

Gingrich should GOPACing

The tables have turned on Newt Gingrich. The Speaker of the House, who has reveled in the national spotlight ever since November's election, is beginning to feel the harsh realities of being in the public eye. He doesn't seem to like it.

Stories of Gingrich's shortcomings as a politician and member of the human race have been appearing with increasing frequency in recent weeks. The sickbed coercion of his cancer-stricken wife to sign divorce papers was the earliest inductee into the Newt Gingrich Hall of Shame. Others have followed.

Gingrich recently took a break from assailing the press to assail his democratic colleagues for making "personal attacks" against him. The offending representatives were scolded for questioning the ethics of Gingrich's \$4.5 million advance for a book he will write for publishing mogul Rupert Murdoch. During that episode, I learned something about American politics that I had not previously known: It is fine and dandy to launch into personal diatribes against the President of the United States, but the Speaker of the House should be treated with a sort of ceremonial deference. Funny, they never taught me that in Poli Sci 100.

The divorce papers and the book deal have slipped into the category of old news, however. Now the Speaker is being haunted by his fundraising GOP Action Committee, or GOPAC. The committee, which has refused to release the identities of major individual donors and operates thanks to a loophole in Federal Election Committee rules, has raised millions for Republican campaigns. Those millions include more than \$700,000 donated by one Wisconsin couple since 1985, an amount



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that, according to the Los Angeles Times, more than doubled what the couple would have been allowed to donate directly to all federal candidates in that time.

Major GOPAC contributors have enjoyed Gingrich's friendship immensely. Gingrich, "Mr. GOP," has even broken from the party line to side with a major textile manufacturer on the issue of import quotas.

That makes me wonder: What does the GOP in GOPAC really stand for? Obviously not "Grand Old Party." Maybe "Gobs of Pork." How about "Gingrich's Overflowing Pockets" or "Gingrich's Own Profits"?

Ben "Cooter" Jones, of "Dukes of Hazard" fame, was defeated by Gingrich in November's election. He has since filed ethics charges against Gingrich relating to GOPAC. In addition, other House members have filed similar charges. Gingrich's spokespeople have called the charges "sour grapes."

But Newt, a self-proclaimed "futurist," does not let himself be bothered by such mean-spirited personal attacks. He has a perspective on the world that allows him to persevere, to "boldly go where no man has gone before."

No kidding. A recent article by the Cox News Service quotes Newt's favorite think tank, the Progress and

Freedom Foundation, on issues vital to our future.

"We ought to be more strongly focused on the odds that an asteroid may hit the Earth, and that the human race needs to have a chance to live someplace else," reads one foundation release.

Another states that "21st-century humanity will desperately need an open frontier on Mars."

Why not? Those ideas sound great, but they give me a funny feeling. The "asteroid" that strikes the Earth, if anything, will take the form of irresponsible government — the wholesale selling-out of everything that is good about this country by a select few for the sake of money and power. Focusing on an asteroid or other natural (or supernatural) disasters is ridiculous considering all of the pressing issues we face.

I've got no problems with crackpots, really. I'm one myself. But if the crackpot in question wants to lead the nation in a goose step down the yellow-brick road of technology and space exploration, rather than solve the problems at hand, I start to worry a little.

If Newt really wants to go to Mars, though, that's fine with me. But with the proposed balanced-budget amendment, he might have some trouble finding the cash for a mission to the red planet. Luckily, he can free up some cash by cutting public television, the National Endowment for the Arts, food stamps and other "unnecessary" programs. If all else fails, maybe GOPAC can kick in some bucks.

Actually, so no one can say I didn't pay proper respect to the Speaker, I might even help out.

"Yes, AAA Travel? I'd like one ticket to Mars, please. One way."

Happy trails, Newt. Peters is a graduate student and Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Hung jury may stem from planting doubt

After hearing the opening statements, my bets would be on O.J. Simpson walking out a free man.

It isn't that the prosecution doesn't have an arsenal of persuasive evidence — trails of blood, DNA samples and a portrait of Simpson as a jealous and violent stalker.

And it's possible that when all the testimony is over, the majority of people watching television will be persuaded that he is guilty.

But it won't matter what you or I and all the other spectators think. We're just part of the world's biggest gapers' block.

Something in Johnnie Cochran's opening pitch makes me believe that he and the defense team will be able to plant enough doubt in at least one juror's mind to prevent a guilty finding.

That something is Mark Fuhrman, the eager-beaver detective who was involved in so much of the early Simpson investigation and seemed to have an uncanny knack for coming across important clues and evidence.

He was also in on one of those past domestic squabbles between O.J. and Nicole.

But most important, the defense believes it has evidence that Fuhrman said things in the past that indicate he is a racist.

If he is, that shouldn't be much of a shock. Many cops are racist. So are many Americans in other jobs.

But Fuhrman isn't just any cop or any American. And that's why Cochran made a point of mentioning Fuhrman in his opening remarks.

