

RAINBOW ROWELL

Clinton could make MTV sizzle

I had a rare chance to watch President Clinton in action last night. I read about him all the time, but I haven't seen him for a while.

This is probably because the only station I watch is MTV.

I have no choice. I only have time to watch television for 15 minutes every day while I'm getting ready for class.

Fifteen minutes doesn't leave much room for choice. I've tried watching "The Real Ghostbusters" instead, but I get caught up in the plot. I'm too distracted to make sure my shoes match my blouse, and I end up late for class.

I wake up too late to catch morning news shows, and I can never find CNN (I've looked twice), so I'm left with MTV.

Actually I'm left with "MTV Jams," hosted by constantly awe-struck VJ Bill Bellamy.

Taking daily doses of "MTV Jams" has its side effects, such as walking around humming Ace of Base all day and always feeling the urge to say, "Who you calling a bitch?"

But I can handle any UNL-sized problem after starting every single morning with Snoop Doggy Dog and Menthos commercials.

I'm ready for anything—a broken heel, sneaking into a rock concert or crossing a busy street. A few minutes of "Jams" helps me kick off my days with a little attitude—helps me be a real freshmaker.

Our nation's leader doesn't usually show up on "MTV Jams." I wish he did. I'd like to see Bill Bellamy take on the president.

"Clinton's in the how-owse! Yeah! You are the man. The MAN. Look at that tie. Poo-yah! That tie's got the funk. Oogle woomp. Yea-ah! How'd you get so, so, you are the MAN! Woomp!"

He'd be so excited, he'd be inarticulate, more excited even than when he interviewed En Vogue (but not as stoked as when he talked to Janet Jackson and her dancers).



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Clinton was speaking at an MTV "Enough is Enough" forum. Tecny-boppers and twenty-somethings like myself asked the president about things that matter to people like them and me.

"What's your favorite song?"

"Do you keep a diary?"

The president was in good form, although he might have had on a little too much pancake makeup.

Clinton announced to the crowd of acne-fighting American youth that he would probably run for president again in 1996.

Now I'm not about to comment on whether Clinton should or should not run or how he's doing so far. But IF he should be in need of employment come January of '96, I think he should go to the people who helped him get where he is now.

Clinton's appearance on MTV before his election won him many young votes. After helping him get the most miserable job of his life, the network should feel responsible for him if he gets fired.

Clinton would make an excellent VJ. He'd fit right in. He's a "money for nothin', chicks for free" kind of guy. There may be some initial arguments between him and Adam Curry about who would get to be called "that big hair guy," but after a while they'd smooth things out.

He probably wouldn't be "MTV Jams" material, but it's a big network with plenty of room for former presidents.

They're about to start a new season on "The Real World." He'd have to remember not to play his sax every night when he gets home from the bars. But he could be the official cute Southern person.

Clinton would be right at home in MTV's late-night format. He could be the president of "Alternative Nation."

Can you imagine Clinton and Kennedy (get it?) doing their thing together?

"Ew Bill, stop licking me. You suck. Eww."

Maybe he's not glam enough to be a VJ. Besides, being a video jockey takes some skill.

You have to be able to pretend you actually sit through every video and commercial and say things like "Oh, we're back already?" (I think that's why they had to fire Nina Blackwood. Couldn't cut the mustard.)

Clinton might be more the "MTV News" type. Ugly and boring, but able to talk about ultimately trivial things as if they really matter.

Maybe he could find a home on "Head Bangers Ball." He and Ricki Rachman kind of have the same hair. A few tattoos, a pierced nipple here and there.

If he could stay away from those juicy "The Grind" dancers, he might have a long and fruitful career at MTV.

Like Martha Quinn.

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E. HUGHES SHANKS

Drug stigma can't be shaken

Former drug users have no credibility in this society, and it stinks to high heaven. The subject of previous illegal drug use is taboo.

It can be social and political suicide to admit to it. Because of the stigma attached to it, a lot of former users have to remain in the closet, where no one belongs.

We treat previous drug abusers like AIDS victims. We don't want them around us, but we always want to know "how" someone got it. Why does it matter?

What really matters is whether you care. The ability to care is an important human quality that can only make society better. No one can say that one person is better qualified to offer help or care more or less than another person.

I recently had a conversation with a parent about teaching his children about drugs. He said his children knew he was a former "pothead." He was worried that he had no credibility because of this.

He told me his children's friends were also aware of his previous use. This raises a question I have feared for a long time.

Can the '70s generation of drug users tell the next generation about how not to use illegal drugs?

Not everyone from the '70s used drugs. Most people didn't. However, those people are parents with teenagers now.

All children need to be taught about drugs, not just the children of former users.

Otherwise, our stigma of former drug use leaves the children of former users up the creek.

I'm not so sure it matters who used them and who didn't. Drugs poison your body, not your soul. If a person is an ass before using drugs, they'll likely still be an ass during and after the drug abuse stops.

There is no rule of thumb that determines someone's worth based on



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Those concerned about the damage drugs do to society should not fall into the trap that says, "If you used drugs in the past, you can't be as credible as those who did not."

The fact is, most people don't use drugs and never will. However, previous drug use doesn't stop someone from having a family. Nor does it stop the former user from caring. If previous drug use is a reason not to listen to someone, lots of young users have no one at home to which to talk.

Society doesn't openly accept the former user. It is not safe to admit previous drug abuse. There is too dark a cloud placed over the head of someone who admits to it.

Meeting the needs of present drug users is a tall order. Drug users need all the help they can get.

I worked at a substance abuse treatment center for almost two years, and believe me, addicts don't care from where the help is coming. Only that it comes. And if it doesn't come, we all suffer.

I learned that my being clean and sober did not especially qualify me to work with addicts. I found that what matters is whether you give a damn.

Just like the addict, who must at some point care enough to quit, the care giver must care enough to care.

I often heard people say things like "Wow, that's a great job you're doing with those homeless drug addicts..." It was as if, I did a "great job" simply

because I was doing it.

It reminds me of the way we call people in wheelchairs "courageous," apparently for simply being in a wheelchair.

We assume that it must be courageous, but how can we ever know for sure? How can we be so sure a former addict can't be credible?

Few people ask about the experience of the addict. Few people really understand life as an addict or life in a wheelchair. But for some reason, the person in the wheelchair is courageous and the drug counselor is doing a great thing.

What if a person has AIDS, is in a wheelchair and is a former addict? Our society, would see them as a courageous person, lacking credibility who—sshhh—might have contracted AIDS by weird sex. It's bizarre how vexing the stigmas we attach to less fortunate people can be.

It seems like a lot of effort goes into not speaking to the issues. In terms of drug abuse, we need everybody's input, especially from former abusers and their families.

We need to talk about "it." Without doing that, we're blowing a lot of air at a problem that needs substance, not rhetoric. By routinely discrediting former users, we may take away a child's desire to go to his or her parents for help. Is that what we want?

Shanks is a graduate student and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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