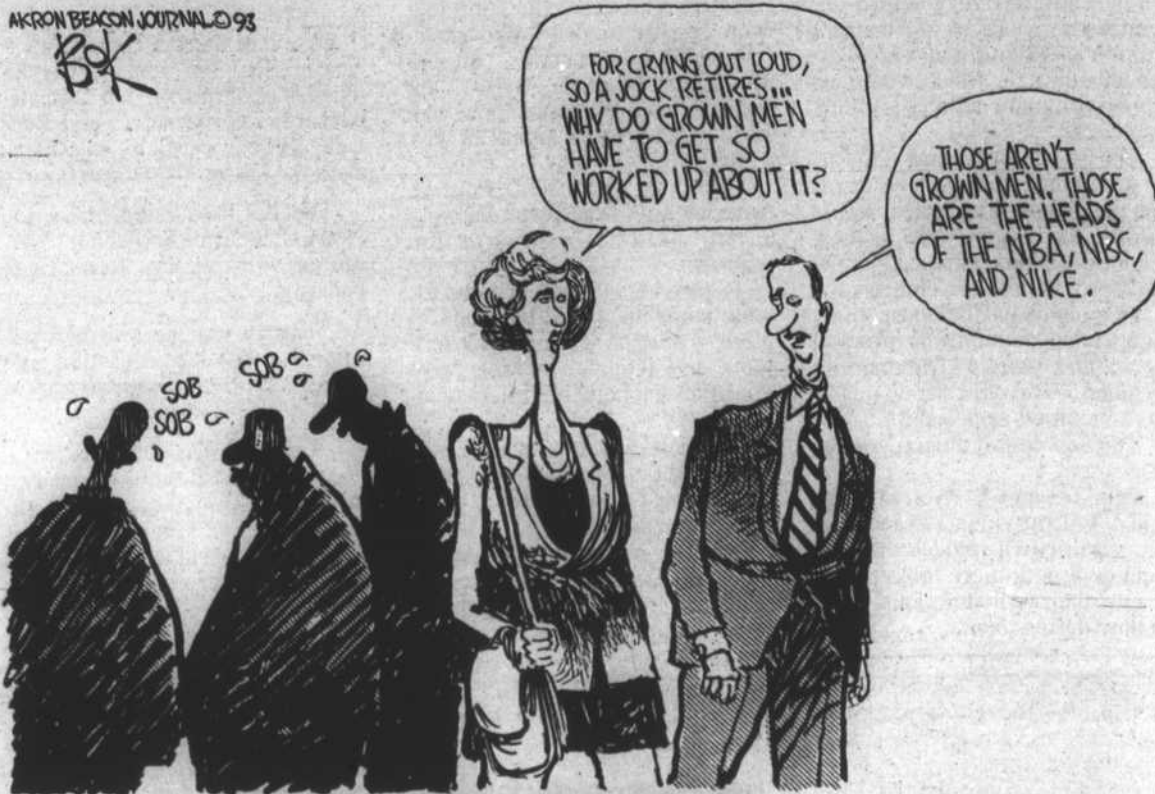
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### LETTER POLICY

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.

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MATT ZIMMERMAN

## Rushdie keeps paying for 'sins'

There are but two events I would like to see occur before I die. First, I would truly like to see Jesse Helms named as an honorary grand marshal of the National Gay Rights Parade. No reason, other than dying amused is the most appealing way I can think of for me to leave this earth.

Second, I would truly like the opportunity to see Salman Rushdie in person without having to worry about whether or not I would live to tell the tale. The funny thing is, though, as recent events seem to indicate, seeing Jesse in that Queer Nation sweatshirt is starting to seem the more likely of the two.

On Monday, William Nygaard, the publisher of Rushdie's "The Satanic Verses," was shot three times in the back as he left his Oslo home. Latest information has him in serious but stable condition, and he is expected to recover. This latest attack, for those of you keeping score at home, brings to three the total number of publishing officials, not including booksellers, who have been physically assaulted because of involvement with "The Satanic Verses."

