

DEB MCADAMS

Diversity dares society to listen

The biggest obstacle to eliminating racism is fear, which is generally a product of ignorance. Information is the antidote for ignorance. The media provides information, and from that our perceptions are formed.

Consequently, if there are no black people in our immediate communities, we may be led to believe they are all pregnant teen-agers, drive-by shooters, drug pushers, extremists, corrupt politicians or high-paid athletes.

The many ethnic groups aren't well represented by the media because they aren't represented well within the media. While ethnic minorities account for about 25 percent of the U.S. population, they represent roughly 12 percent of the work force in the largest newsrooms.

The media has lost most of its credibility with people of color, and it's struggling to recover. Many newspapers, facing declines in circulation, are diversifying newsrooms to appeal to more readers. This means they are more inclined to hire someone on the basis of ethnicity.

Hiring preferences based on skin color are nothing new in this country. White people have had the inside track for decades. The tides have turned.

I recently asked Keith Woods how race would affect his decision between hiring two equally qualified job candidates: one black, one white. Woods, a columnist and editorial writer for the Times-Picayune in New Orleans, replied the two would not be equal.

Since part of his responsibility for hiring included diversifying the work force, the black individual would inherently possess qualifications to fulfill that purpose. Woods, a black man by self-definition, explained that a black person could bring a different



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and necessary perspective to the job that a white person could not.

The same would be true of a Hispanic, Asian-American or Native-American candidate, as well as someone from the streets of Brooklyn or the coal mines of the Ozarks. The unique perspective of an individual's place in society is becoming just as valued by employers as professional skills.

That's a difficult pill for the privileged class to swallow. We can't fathom not being hired because of our color.

It may seem unfair, but fairness is precisely the point of diversifying our institutions. The voices of the nation's many cultures have long been absent or misrepresented in the public discourse.

Diversity, particularly in the media, is necessary to dispel notions that black people are natural athletes, blind people are deaf and homeless people just don't want to work.

Giving up the edge in the job market isn't the only threat to the white population. Diversity challenges us to listen. We'd rather not hear ideas that make us uncomfortable. Black unity definitely makes us uncomfortable. It excludes us. We're not accustomed to being excluded.

We see ourselves in television programs, in magazines and bill-

boards. None of us were ever expected to model ourselves after anyone other than white people. We expect people to want what we want, to believe in our God and to speak our language. We don't easily accept people who don't conform, but white people can hide.

Woods pointed out that white people could choose whether they interact with minority cultures. People of color, if they wish to work, must interact with white people. Woods described a sort of exhaustion from constantly wondering who might hate you for the shade of your skin. It's not so easy for a black person to hide.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, whites will comprise about 56 percent of the total population by 2080, compared to about 75 percent today. If we don't work for fairness and balance in society now, we may be forced to retreat into segregated, fortified neighborhoods that we can't leave at night.

A less hostile society is certainly worth placing people of color in traditionally white positions, especially in the media.

McAdams is a junior news editorial major, the Daily Nebraskan wire editor and a columnist.

JEFFREY ROBB

A McSolution to our problems

The solution to our world's problems is right under our noses.

Countries of the world hold conferences to try to pound out solutions to problems such as poverty, homelessness or hunger, yet nothing ever gets done. The United Nations activates peace forces to make a difference in starving countries, but as soon as one country has been helped, another problem spot erupts. Independent agencies sprout from every corner of the globe to do their part.

Alas, they always say, it's all in vain. The scourges of the world won't go away.

Little does the world know that it needs to look no further than the helping hand of the fast-food restaurants of the United States. That's right, the solution is ... the meal deal.

Just think of the potential miracle our nation's fast-food restaurants have laid in our laps. Each time a customer purchases a compilation of food, rather than by a la carte, he can save up to \$1. That's a lot of extra cash that doesn't have to be spent on food.

Consider this: Just one popular fast-food restaurant serves billions and billions of people. Billions means more than one billion, but for this purpose, we'll go with 2 billion, a conservative estimate. However, not everybody is wise enough to save by getting a meal deal. We'll say one-fourth, or 500 million.

Multiply that by the savings incurred from all the meal deals. Customers can save \$.98 when they buy a double quarter-pounder, large french fries and a medium drink via a meal deal rather than through buying each item separately. The average is about \$.60, we'll use that. \$.60 X 500 million = \$300 million.

Then multiply that by about 10



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prominent restaurants that have meal deals.

\$300 million X 10 = A mountain of potential.

The leaders of the world are looking at solutions the wrong way. There are many ways the meal deal is going to revolutionize Earth. But first, there will need to be a lot of organization.

Leaders could first enter into negotiations with the administrators of our U.S. cateries to find a way to properly funnel a wealth of American currency.

Restaurants could put up an offer to ask their patrons, as they pay, to donate that extra food dollar to a fund. That could be the easiest way to gather the money.

The money could then be directed to any number of problems. Lately, antiquated nuclear plants in Eastern Europe have deteriorated even more. Nations have requested U.S. money to replace these plants. Thus far, the money isn't forthcoming.

The meal deal fund could change that. The money could be pumped in. The plants could be replaced. A nuclear disaster could be averted — simple as that.

As a bonus, millions of Eastern Europeans could have a surplus of power, and cheap power at that. Thank you meal deal.

But the problem doesn't have to be international. Many UNL

students and faculty members who flooded the City Union for lunch Monday could have unwittingly done their part in alleviating homelessness and hunger from Lincoln.

What food bank or homeless shelter wouldn't love a nice, big grant from the meal deal fund?

One popular meal deal is named "The All-American Meal." I ask you, what is more All-American than donating excess savings from your lunch or dinner to a good cause? What's more All-American than helping your fellow man or woman?

But the power of the meal deal doesn't have to be restricted to a fund. Each time a hungry person can't scrounge up the last \$.60 to buy an order of fries and a pop with their meal, they can rejoice. The fast-food restaurants have a way to help. They offer a chance for the hungry to get the food they so desperately need and desire.

Unemployment also will inevitably decrease. Restaurants have caused such a demand for these cheap meals that they soon won't have the staff to keep up. They'll have to hire extra workers, thus decreasing unemployment.

The future, I can smell it now. And it is flame-broiled.

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