

## Daily Nebraskan

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## King's dream

*Birthday celebrates nation's diversity*

Twenty-eight years ago, Martin Luther King Jr. was killed by an assassin's bullet. He is gone, but his dream is still with us.



Bret Gottschall/DN

King's dream of a color-blind society took some serious blows in 1995, though.

The O.J. Simpson trial made evident the enormous polarization that exists between whites and blacks in America. Poll after poll reflected a mutual mistrust, a diametrically different look at the same sets of evidence.

Then came the "race card." The Fuhrman tapes. The riot police suited up and deployed on the day of the verdict, waiting for the inevitable mayhem that would come with a conviction.

At times, it seemed the only unifying factor between black and white America was that all of us watched.

And we should have.

The "trial of the century" had more than one defendant. Simpson was before the court, but America, too, was on trial.

And the verdict has yet to be delivered.

One preliminary ruling has been issued, however: The dream of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is still, all too often, just that — a dream.

But not an impossible one.

We live in the most diverse nation on earth, a country living the grand experiment of the melting pot. Before we look at our problems and declare the experiment a failure, let us look to the east — to Bosnia, where a scant handful of ethnic groups continue to kill each other off because of their differences.

As King pointed out 30 years ago, we can let our differences define and tear apart our society, or we can let them add spice to the richness of the American recipe.

As we observe the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. today, we should do so with a range of emotions as diverse as our nation's population.

Sadness and frustration over the obvious chasms that scar our country's racial landscape; elation over the advances that have been made; determination to try, checking our petty stereotypes and misconceptions at the door, to realize the dream so boldly proposed all those years ago.

This year has not been an easy one for the dream. But no one, especially not King, ever thought it would be easy.

The most important things never are.

### Editorial policy

Staff editorials represent the official policy of the Fall 1995 Daily Nebraskan. Policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board. Editorials do not necessarily reflect the views of the university, its employees, the students or the NU Board of Regents. Editorial columns represent the opinion of the author. The regents publish the Daily Nebraskan. They establish the UNL Publications Board to supervise the daily production of the paper. According to policy set by the regents, responsibility for the editorial content of the newspaper lies solely in the hands of its students.

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The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor from all readers and interested others. Letters will be selected for publication on the basis of clarity, originality, timeliness and space available. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit or reject all material submitted. Readers also are welcome to submit material as guest opinions. The editor decides whether material should run as a guest opinion. Letters and guest opinions sent to the newspaper become the property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned. Anonymous submissions will not be published. Letters should include the author's name, year in school, major and group affiliation, if any. Requests to withhold names will not be granted. Submit material to: Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St. Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448.

### NEBRASKA vs. OKLAHOMA



## Fair chance

*Phillips capable of good after his terrible deed*

Earlier this week, an Oklahoma man was arrested and charged with assaulting his wife. Crazy enough, it's yet another domestic violence case related to the Cornhuskers. But I don't think we can put the blame on Dr. Tom or the system for this one.

The man, an avid Husker fan, was having a heated discussion with his wife over who would stomp whom in the Fiesta Bowl. His wife was confident that the Gators would come off with a win, and he disagreed. The discussion turned violent, and he attempted to burn her with the grease of the bacon she was cooking in addition to hitting her.

Now, as most of us at Lincoln know, it does absolutely no good to argue with Husker detractors. Nothing will change their minds but a national championship game in which the second-ranked team in the nation is pounded into the ground.

Most of us simply sit back until the game, when we can let the Huskers speak for themselves. Then, we can go around with a smug smile on our faces, giving everyone telepathic messages with the basic content of "Naah-nah-nah-nah-nah. We told you so."

But those who can't resist getting into arguments like that (and I have before) can understand the emotions this Husker fan was feeling.

Then again, we can look at the Oklahoma man as an impressionable, mindless fanatic imitating his heroes. The topic of Lawrence Phillips has been beaten to death, but maybe his assault on his ex-girlfriend actually did make it acceptable in this man's eyes. Monkey see, monkey do.

But if that was the case, I don't think this incident at Oklahoma



Kristi Kohl

*"The NFL has never claimed to be looking for four categories: scholarship, leadership, community service and superior athletic ability. No, they're looking for superior athletic ability. And nobody can deny that Phillips has that."*

would have happened. Really. Let's try an exercise in creative thinking. Close your eyes. (No, open them; you won't know what the exercise is unless you read this.) OK. Now, quit looking at Lawrence Phillips as Phillips the monster, even though what he did was terrible, and yes, he can become a monster.

He is human like the rest of us. And we should look at that human side of Phillips. Frustration is a very human characteristic, but most of us deal with it in less violent ways. With the help of Tom Osborne,

Phillips also is learning to deal with frustration and rage. He has started again, learning to control his anger and find acceptable outlets for that frustration we all face.

No, it's not fair that someone who did what he did should get millions of dollars in an NFL contract. But life by nature is not fair. The NFL never has claimed to be looking for four categories: scholarship, leadership, community service, and superior athletic ability.

No, they're looking for superior athletic ability. And nobody can deny that Phillips has that.

And I'll say it again: Life isn't fair.

When teachers are paid as much as they are worth with respect to the rest of the society, then maybe I'll retract my words. But until then, life isn't fair. If a different young man who had the skills to be a bricklayer had assaulted a young woman, we wouldn't try to stop him from using those skills. And we wouldn't mind him getting paid for it. But I would want to see evidence that his attitude toward women had changed, and evidence that he was trying to build a positive new life.

It's easy to tear people down, demanding retribution and justice. It's human nature. But why not get involved and try to help?

I admire Tom Osborne for having the courage to help his player despite bitter public opinion. Perhaps if the energy we spent on criticizing public figures were reinvested into our community, we could eliminate some of the problems we complain about.

Let's just hope that day will come.

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



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**Daily  
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Send your brief letters to:  
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