

DEB McADAMS

Powerful few lack perspective

Let us give thanks for hardship, and let us have pity on those who have no grasp of human struggle. These privileged few don't have the same intimacy with survival as those who have had to fight for everything. They don't understand the sheer human will required to confront the psychological impositions of poverty in a society where so many have so much, and still more have so little.



We spend about 1 percent of the federal budget to help families and children, and now we have a speaker who wants to put that one percent into programs that take children away from parents.

Many individuals so immune to human suffering also happen to be in control of this democracy. They often have little inclination to change the current social dynamics. Homeless children don't form PACs. Illiterate adults don't write to their senators. Illegal immigrants don't go on strike.

Californians passed Proposition 187, which denies education and other services to illegal immigrants, for the same reason we would consider driving the homeless from the Nebraska Union. We don't want to look at poverty. We don't want to be reminded that something corrosive has given us a caste system impenetrable by all but the most assiduously determined or athletically gifted.

Greed degrades human decency so much that we can deny pocket change to a homeless man as we walk by in \$85 jogging shoes and still consider him the one with no dignity.

Greed eats the part of the mind that would recognize the incongruity in driving a \$60,000 car and paying a nanny little more than long-distance phone rates.

Where would the powerful be without the poor? Who would mow their lawns, pick their fruit or feed their babies? Who would rip the flesh from animals in slaughterhouses and shield us from the violence of the American diet? Who would pull the sandbars out of bean fields in western Nebraska?

Democracy suffers when the rich can't face the poor. A culture of resentment breeds among those

who have little to lose. Bars go up on windows, and walls go up around neighborhoods. It's dangerous to be out after dark. It's dangerous to be out. Legislating poverty out of sight helps no one and ultimately undermines everyone's freedom.

Wealthy Californians want cheap labor, but God forbid they should pick up the bill for educating the people they exploit. If people want \$4-an-hour yard work, they deserve neighbors who hang clothes from window frames and park old cars on the front lawn.

If people want to pay minimum wage to have someone else raise their children, perhaps they should consider birth control. If Americans don't want to spend more money for food, then we should acknowledge that we contribute to a system that depends on the labor of families living out of beat-up station wagons.

Each one of us living in the United States has known some degree of privilege. Few of us have faced a gauntlet of rifle butts for a handful of rice. Many of us are so comfortable and protected we simply can't fathom schools with no plumbing in East St. Louis, or the children there who play in vacant lots so contaminated by the local chemical giant that the soil glows at night.

The difference between starving Somalians and our own indigent is that Americans are supposed to be able to change their circumstances through education and hard work.

The work ethic served us well in

the decades after the depression had equalized the majority and a war had brought prosperity. Since the end of World War II, the United States has grown by about 100,000,000 people, and the egalitarian prosperity of the '50s has disappeared.

The wealthy became the welfare class of the '80s through massive, high-end tax cuts. Meanwhile, the poorest of the poor lost as many infants in childbirth as most third world nations.

Now that the '94 elections have restored the conservative elitists of the '80s, programs designed to help the poor are once again the target of their self-righteous lambasting. They don't dare lay a hand on social security, which accounts for 22 percent of total federal spending. Social security recipients have the AARP, and when they talk, politicians listen.

Families with children are the fastest-growing group among the homeless. The U.S. Department of Education estimated there were as many as 220,000 homeless children in the nation in 1988. We spend about 1 percent of the federal budget to help families and children, and now we have a speaker who wants to put that one percent into programs that take children away from parents.

If this represents the family values among the privileged few, then thank goodness for those who struggle.

Amen.
McAdams is a junior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

SHANE TUCKER

Texas traffic creates havoc

Thanksgiving is upon us again, with thoughts of turkey and stuffing and friends and family right around the corner.

But when I think of Thanksgiving, the first things that come to mind are car wrecks.

My anonymous friend, ASUN President Andrew Loudon, and I take an annual trip down to Dallas, Texas, to visit a high school friend of ours who lives there. We always have a memorable weekend filled with too much food, too much beer and too much driving.

With all the driving required to get to Texas, the law of averages would dictate an accident should happen sometime along the trip. This possibility is intensified by the fact that Loudon does most of the driving.

It was Thanksgiving day, and we were returning from the home of a wonderful family daring enough to invite Nebraskans to their Texas-size feast. It was also one of the rare days when snow falls in Texas.

Although bright enough to evict Democratic Governor Ann Richards, Texans are not quite bright enough to handle snow fall.

So enamored with the white flecks falling from the sky, Texans veer and slide and collide into other unsuspecting Texan (and Nebraskan) motorists.

However, being a Nebraskan, Loudon had no trouble coping with the sudden weather change. Guiding his parent's Taurus deftly through the streets of Dallas, we drove to our friend's apartment after our Thanksgiving feast.

"Oh, hey, this seat belt's really uncomfortable," Loudon said, trying to adjust the belt so it no longer constricted his belly, made larger by our meal. "I shouldn't have eaten so much."



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Luckily, he left the belt on. Driving cautiously because of the inch of snow on the ground, Loudon slowed down to make a left-hand turn. Pulling out into the intersection, a white Ford Explorer fresh from the stadium came careening into the left rear section of our vehicle.

From the driver's side of the truck stepped a 6'4" drunk Cowboy fan with long, blond hair. He walked to the front of his truck and noted to his equally large passenger that no damage was done. The Texas long-hair then turned to our car and noted that the left rear quarter panel had been mangled.

"You can't turn left from the right-hand lane," drunk boy commented and hopped back in his car, weaving on down the road.

In shock, we watched the moron depart and quickly jotted down his license plate number.

Fresh snow on the road made it impossible to distinguish between lanes; however, our friendly Texas idiot was clearly on the shoulder of the one-way street we were traversing when he attempted to pass Loudon.

Common sense would dictate that a car pulling slowly into an intersection in the left-hand lane, with the left turn signal on, intended to turn left. This same brand of common sense also might

suggest that passing a car with the aforementioned intentions on the left-hand shoulder might not be too wise.

When the police arrived at our friend's apartment, we explained the situation and gave them the drunk man's license plate number.

Expecting to hear from the Texas lawman that afternoon — or at least within the next couple days — we were surprised to find that the police didn't find the offender all weekend.

In fact, the police never found the driver, and Loudon's dad ended up using his insurance to cover all of the damages.

It seems odd that the white Explorer was that hard to track down. Granted, them squirrely little numbers can be pretty tricky, but after that, the process seemed pretty simple:

You look up where the guy lives, go to his house, knock on the door, and when the 6'4" blond guy answers, you ask him if he hit two kids in a white car on Thanksgiving day.

Unfortunately for the Loudons, the police in Texas aren't much brighter than the police in Nebraska. I guess we're fortunate that we spoke English.

Tucker is a senior biology major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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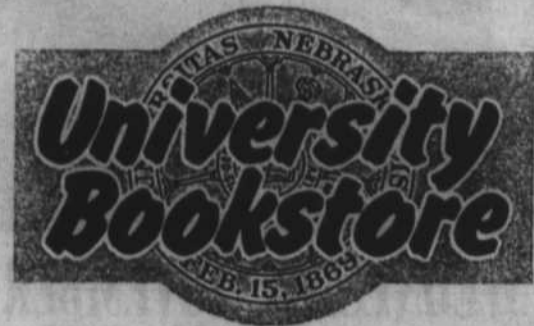
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