It's a safe guess that Cochran is going to try to put Fuhrman on trial. The goal will be to try to establish that he is a racist cop who didn't like seeing a black man become a big success and marry a gorgeous white woman.

And that Fuhrman's dislike of Simpson was nasty enough to prompt him and possibly others to plant evidence — the bloody glove, for example — to hang Simpson for crimes someone else committed.

Does that sound implausible or even far-fetched? It depends on your background.

If you have lived most of your life in a friendly small town or a quiet, comfortable suburb, yes, it might be unthinkable that your nice Officer Friendly would try to railroad an innocent person.

But if you are a black person, you might say, "So what else is new?"

Few blacks, especially in big



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cities like L.A., would be shocked by the suggestion that a white cop might find it in his heart to try to frame or railroad a black person.

And there are valid reasons for their feeling that way. Blacks have indeed been framed by racist cops and prosecutors. If not framed, then pushed around and deprived of a fair shake. There's nothing new in that. It is part of our legal heritage.

I doubt if there are many adult blacks who haven't had bad experiences with cops. And few can't talk about someone they knew being given a bad deal in a courtroom or a police station.

We don't know a lot about the 12 Simpson jurors. But we do know that eight are black, and all but one of the others are Hispanic or Native American.

It's possible, I guess, that those eight blacks jurors are unique, that they have had amazingly carefree lives, somehow sheltered from the tensions and nitty-gritty of a multi-racial society that isn't always friendly and filled with brotherly love.

Sure, it's possible. It's also possible to draw three cards to an inside straight.

It's far more likely that one or more of those eight black jurors already believe that white cops are capable of railroading a black man. If they know that J. Edgar Hoover and his FBI waged a campaign to malign Martin Luther King Jr., why should they have faith in the honesty of some L.A. cop with a possible history of using the N-word?

Yes, all of those jurors promised that they have open minds and would consider only the evidence and testimony. That's what jurors always say.

So Cochran will try to show that there was a bad cop — maybe more than one — out there, trying to nail an innocent man. Such things have happened.

And all it will take is for one juror to believe that it is happening again. Don't bet against it.

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Students should come first

A few weeks ago the United States Congress passed a bill requiring that its members follow the same rules that they pass for the average American individual. Personally, I think this was a great step by the powers that be to finally face the fact that they are not above anybody. I just hope that this attitude begins to rub off on many of the instructors here at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

I know that it's probably not the smartest idea to attack the teachers here at UNL, as some of my friends have suggested, but I don't see it that way. I view it more as pointing out something that is discouraging. If instructors can't take the truth, then they had better take a long, hard look at what they are doing.

The bone that I have with some of the professors here is their belief that they are on a different level than their students. I do know the old idea that they are the teachers and we are the students, so we should respect them, but I think some have taken this too far.

I ask you, what purpose does it serve to have an instructor come into a classroom and purposely try to scare his or her students? What's the point of students not asking questions or raising issues because they're scared of being answered with a "How dare you question me?" type of response?

I'm not saying that all teachers are like that. In fact, the number might be very small, but we must ask ourselves the question of why there are even that many.

Forgive me if I'm wrong, but I thought instructors were here to teach and educate the students who are attending. I know that sounds like a radical concept to some of



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you, but give it a thought.

If this has to be a wake-up call to these instructors, then let it be, because I'm sick of hearing about these horror stories:

You people are not God, nor should you walk around thinking that you are. You are an instructor, a teacher and, if you don't already know, a human being. So why don't some of you take a step off of your self-made throne and act like a person?

Hey, I'm not saying that we won't respect you, because many deserve respect. Most of you have earned the right to your title, and we respect you for your accomplishments. But I don't like people who use these degrees to prove how smart they are and how dumb their students are.

Instead of pushing us around and making us feel inferior, why don't you act like a teacher and help us learn?

Teach.

I shouldn't even use that word in relation to some of the professors here on this campus. If I had a nickel for every time I heard somebody tell me about their teacher not showing up for class, because the teacher was working on a research project or traveling, I would have a lot of nickels.

Forgive me if I'm wrong, but I thought somebody who was hired by the university to teach should at least show up for class. We, as students, have attendance policies stating that if we miss so many classes, we get downgraded. But it seems the teachers can miss as many as they want.

Sure, there may be some general rule that forbids them from doing so, but they'll make up some excuse like research or a job interview, and admin will let it slide.

I'm sure some of you are out there saying that those are good reasons to be gone. Well, excuse me. I'll remember that the next time I have a good excuse for missing class and expect not to have an absence marked next to my name.

If you make the rules, then you better be willing to live by them, and frankly, too many teachers out there don't.

So for all of you teachers who know you're doing okay and know you put your students first, I congratulate you and ask you to keep up the good work, because you honestly care about the kids in your classroom and the kids care about you.

But for you so-called teachers who put students second to your personal projects, why don't you remember the primary job you were hired to do? Why don't you start acting like a teacher and put the kids first, and your research and your travels second?

If you're not willing to do that, then do us all a favor, get out of the classroom and leave the teaching to people who can and want to do the job.

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Mike Luckovich