

Political hype

Election time brings search for integrity

In the coming campaign, there is not a lot of promise for anything new. Only the sound bites will be new, although I can promise you that they will sound familiar.

This is the MTV generation. It is now possible to make a voting decision on a few sound bites or advertisements. The worst part about this is that if you make the decision that way, you can come off sounding intelligent.

Campaign managers use hot-button phrases to catch the attention of the voters. They do this on the principle that enough people don't actually take the time to sift through the information. They just rush to their voting precinct, recalling vaguely that one candidate is a family man. Not everybody does this — just enough to ensure that the candidate will win.

The difference between Republicans and Democrats is becoming thinner. Republicans are supposed to be conservative — which means no change. Democrats are supposed to be liberal, or attempting to change the government. But "conservative" has somehow grown to mean "wanting less government" or "hard-hearted." Democrat has evolved into "bleeding-heart tax-and-spenders."

Thoreau wrote: "That government is best which governs least." A Republican, right? Yet, Thoreau believed that a government composed of intelligent people did not need an extensive set of laws dictating the behavior of those people. This comes from the idea that people can make critical choices all by themselves.

The ability to make a critical analysis, however, comes from practice. It comes from the opportunities to make mistakes and learn



Kristl Kohl

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from them — both yours and those of others. This isn't something that people are born with.

The question, then, is how long does it take for a person to develop this ability? It depends on each individual. Some never go beyond the superficial images. Others have extraordinary insight into human nature from a very young age.

Integrity is something that can't be measured. It can't really even be defined as a collection of certain characteristics. It is our ability to live up to the internal standard of "how it should be." We all have certain things that we can't compromise on.

For some, it's trying hard and doing well in classes. Others couldn't care less. But there comes a time in our lives when we need to pick our standards and take a stand about what is important to us. If we just drift along, then our lives won't

have much meaning. There needs to be something that we take pride in.

Martin Luther King Jr. once said that "If a man is called upon to be a streetsweeper, he should be the best streetsweeper he can be." Taking pride in the things we do is an essential part of our character.

There are times when we have to choose between two goals. That decision is an important part in the character-building process.

Sometimes I wonder if our elected officials have ever reached this point. There are times when I wonder if they even listen to all of the sound bites. I think their speechwriters collaborate with their thousands of aides to write a beautiful speech candidates can deliver with fine oratory skill. No effort required.

Maybe it's my instinctive distrust of politicians that makes me so cynical. Despite this, I do realize that they are a necessary part of our government. Does it really matter that they don't actually care about us?

They do listen to the political surveys. Doesn't that reflect our vote in at least a small way? The bottom line is that the lobbyists have a great advantage over us. They know the politicians they want in office. They work to find the data that will support their cause and not detract from the politicians' other interests.

In any case, we need to do more than just watch the sound bites. We need someone with the integrity to stand for what he believes in the face of these lobbyists.

Tell me if you find him.

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

Baldness shouldn't be a personal issue

During a recent interview, the noted actor Ben Kingsley was asked about his baldness.

Like the late Yul Brynner's and the late Telly Savalas', Kingsley's scalp is totally without hair. No fringe, sideburns or fuzz.

Kingsley said he does not discuss personal matters. That was surprising for two reasons:

First, people in show business seldom consider anything too personal to talk about. They don't hesitate to blab about who they are sleeping with or have slept with and if it was fun.

And when they get too old to sleep with anything but a denture holder, they write books with detailed accounts of everyone with whom they've had even a brief snuggle.

Kingsley should be praised for having the dignity to refuse to discuss a personal matter. Of course, he's English, and English actors are more reserved than their American counterparts, except those who perform after drinking a quart of gin.

But of all the things he could consider "personal," why baldness? Unless he wears a hat or toupee, his hairless dome is there for everyone to see.

Baldness is normal to hundreds of millions of men across the planet. Some are totally bald, as is Kingsley. Others are bare on top with a fringe on the side and back, which makes them the barber's 10-minute delight. And some shamelessly let the side fringe get long and comb those few sad side strands across the bare top.

But baldness is no more a personal matter than your height, eye color or the size of your shoe. One way or another, it is a matter of genetics.

Unless, of course, there are peculiar circumstances involved in Kingsley's baldness.

Let's say, for example, that until recently, Kingsley had a lush head of hair. But then, during one of those lover-spats shows for which show-biz people are famous, every strand was plucked out by an enraged girlfriend.

Under those circumstances, it would be understandable that he would say his lack of hair was a personal matter. You couldn't very well expect the man to say, "Well, I have no hair because my gorgeous live-in lover and I disagreed over the Oscars, and she plucked my entire thatch."

It's more likely that at some point his hair started falling out, either receding at the forehead, which is the most graceful way to lose it, or on top, creating that empty round spot, which is less desirable unless you are about 6-5 and nobody can see it.

The arrival of baldness can be traumatic, especially for men who are young.

