

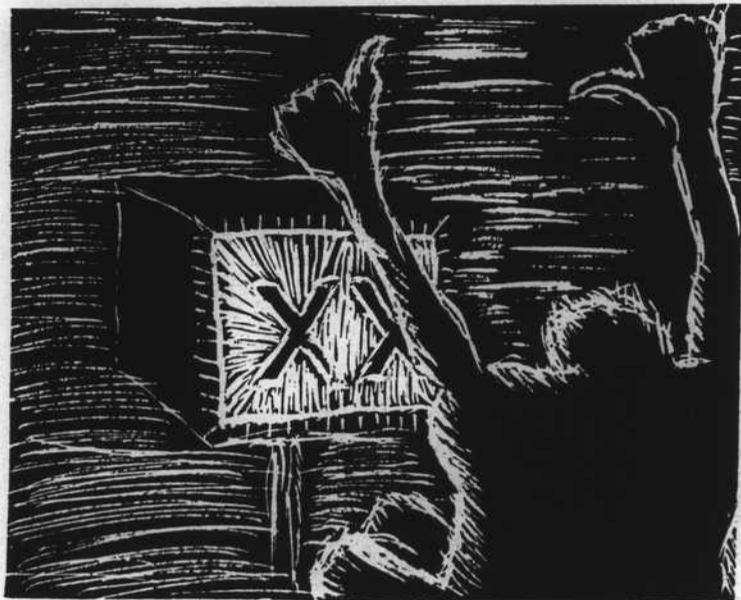
OPINION

Tuesday, March 5, 1996

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Daily
Nebraskan
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See no evil ...

V-chip system good in moderate doses

Shape up or chip out. V-chip, that is.

That's the message concerned parents and teen-agers sent to the television industry last week.

Too much violence and sex, the parents say. And they want to get their hands on the V-chip to censor what their children see, but it's not available yet.

No bother. The Clinton administration has been pushing for years to reduce the violence children see on television. After a meeting with President Clinton on Thursday, TV executives agreed to devise a rating system, much like the one for movies.

Clinton called it a "breakthrough" agreement that will encourage other industries to confront challenges the nation faces.

"That means corporations helping to improve our schools, helping to connect them to the information superhighway, helping to demand high standards."

We sure hope so, but let's not get carried away by this new "guideline" for television.

Clinton would have us believe that the new rating system will dramatically change viewer's habits.

"It's a voting system; it's like the Nielsen ratings," he said. "It might actually change the content of programming so that the market, the market forces, actually produce more positive programming."

Maybe, but we don't want to see anyone go overboard. Yes, the television industry needs to clean up its act. The new rating system will help, but only to an extent.

The industry is governed by what the viewers watch. Programs that draw attention stay on — those that don't get pulled. Guidelines are nice, but ultimately it's the viewers who decide.

Clinton's little cure-all appeals to parents. Those who worry about the shows' quality will know exactly what they are getting once the ratings are assigned. The V-chip will further protect children from objectionable content.

But will it be enough to satisfy everyone? Not likely. Once the shows are rated, what's to stop the parents or others from attacking the programs labeled questionable?

Clinton beware — there's a fine line between suggesting change and forcing it.

Editorial policy

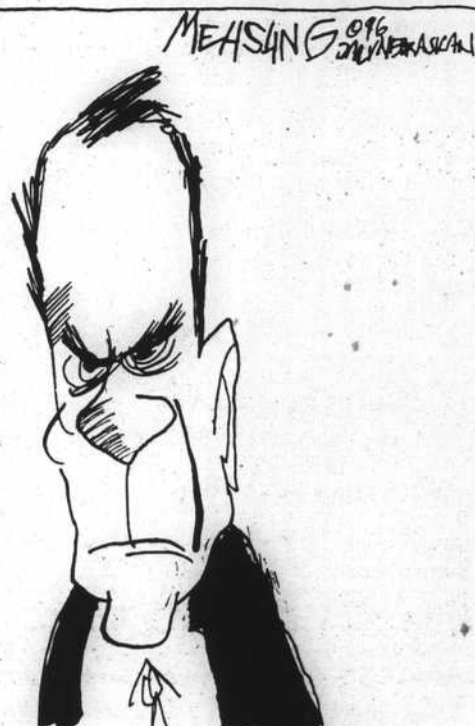
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THIS IS A PIECE OF WOOD.



