

Equality now

Don't tolerate unfairness of your professors

Americans like to believe in the notion of fair play. At least, that always has been my understanding of this nation's founding principles.

Now take this belief and apply it to the workplace, or your family ... or the institution of higher learning you are now attending.

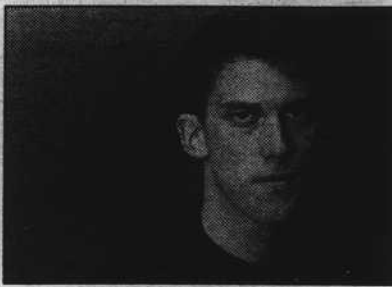
Stop for a minute. Put down that cup of coffee. Set aside the newspaper, and consider your situation. Do you feel you are being treated fairly in your associations and relationships with other people?

It's a pretty broad question, and it's meant to be. But the idea itself is fairly simple. Quid pro quo. Equality. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Fairness would seem to be a straightforward concept to understand. The problems start with the application level. Or lack thereof—otherwise known as THE SHAFT.

For some strange reason, an attitude persists in our learning institutions today that treats students as subservient to the educational systems of which they are a part. Examples of this abound. Students undertaking internships that offer little or no financial support or guidance. Charging students special material or participation fees, without stipulating how these fees are being used. Combining undergrad and graduate students in the same classes. Charging outrageous sums of money for required texts written by instructors.

Or worst of all, instructor attitudes that treat the student as merely an addendum to the process, or responsibility, of instruction.



Fred Poyner

"If instructors want to play career politics, they should save it for the faculty lounge."

When someone asks me to work with them on a project, as a fellow professional, I devote my time and energy to that project to the best of my ability. My commitment to the project includes making a commitment to the others involved. This is my understanding of professionalism and an instrumental part of my learning program.

Expecting this treatment in return is my definition of fairness. Despite my status as a graduate student, this isn't always proving to be the case.

My advice to some instructors, who shall remain nameless, is that if you feel threatened by working with students on projects, don't waste their time by asking their help in the first place. If you think their input is going to somehow diminish your own role, DON'T ASK THEM TO

MAKE A COMMITMENT, AND THEN LEAVE THEM HANGING. If you don't have the time or inclination to work with students, do them and yourself a favor and point them in a better direction.

If instructors want to play career politics, they should save it for the faculty lounge. Deciding on a whim that you no longer want to serve on a particular student's graduate committee or work with a student on a particular independent study project is taking advantage of the student, plain and simple. I don't care if you have tenure, and I don't care if you are about to retire—the students of today are going to remember the B.S. you pulled on them in the future.

For the students out there, be secure in the knowledge that you have recourse to this kind of treatment, not the least of which is the fact that you help pay instructors' salaries.

Also, there are several organizations and individuals at the University of Nebraska expressly created for student grievances, including the student Ombudsperson and the Office of Student Judicial Affairs.

Think not only about the concept of fairness, but its practice as well at the university level and on all other levels of society. Letting professors walk over you now with unfair treatment could set a bad precedent for how you run your own professional career after school.

In this corner ...

Poyner is a graduate student in museum studies and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Parenthood means more than a V-chip

Some issues can be so confusing. As a parent, I can't make up my mind about the V-chip that the government wants put in future TV sets.

These chips will permit parents to block shows they don't want their kids to see, such as those that are lewd, violent or just plain stupid.

At first, this struck me as being a fine idea. I've channel-surfed the cable stations enough to know that at night it is a shower of heavy sex and blood-splattering violence.

I'm not a prude, but I think that children are better off not seeing the first dozen positions of the Kama Sutra or hearing some comic boast about the size of his male appendage.

At least that's what I thought until I heard various wise people of the liberal persuasion explain on TV and in the press why the V-chip is such a dumb idea.

As they put it, "all a parent has to do is turn off the TV ... It's up to parents to monitor what their kids watch on TV. ... If parents accept their responsibilities, they don't need a V-chip."

How can anyone argue with that?

And now that I think about it, that's similar to things I've been saying for years.

For example, there is the problem of education and the many kids who go through eight years of grammar school and four years of high school without learning much about reading, writing or arithmetic.

I've always said that the lion's share of the blame should be aimed at the parents.

In a typical week, a kid is in school for about 30 or 35 hours. And he or she will be only one of 25 or 30 kids with whom one teacher must deal. On the other hand, a parent or parents will have responsibility for about 130 or more hours a week. And most parents don't have to deal with 25 or 30 little creatures.