But as a great philosopher once put it, "Hey, doo-doo happens, man, dig? So be cool."

And that's the way it is with baldness. Just as some people



Mike Royko

"It takes me about two or three seconds to prepare my hair in the morning. I haven't owned a comb for 15 years and spend nothing on sprays, shampoo or a blow dryer."

become nearsighted or farsighted or have prominent noses, over-bites, big ears or poor hand-eye coordination, others lose their hair.

Some young man staring with terror at a dozen hairs in his sink might disagree, but there are benefits to baldness.

For one thing, a young man who knows baldness is a family trait might be more inclined to seek an early, stable family life. He looks at his father, who has a head like a cue ball, and tells himself: "Uh-oh, I'd better find a willing female and marry her now before I look like old Dad."

So young men who are inclined toward future baldness tend to marry young. Of course, when his hair falls out, he notes that his wife now weighs 180 pounds and has big blue veins in her legs. So she, too, was looking ahead. But that's the breaks.

And as I've written before, there is nothing more time- and cost-efficient than baldness.

It takes me about two or three seconds to prepare my hair in the morning. I haven't owned a comb for 15 years and spend nothing on sprays, shampoo or a blow dryer.

In contrast, a friend who is a TV anchor creature spends a minimum of 30 minutes a day at home and in the health club on his hair. Think about that. It comes to about 182 hours a year. That's more than 7.5 full days.

If you think of the millions of man hours that are wasted each year by the millions of men who are overhairs, it is an awesome economic waste by this country.

Because we are in a highly competitive global economy, maybe we should shave a law requiring all men to have their heads shaved each day.

Women, too. I don't want to be accused of discrimination.

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You decide

Who's good enough to pass the popularity test?

It seems my life always has been dictated by what I have on my feet.

Remember "Kangaroos" (the shoe with a velcro pocket that could hold a coin) or red Converse high tops a few years later? Then there were Reebok high tops with blinding bright neon laces.

From there we crashed and burned with the "Puma Disc System" (OK, so maybe I was the only person that bought a pair). Finally, we lead up to the current "Timberland" hiking boot fad.

What I've trampled on the past 19 years has been a statement in popularity.

Popularity. I say the word and what do you think? Elementary school, right? No, too young. How about junior high? Or high school?

Yes, those were the times when your popularity was determined by what kind of label was sewed on the butt of your jeans, by what kind of friends you hung out with, what activities you were in and who or who you did not "go with."

Sigh ... Those were the days, right?

I remember them well. In eighth grade it seemed I was as popular as the class mascot, which happened to be a pig (don't ask). I wore what everyone else wore, yet never did what everyone else did. I was a (shudder) nerd and immediately fell to the bottom of the almighty popularity pyramid.

Yet now, I put forth a question that I and everyone else whose popularity has ever been compared to a pig will ask — is college yet another haven for "popularity"?

Or have we risen above the temptation to judge others by the clothes they wear, their hairstyles, their friends and their dates or lack thereof?

Sadly, no. Popularity seems to be here to



Kasey Kerber

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stay. That never holds more true when you apply the timeless quote "you never get a second chance to make a first impression."

Think about it. When you meet another student for the first time, what is the first thing you judge about them? Appearance. If they have green hair, your first impression is going to be "why does this guy or girl look like a Fraggie?"

Yet popularity extends far beyond appearances. Who you hang out with has become just as much a statement in popularity as when you had 10 "best-friends" clamoring over you in junior high.

Ever hear the word "cliques"? If not, use your eyes and you'll see them. There are probably a few in the class you're now in. Or, if you happen to be reading this during a meal, they're certainly around.

Cliques are nothing more than a group of friends. Yet what makes a group of friends different from a

clique is that in a clique, people are pretty much the same. How many times each day do you encounter a group of guys that wear the same clothes, have the same bald-head hairstyle and say the word "shit" a lot. Or a group of girls who seem to share outfits, have the same hairstyles and say the words "like" or "whatever" a lot.

Popularity even extends to who you date. How many times have you avoided getting to know someone because you heard something about them from your friends? Or because your friends mocked them? Or because they don't fall into your "clique"?

Or ask yourself how many times you've dated someone that your friends didn't like and then they pressured you to go after someone else that better fit their "standards."

Let's be honest with ourselves — we've escaped "popularity" about as well as we've escaped the '80s, which anyone that watches VH-1 can tell you is not at all.

We still live our lives by whether we have a "Bongo" or "Levi" label stamped to the butt of our jeans. We still shy away from the guy with a nose ring or girl with a shaved head. We still laugh along with our clique of friends as they make fun of the person who, for a moment, we considered dating.

We still have a lot to learn ... There are things in this world more important than what clothes you wear, who you hang out with and who you do or do not date.

There comes a time when you simply have to say "to hell with it." That phrase should be the one by which you decide to live your life by.

Notice what I said: "You decide."

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