

OPINION

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EDITORIAL

Right idea

Education key to lowering birthrate

One plan of action coming from the the U.N. population conference in Cairo, Egypt, this week deserves applause.

Conference members are identifying the improvement of women's rights, opportunities and status as a positive solution to easing overpopulation.



Bret Gottshall/DN

world's income."

For centuries under these conditions, many women have attained status by bearing more children. And in cultures where women were deemed less important, women continued to have children until sons were born.

Promoting equality would reduce women's incentive to have children to attain status and economic security. Advancements in women's education also are directly linked to lower birth rates. Educated women are less likely to have unwanted pregnancies.

This long-term solution of promoting gender equity promises to be more effective and less insulting than past U.S. efforts at easing overpopulation by dropping plane-loads of condoms on developing countries. (In one such instance, the U.S. found 75 percent of the condoms it had donated to Egypt were being used by young boys as water balloons.)

As education increases and birth rates level, infant mortality would lessen, and fewer women would die of pregnancy-related causes.

Timothy Wirth, undersecretary of state for global affairs summed it up best when he told The Washington Post, "The education of women stands out in study after study as the most consistent way to make an impact on reproductive behavior, on infant mortality, on family health, on individual productivity.

"Again and again, even a little education for women pays dividends in every recognized index of social progress and development."

While the conference is a breakthrough in showing the necessity of gender equality, it is only one of many reasons it must be achieved.

EDITORIAL POLICY

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MEHSLING
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

'Lynch mob'

If I had any doubts about my opposition to capital punishment, they were certainly put to rest last Thursday night. As a life came to a sudden and gruesome end in the electric chair, I reflected despondently on the futility and degradation of the death penalty.

I was shocked and disoriented by the stark contrast between the hollow words of the pro-death penalty crowd proclaiming their concern for justice and their dehumanizing behavior that celebrated a state-sponsored murder and brutally mocked Mr. Oticy's desire to live. We must find a way to end this barbaric practice before we all are consumed in the fire of hate and vengeance being kindled by the supporters of this death penalty.

We should not be proud of ourselves for committing such a cowardly and hateful act of violence. It was neither civilized nor responsible, neither just nor wise, for us to collectively decide that another person deserved to be killed on our behalf.

Only a weak and decaying society needs to resort to such a terrible "solution" as capital punishment when there are other alternatives available that don't require us to kill. Furthermore, we are arrogant and foolish to believe that we are qualified to judge that another human being is deserving of death, whether the decision is made by an individual perpetrator or all of society.

Capital punishment is an irrational public policy. It is not an effective deterrent, it fails to provide any tangible compensation for wrongdoing, and it is not applied equally to persons committing similar crimes. It is a bitter irony that many of those death penalty advocates who most strongly claim to support the victim of a murder also deny the inherent immorality of the act of killing by treating it as acceptable in the context of capital punishment. We must call for the immediate abolition of the death penalty and the instatement of effective life imprisonment.

We all have Mr. Oticy's blood on our hands. We are collectively guilty of his murder, premeditated for more than a decade, and ruthlessly justified as a state expedient. We are made no better by his death, and our own humanity is degraded by this shameful effort at retribution.

I don't know about the rest of the UNL campus community, but as for me, I reject the "lynch mob" mentality of those who celebrate an execu-

tion. I choose instead to stand among the sorrowed and shamed who despair at humanity's ability to destroy itself, and I pray that one day love and kindness may overcome our need for vengeance against our brothers and sisters.

Jeremy Vetter
sophomore
philosophy



Abortion

Lori Lyn Arthur recounted a rather profound experience in her column (DN, Aug. 30, 1994), yet she appears to have escaped any lasting effect from it.

As she waited for the results of that home pregnancy test, she thought of names — not for the pregnancy, of course, but for the baby.

She imagined her offspring's future. She wondered about his or her happiness and hair color. She assessed her ability to parent. In all this, she recognized the life, the value, the viability of her unborn child.

This experience made a self-described "militantly pro-choice" woman realize that abortion was not and could not be an option for her. The mere possibility of pregnancy clarified the impact of abortion: It would take the life of her innocent child, and that is unacceptable.

Yet she remains in favor of abortion — if not for herself, then at least for others. Could there possibly be a difference between her fetus and that of another woman?

Too many women have been brainwashed into believing that the "thing" we carry in our wombs during the first months of pregnancy is a meaningless clump of cells. Ms. Arthur's experience easily exposes the fallacy of that argument.

Abortion does not simply end a pregnancy; it ends a life — a life Ms. Arthur would have called Kinser if he was a boy, Michaela if she was a girl.

SheriLynne Hansen
Lincoln

Embarrassed

I went to the Nebraska State Penitentiary Thursday night in support of the death penalty; however, my reasons for support are not important to this letter.

When I arrived on the "pro" capital punishment side, I was so embarrassed by the behavior. I found myself on the anti-death side within five minutes. The so-called "college party" crowd was obnoxious, rude, ignorant, and in many cases, racist. These are the kind of people you don't want on your side — it truly hurts the cause more than helps it.

I couldn't believe some of the stuff that was yelled across to the side where there were true feelings being felt. What does "Go Big Red" have to do with Harold Oticy or Jane McManus? And why did people feel the need to throw things into the crowd? It's scary to think that Lincoln, Nebraska, is full of so many people with so much hate and nothing better to do than to purposely try to hurt other people's feelings.

In the meantime, the anti-death side was very somber and did its best to ignore the abundant stupidity on the other side. I was very proud of the anti-death group for peacefully being able to do what they were there to do by ignoring the ignorance and hate on the other side. The only act I didn't like was the burning of the American flag. If you don't like America, then leave — you are free to.

As the Plainsmen (a death penalty supporters organization) so eloquently put it in the rules they passed around, "This is America. It is a land that thrives on freedom and the input of all of her citizens. Color, creed, philosophy and gender may differ, but we are all American. Let's remember to be considerate and respectful of that fact."

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