Two years ago, the Italian translator of the book was attacked in his apartment and nearly killed. The Japanese translator was stabbed to death that same year. And as of yet, despite numerous attempts at arm-twisting by the United States and other Western nations, Iran still refuses to revoke the death sentence on Rushdie that was issued by the late Ayatollah Khomeini.

Far be it from me to be cynical about anything, but I can't believe the situation will ever change significantly. This latest attack proves that even though the issue may be out of the national and international spotlights, it is still a very real issue to those people involved. Going out on a limb here and assuming for a moment that



one day the sentence will be revoked, Rushdie still will be more likely to end up face down in a puddle somewhere than to live to a ripe old age. Old habits die hard, and even without Iranian support for this manhunt, there still will be enough nuts left out there trying to make names for themselves. It's been overdone, I know — but my sympathies go out to Mr. Rushdie. I'm sure this isn't quite the way he wanted to go down in literary history. I don't know whether his work is any good — I've heard that it is — but that has become irrelevant at this point. He could write a cookbook, and it would get the exact same media coverage as if he wrote the greatest novel since "The Grapes of Wrath." He will for all ages be known as the guy they tried to kill for writing a book.

He must be given credit, though, for trying to get on with some semblance of a life. He has published new work since he has gone into hiding, and he has made the occasional public appearance despite the threat to his life. But living under 24-hour protection, moving from place to place and being prevented from seeing friends and family is not exactly an ideal environment to cultivate creativity, let alone a healthy mind. When we get tired of hearing about it, we can turn it off. He has to live with it every day.

Mention also should be made of those who have suffered and those

who are continuing to take risks as a result of being involved with the publishing of Rushdie's book. It takes a special type to stick with a project where not only your reputation, but your life — your life! — is placed in jeopardy. Sure, many jumped on the bandwagon when the book first came out and proudly proclaimed support for it; but to still be involved with it now, after the dust has settled and all the self-congratulations are finished, is admirable indeed. Merely continuing to print the book, without the fanfare and without looking for a pat on the back, is a testament to the ideals to which we all supposedly aspire.

Rushdie continues to live with the burden of knowing that people are being killed while sticking up for his book, which in all likelihood was never seriously intended to be the malicious slam on Islam it has been interpreted as. He undoubtedly has learned to regret having the courage to publish what he once thought — and may still think — was an excellent literary effort. Ironically, being forced to abandon artistic integrity is one of the greatest fears of all writers. Mr. Rushdie, here's to the day you will again be able to write without having to be inhibited by an ignorant and narrow-minded world.

Zimmerman is a junior English major and Daily Nebraskan columnist.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### Homecoming

While reading the article on homecoming (DN, Oct. 8), I found it very hard to distinguish whether it was an ethnic issue or an issue of skin color. Those who were not part of the court were represented by the Afrikan People's Union or the Mexican-American Student Organization, so I knew the ethnicity of the people who were not selected to the court.

Those who have been selected to the court were simply referred to as white. The article was written as if to say that a group of individuals all having the same skin color could not be a diverse group; therefore, no attention should be paid to their ethnicity. Whether any of them are Irish American, German American, Swedish American, Czech American, Spanish American, French American

or Dutch American was obviously not as important as the fact that they were white.

The theme is United Colors of UNL. Let's stop focusing on our color and ethnicity and unite, forgetting what color our skin is.

Karl Thoene  
freshman  
mechanical engineering

#### Death penalty

Once again, the ugly head of liberalism rears itself (DN, Oct. 12). It's interesting how Scott Carpenter's letter commenting on my letter mentions the fifth commandment of "thou shalt not kill," then states, "I don't condone ... despicable actions of Harold Otey."

He states the death penalty is

"dished out" unfairly. If you violate society and its laws such as Otey did, you must pay. It doesn't matter to me what color your skin is.

Carpenter asks, "... if the death penalty is a deterrent ... why has violent crime become more prolific?" Simple — we don't use it enough. People think that if they get away with something, they can keep on doing it. On the other side of this, if you commit violent crime and know you'll pay for it with your life, you won't do it.

Society has the right to protect itself from individuals like Otey. When you say they shouldn't be put to death, you are wrong, pure and simple.

Mark D. Mercer  
freshman  
general studies