Then there are the four or five very important formative years before the kid starts school when the parents have sole responsibility. Thousands and thousands of hours. And you can add even more hundreds of days and thousands of hours when the kids are on summer vacation, Christmas vacation, spring break and all the holidays.

If you look at the numbers, you'll see that kids are exposed to teachers only a fraction of the time that they are supposed to be under the control of mommy and daddy, or one of them. So I've always believed that teachers and the schools get far too much of the blame for the rising number of near-illiterates that are being produced in many school systems.

My theory also extended to the rising crime rate among young people.

If kids are to learn right from wrong, they are supposed to learn from the parent or parents. Who else is supposed to do it? By the



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Mike Royko

time a police officer, a judge or a prison guard gets involved, it's a little late. And while it is thoughtful of a basketball star to go on TV and make a public-service announcement aimed at wayward youths, it's unrealistic to expect some 15-year-old to say: "Hey, that slam dunker says we should be good lads. So let's stop dealing drugs and dump our guns and forget about robbing the grocer or the cabdriver and see if we can find a good Scout meeting to attend."

But whenever I wrote something like that, I would be promptly slapped down by those who had taken more sociology courses than I had.

They would say: "You can't blame the parents for educational failures. It is a failure by the school systems and an uncaring society."

And when this was explained to me, I would have to slap my head and say: "How could I be so stupid as to expect someone to take responsibility for encouraging their children to learn to read and write and not to go out at night and mug children?"

I remember how everyone hooted and jeered at a guy named Bernie Epton, who ran for mayor and was asked at a big gathering, "What will you do about our children dropping out of school?"

And he said: "As mayor of Chicago, I won't be able to do anything about your kids dropping out of school. Keeping your kids in school is your responsibility."

Everyone agreed Epton was a mope, and he lost.

But now many of the people, the ones who say that I was an unfeeling fool for suggesting that parents had responsibilities and that Epton was insensitive by saying the same thing, are preaching something entirely different. Now it's the parents' job to turn off the TV or make sure the kids are watching something nice.

That's a start, I guess, but there should be more to parenting than knowing how to use a zipper.

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Late arrival

Clinton finally fighting teen-age pregnancy

Two years ago, a domestic policy adviser to President Clinton assured me that the president was considering a national campaign to fight teen-age pregnancy. I didn't doubt it. The question is whether the man who appointed Joycelyn Elders as surgeon general would have any idea of what such a campaign should consist.



Mona Charen

"Teen-age pregnancy is not just the consequence of over-sexed high schoolers getting carried away in the back seat of a convertible."

consequence of over-sexed high schoolers getting carried away in the back seat of a convertible.

Even leaving all of that aside, the question remains: What message will the president's campaign send to kids? The problem with liberal approaches to avoiding teen pregnancy is insincerity. Sex educators say, "We don't think sexual intercourse is appropriate until you are older—but if you are going to do it anyway, here is how you can protect yourself against pregnancy and disease." These same educators take a very different tone on drugs. The schools don't offer lessons on how to sterilize needles ("if you're going to do it anyway"). They teach abstinence, pure and simple.

Kids pick up the distinction with alacrity. Studies on the efficacy of sex education in preventing early sexual initiation have shown negative correlations. The more sex

education a community has, the more trouble with pregnancy, abortion and sexually transmitted diseases.

But not all programs aimed at reducing teen-age pregnancy have failed. Best Friends, a Washington, D.C.-based program for inner-city girls, has shown dramatic results in the last decade teaching abstinence, self-respect and decision-making. And there are other programs around the nation that succeed with similar messages.

President Clinton indicated the kind of message he would send to kids with the naming of Dr. Henry Foster, last year's rejected candidate for surgeon general, as his adviser on these matters. Foster's "I Have A Future" program, touted as a model by Presidents Bush (who listed the program among the Thousand Points of Light) and Clinton (who hailed it as an "unqualified success"), in fact failed to reduce pregnancies among the girls in the program. Indeed, according to an evaluation by the Statistical Assessment Service of Washington, D.C., the program actually showed paradoxical effects—increasing the level of sexual activity among participants in the program as compared with a control group. Girls who participated in Foster's program demonstrated much higher levels of knowledge about sexual matters, but this did not translate into chaste behavior.

President Clinton wants to have it all ways—to placate the left by including Whoopi Goldberg and MTV President Judy McGrath on his national commission and to commandeer the rhetoric of the right. But as the Foster appointment makes clear, the Clinton contribution to solving the problem will be worse than doing nothing.

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