THIS IS BOB DOLE.

ANY QUESTIONS?

No funds

Poverty represents barrier to education

Recently, South Africa took its first step toward desegregation. Five black children must be allowed to go to a white school that had originally denied them admission, a judge ruled. In this South African school, racism is a fact of life. Many Afrikaner (of Dutch descent) parents feel that mixing racial groups is a sin, and that allowing blacks to attend the school would erode Afrikaner culture.

The situation is similar to that of the U.S. in 1954. Schools attended by black children were grossly underfunded in comparison to the white schools. If you've seen "Hoop Dreams," you know that the situation hasn't righted itself. Today, however, kids aren't denied admission to schools on the basis of race.

Today the problem lies in the systematic underfunding of schools that black and Hispanic children attend. Jonothan Kozol cites several cities in which this gap occurs in his book "Savage Inequalities." The barrier to a better life — either moving or changing the neighborhood's quality — is the poverty of these families.

By the definition of "average," there always will be a group that is below average. Nobody wants to be below average. Do you remember grade school? Even if everybody was above the national average, there was still a pecking order. Do you remember who was best at math? Who was the fastest reader? Who was the best speller?

Of course, the school's job is to teach students how to function at a minimum level in things that they deem important. But what about the students who don't excel at those things? The standardized tests tell them that they're not at the level of the other students in the class.

Some kids lose their identities and their sense of self. Either they lose interest in the things that make them unique in this attempt to fit in, or they don't learn the skills that



Kristi Kohl

"Too often, creative minds are overlooked because they don't conform in the basic grammar school skills."

could help them in the areas that they have chosen.

"He tried to be somebody by trying to be like everybody, which makes him a nobody," — from a quote off of my calendar.

I was the "Good Speller" in grade school. I didn't spend hours poring over the word; I just read a lot. My spelling ability was mainly a reflection of the number of words I had been exposed to. I refused to study for the Omaha World-Herald Spelling Contest. And I couldn't compete at that level with only my books.

Still, I think it's more important to preserve your identity than it is to lose yourself in conforming to the system. In high school, the ACT came up. Again, I didn't study. And the moment of drama ... would Kristi Wendland do as well as the ACT study manual? As it turned out, I did fine.

I remember watching "Hoop Dreams" and seeing the Encyclopedia Britannica course that William took. "Pick B's and C's if you don't know the answer," the course instructor told him. "A monkey, if you train it to pick only B's and C's,

is capable of getting an 18 on this test."

Are we reversing the process of evolution — teaching ourselves to be monkeys? We train ourselves to pick the B's and C's and remember that in true/false tests, the true answers are always shorter — or are they always longer? My history teacher purposely mixed these up, so I never trust myself on this rule of thumb.

I saw no reason why William was not capable of learning the skills that the ACT requires. He was smart. But everything that he learned in school was out of context with what his previous experience had taught him.

Too often, creative minds are overlooked because they don't conform in the basic grammar school skills. When a teacher has a class, he or she needs to keep the needs of the class in mind. When two or three kids slip through the cracks, often it is overlooked.

The problem is intensified when the classroom is diverse, and the teachers and students come from different cultural backgrounds. The teacher may not have a way to reach the student.

But this is the argument that was used to justify the "separate but equal" schools before "Brown vs. The Board of Education." The problem was that the quality of the schools for black children were substandard. Property taxes were used to fund the schools — as they still are. This lets the districts with high property values get a better education, perpetuating the caste system.

South Africa has far to go in equalizing the system that has made the black people the underclass — as does the United States. The step South Africa took, however, is a historic first step. Let's celebrate it as such.

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

Please
Write Back!

Send your brief letters to: Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 "R" Street, Lincoln, NE 68588, or Fax to (402) 472-1761, or e-mail <letters@unlinfo.unl.edu>. Letters must be signed and include a phone number for verification.