

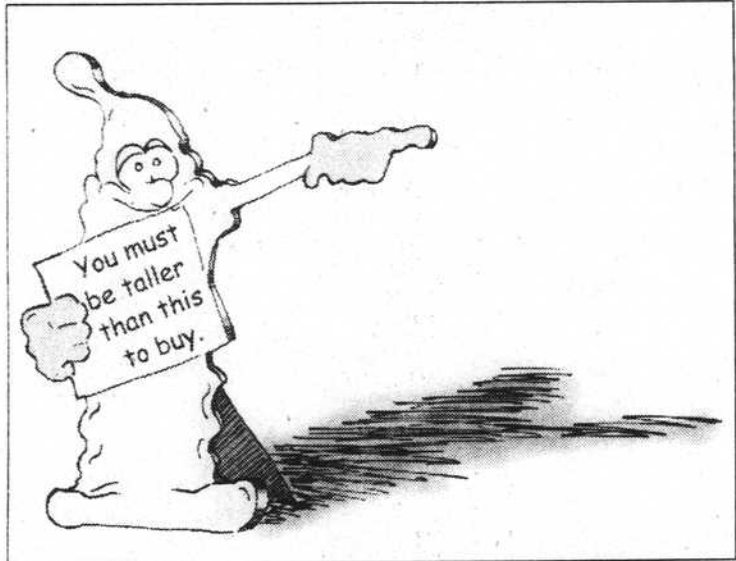
OPINION

Wednesday, February 14, 1996

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Daily
Nebraskan
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University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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Aaron Steckelberg/DN

Deserved protection Public must face fact that teens have sex

Just when you thought it was safe to assume that the American public is becoming more enlightened about issues like sexuality and AIDS...

In Omaha last week, a 15-year-old girl tried to buy condoms at a convenience store.

The clerk refused.

She refused on the basis that it is wrong for a teen-age girl to buy contraceptives, even though the government places no more restrictions on purchasing condoms than it does on purchasing a pack of chewing gum.

The girl's parents found out what happened and, of course, were angry — not at their daughter, but at the store.

And rightfully so.

The owner of the store called the parents to apologize and assure them it never would happen again.

It never should have happened in the first place.

We know about this incident only because the girl told her parents. How many times has this happened before, when — not just at this one store, but anywhere? How many teen-agers have put themselves at risk because a convenience-store clerk took it upon himself to make moral decisions for them?

Many people might be shocked by the family's reaction. Many would say that abstinence is the only alternative for our country's amorous adolescents. Many would say that a 15-year-old girl has no business buying condoms — and she certainly has no business using them.

Maybe not, but consider the alternative.

Teens have sex. At least many do. Convenience store clerks who refuse to sell them condoms will not change that. Instead, the well-intentioned but naive act of withholding condoms from sexually active teens compounds the problem. Without condoms, teens having sex risk more than their reputations or their self respect — they risk pregnancy or disease — they risk their lives.

Teen abstinence is held up as a goal. Fine, have it as a goal. But make sure that those who don't abstain have the ability to protect themselves.

If someone swims out into choppy water and starts to go under, we don't scold them for using poor judgment; we don't try to teach them how to swim.

We throw them a lifeline.

Editorial policy

Staff editorials represent the official policy of the Spring 1996 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.

Letter policy

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.



MEASLINE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Students make UNL

I am writing in concern to the article published on Thursday, Feb. 8, pertaining to the proposed change in UNL student seating at Memorial Stadium.

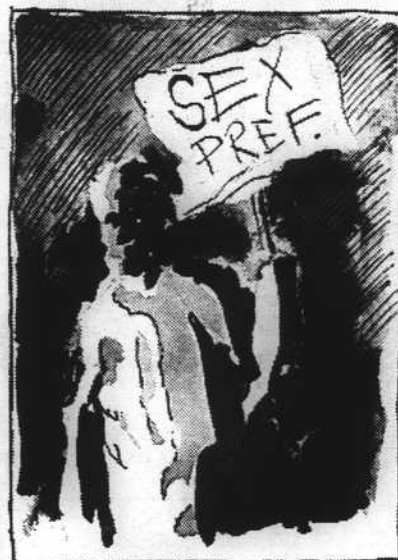
I firmly believe that it would be a tragic mistake to move student supporters from their current position. There would not be any Cornhusker football games for all Nebraskans to enjoy if there were not a university, and there would not be a university if there were no students. Therefore, students should come first in the eyes of the university and the athletic department, not alumni, boosters, or Nebraska citizens. These people are important, but students attend this institution — we are the players, the cheerleaders, the band and everyone else who makes the Nebraska football program truly great. We are the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and I'd welcome anyone to try to put the program together without us.

