

JEREMY FITZPATRICK

# Photo shows reality in Bosnia

The war in Bosnia became real for me when I saw the picture of a small, dead boy in Time magazine. The boy, killed by a shell in Sarajevo, stared lifelessly into space.



**But the boy's face will not fade from my mind. He was a real person who must have just wanted to be able to play and get away from the shells and bombs and killing.**

He couldn't have been 10 years old. The picture of the boy crystallized what had before been an endless and confusing series of reports on Serbs, Croats and Muslims. I have read countless stories on the war and still do not completely understand what is happening there.

Does anyone really understand the conflict?

Would the boy have lived if the United States and NATO had decided earlier to threaten airstrikes if the Serbs didn't stop bombing Sarajevo? Now that the ultimatum has been issued, the shelling has stopped.

But hindsight is easy. Making decisions about a conflict most people cannot understand is much more difficult. President Clinton's hesitancy to involve the United States in the war is wise, considering the considerable danger U.S. forces would confront in Bosnia.

Still, I wonder if the parents of the slain boy have a bitterness toward the United States for not acting sooner. Many people in the former Yugoslavia must believe the United States could end the slaughter if it really wanted to.

And it probably could, although the cost in U.S. lives would be high.

The question becomes how much responsibility we have to help people who are struggling in places like the former Yugoslavia. How much responsibility did we have to do something to protect the boy pictured in Time?

There is no absolute answer to the question, except that it is up to us to make that decision. We will decide to put ourselves at risk in Bosnia or stay

at home and remain safe.

The United States is no longer directly threatened by most conflicts in the world. Our decision to intervene in Bosnia was largely a decision to help people. Our national security was not threatened.

Now that the Cold War is over and Russia and the United States are not maintaining a world order through competition, countries can fight each other without much worry of intervention. As long as the wars don't threaten Russian or American interests, they can continue.

The new peace with Russia has made people in Lincoln and everywhere else in the United States safer. Now that Russia is no longer our adversary, we are protected from a major conflict.

But that peace means people in Sarajevo and other cities around the world face greater danger. Our security comes at the price of the stability in their lives.

Because the world has been so greatly transformed in the last several years, our generation will probably enjoy greater peace — as well as more requests from other countries for help. As regional conflicts grow, more people will die. More countries will expect the United States to live up to its promise of protecting human rights.

As we are seeing in Bosnia, the promise is difficult to keep when it comes at the expense of American lives. And there is a real question about how far we should go to protect other countries. Should American lives be placed at risk to end wars started by other people?

We have more than enough struggles to deal with at home. We cannot afford to be the answer to the world's problems any longer.

But the picture of the boy stares out at us. He was a human being who was undoubtedly worth fighting for. To ignore the problem in Bosnia is to ignore many people like him.

There are unfortunately no easy answers. To send in ground troops will likely mean many Americans will die. To do nothing will mean many innocent people will continue to die.

Writing about the issue in Lincoln is easy. If we fight in Bosnia, I will not have to go. If we do not, I am half a world away and can choose to ignore the reality of what is happening there.

But the boy's face will not fade from my mind. He was a real person who must have just wanted to be able to play and get away from the shells and bombs and killing.

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E. HUGHES SHANKS

# It takes effort to combat faults

Not long ago I spent more time noticing what was wrong with everybody else than looking at what was wrong with me.



**Being human means facing new things. So, if you're going to play the game of life, put on a helmet.**

Eventually I remembered one of our family mottos: In order to discover my weaknesses, I need only to look at what I criticize in others.

Whatever irks me about another person inevitably will be some quirk of my own. If I'm going to grow as a person, I have to accept those quirks. If I don't accept myself, how can I accept others? How can I grow?

For most of my adult life I've worked at being less biased about people. I've learned that bias shuts people out of my life. It causes me to take them for granted. I find the years I spent making fun of people a part of my past I'd prefer to forget.

Lately I've been trying hard to stop being so critical of particular stereotypes. This pursuit has occupied my mind for some time. I'm not proud of being secretly critical. I find no value in despising someone because of what they appear to be like.

I'll tell you what bugs me the most, middle-class males who at 35 years old or so have failed to realize their full potential and seem to be economically just a half step behind less enlightened, more successful sellouts who are probably stupid, anyway.

There, I said it. It's amazing the similarities I find between myself and that type of person.

Why can I say the bad characteristics I notice and despise in others are characteristics of my own? Because that is the only reason I do notice them.

It is much easier to recognize familiar habits and idiosyncrasies than things that are different or foreign. So, it stands to reason that if we're constantly critical of a certain group of people, we recognize specific things in them. If we're not like them, how do we know what they are like?

Every year I narrow down who I hate to a smaller segment of society.

I've made progress. But I'll never improve enough.

The road to self-improvement is long and never-ending. I feel good about myself for a while, able to face any new challenge with ease.

Eventually, however, I find my elation is a passing moment in the time continuum called life. Something new comes up. I'll meet someone who drives me crazy. At this point, I do one of two things — retreat or advance.

If I advance, I must make some effort toward changing myself a little further. If I retreat, even temporarily, just to take a short "break," I withdraw from an opportunity to grow a little.

The key is to string together as many moments of personal growth as you can without long breaks between them, because during those breaks you aren't improving yourself. You're just a stump. A rock. Maybe a nice rock, but you're still a rock.

When I'm taking a break from self-improvement, I rely on the quality of myself as it stands, which in many cases is OK.

This may work well for a while but not forever. To quote the dear and departed Gilda Radner, "It's always something..." Around every corner, I find a new challenge.

I've often heard people say in desperation, "I just don't want to change right now," or "I need a break from reality."

We all need breaks, but don't take a break from reality on my time. Do it at home, in private. Because tomorrow, when you get up, the world awaits and it's ever-changing. If you don't like it, stay at home. Stay out of the way. No attitude is better than a bad attitude.

Being human means facing new things. So, if you're going to play the game of life, put on a helmet.

As we face new challenges, we can either use old thinking or find new ways of thinking. If we don't, we'll be stale and dull.

At some time or another we've all complained about people we know who won't change their ways. In our families, for example, there's always one member who is notoriously rigid. Their predictability makes them the object of jokes. Other times, their refusal to change isolates them. Once identified as unchangeable, people give up on them.

If you perceive yourself as unchangeable, you give up on yourself. When this happens, the chance for improvement is lost. Once you stop improving, you simply can't face new challenges with continued success.

If you lose hope in yourself, what the hell good are you to the rest of the world?

I'm glad I meet horrible people. And annoying people. And hateful people. Because without them, I may not find in myself troublesome areas in need of changing.

Shanks is a graduate student and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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