Mark Stanton
sophomore
social science

Life in the closet

After reading Bob Ray's column about the gay community's need to "Get Over It," I felt the need to respond.

Because heterosexuals never will have to "come out," it is understand-



Aaron Steckelberg/DN

accused, trying to put down, suppress or show hatred for those who are gay. Quite the contrary — he was trying to provide his insight on how those of us who are gay can avoid abuse from those who are not.

As for him being "homophobic," this is a term concocted by liberals who cannot tolerate anyone who does not fit their mold of what the world should be like. Homophobia is a fictional phenomenon. I do agree that homosexuals are abused, mistreated and denied their rights as human beings. But this action is not the result of fear — it is because of the lack of love we should feel for our fellow creature of God. I do not believe God approves of homosexual behavior. But I also KNOW He does not approve of the abuses of other human beings based upon their actions: Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.

Eric L. Anderson
College of Medicine
University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa
via e-mail

Majority rules

Right on Bob! Finally somebody at this paper is actually writing articles that are not politically correct and thus do stir emotion in people, which I believe should be the focus of such opinion pages.

I think what Bob is trying to get across to everyone is that it's fine to be gay, but don't force all the rights and judicial procedures on the rest of us. I for one, don't care if people go out and try to educate people on what being gay means, but this should be passive. By this I mean that there is no way that any gay group should be able to force its opinion on me by parading down O Street or by parading around campus. Anything that interferes with the general public that is not of majority consent is purely showmanship that is completely laughed at by the rest of us who aren't gay. In fact, I think that this type of behavior pisses most of us off even more — though we won't admit it. People who are gay have to realize that the majority of Americans do not perceive their "struggle" as being worth the time, and that is a proven census fact.

John Osterholm
senior
political science
via e-mail

able that the process is incomprehensible to them. For me, being in a gay pride parade is a liberating experience to accept myself as I am. It is necessary because society, especially so-called Christians, has deemed homosexuality as immoral, subhuman, and inherently wrong. This is the reason that the "keep it in the bedroom" philosophy is bogus and would perpetuate hate toward gays.

Equal rights (such as in marriage and employment), and acceptance as a human being are the goals I hope for as a gay man. Communication may be the only key to these goals. To keep it to myself would be defeating and "simply inappropriate." Because Mr. Ray never has had to hide his heterosexuality to get along in society, it is reasonable that he cannot comprehend why the closet is a terribly degrading place to keep oneself.

Paul Good
alumnus, class of 1987
Lincoln

Ray misunderstood

Mr. Ray has received quite a bit of heat for his editorial, so I wanted to take the time to actually add some support for his stand. I do not believe he was, as many have

Capital costs

I wish to join Tim Janda and C. David Peters in thanking Veera Supinen for the excellent editorial on capital punishment in the United States. Mark Baldrige's comments regarding this subject are also duly noted and appreciated. Philip Paider is the one who needs to check his facts. A January 1995 Legislative Research report studied the cost of the death penalty in Kansas and North Carolina. It found that this system costs around \$4 million more per year to operate than life imprisonment in both states. Figures indicate execution costs to be \$163,000 to \$546,000 more than trial, appeal and incarceration costs of life in prison.

The moral and ethical considerations of killing as a solution to the problem of violence in America are hard to ignore, but putting them aside and focusing on cost factors alone should make it clear that life sentences (without parole) make better use of Nebraska taxpayers' dollars than executions.

M.J. Berry
Nebraskans Against the Death
Penalty
Lincoln