

# OPINION PAGES

GUEST VIEW

## Congeniality

*Election best served by issues, not insults*

From The San Diego Union-Tribune

It is encouraging that at both the Republican and Democratic national conventions the candidates made commitments to political civility. These heartening pledges were all the more noteworthy for being uttered in wildly partisan environments.

Bob Dole noted, pointedly, that President Clinton was "my opponent, not my enemy." Jack Kemp generously described Bill Clinton and Al Gore as "good men" with whom Republicans disagree. Further, Kemp made clear he didn't intend to be anyone's hatchet man — a role often designated to vice presidential candidates.

The Democratic ticket responded in kind. Clinton had gracious words in his acceptance speech for Dole, praising him as an admirable, courageous man who by dint of sheer will and character had recovered from crippling wounds in World War II and devoted his life to honorable public service. Clinton then said he wanted the campaign to be a contest of ideas, not insults. Vice President Al Gore offered similar sentiments in his acceptance address.

To all of this, we are certain that voters are saying: Yes, yes, yes.

Public opinion polls and the results of focus-group surveys show unmistakably that Americans dislike negative campaigning. Indeed, the dreary negativity of so much in American politics is an important explanation for the public's mounting cynicism about this country's political life.

That this cynicism is corrosively unhealthy for the world's oldest continuous democracy should be obvious. Among its manifestations are falling percentages of voter participation.

It is now customary for 40 percent of the electorate to stay home in presidential elections, with even larger percentages abstaining in lesser contests. That cannot be good for a system of self-government built on the assumption that a free citizenry should choose its political leaders and then respect those it selects.

Clearly, a code of civility wouldn't, and shouldn't, muzzle candidates or fuzz over the clash of ideas and personalities we expect from presidential elections. Much is at stake this year in the Dole-Clinton race. And, yes, the character of a presidential candidate can be a legitimate issue. So should be the truth, or demonstrable untruth, of statements made by one side or the other.

But these vital differences can be debated honestly and vigorously without the campaign descending into a mud bath.

Nor, we hope, will the necessarily confrontational debate of a presidential campaign fall to levels that insult the electorate's intelligence. Much of what will be debated this fall is inherently complex, replete with nuanced shadings and not fairly reducible to simplistic sloganeering. Let both sides, and the voters, remember that on such issues as Medicare, tax cuts and balancing the budget.

The great debates in American presidential politics were distinguished by their erudition and intelligence, not their vitriol. Let Bob Dole, Jack Kemp, Bill Clinton and Al Gore live up to the best in our political traditions.

They'll be well served if they do. More important, so will the American people.

MEHSLING'S VIEW



Sonia HOLLIMON

## Get it straight Black beauty doesn't fit white design

"FOR WHITES ONLY." If you saw this sign in a storefront window it would definitely get your attention. Scenes from "Do The Right Thing" may flash through your mind. You might not want to stand too close to the window.

Well, as Spike Lee would say: "Wake up!"

There are signs like this all over Lincoln, indeed, permeating the Midwest in general. You say you haven't seen them? Then guess what? You're white.

Oh Lord, here they (minorities) go — always complaining....

Well, think what you want. This time however, I'm talking about hair.

Yes, hair. My hair. Anyone who has that black-Hispanic-mixed-can't-control-those-curls-where-the-hell-is-my-hot-comb kind of hair will understand.

If there were a sign outside of Walgreens or any of the local Lincoln hair salons that said, FOR WHITES ONLY, I could really save myself some time. How many times have I been in a dire hair situation only to be turned away at the local Cut-N-Curl?

"We're not trained to do that (here they pause and turn to look at the other bewildered stylists) kind of hair. Sorry"

"Oh, no. This is MY fault," I say. "I thought your sign said 'Hair Salon.'"

Well then, I'll just march myself on over to the local drugstore or beauty supply to fix things myself....

What ho! I see only three shelves of black supplies — and yet, L'Oreal seems to be taking over the universe. Hmm. Could this be — dare I say it — institutional racism?



“What ho! I see only three shelves of black supplies — and yet, L'Oreal seems to be taking over the universe. Hmm. Could this be — dare I say it? institutional racism?”

I may sound like I'm being sarcastic, but think of it this way. Say you're a young black woman and you get a scholarship to a Midwestern university. Great. But, there aren't a lot of other minorities there, not a lot of support networks to encourage your success. There aren't even going to be more than

two people who look like you in your class. Now here's the bonus: The closest place where you can get your hair done is 50 miles away from your school. Suddenly, you're not feeling very wanted.

There are about four or five places for a black woman to get her hair done in Lincoln, and most of us don't go there because we're scared. I mean, you don't go out and eat Chinese if you can't find any people from China — that could be bad.

So, we drive to Omaha, gas money to the wind. Oh, and let me clear this up right now — we don't wash our hair every day because it takes our hair longer to build up a lot of dirt and oil, plus we don't use a lot of mousse and stuff everyday. Got it? Now don't ask me again.

In my family there are several different races, which means the type of hair you get depends on how nice your DNA was feeling that day. Consequently, we own everything from Bobbi Brown Essentials to a product called Bone Straight "when you just need to knock it out."

I'm not just writing this for black people. Most minorities know that if you want to be able to continue your cultural traditions, dine the way you want, wear the clothes of your people — you'd better make it yourself or open your own store, because as long as you are a MINORITY (which I will define here as someone who is small in status and not in number) who the hell cares that you want hand-carved chopsticks? This is America. We eat with our hands.

Hollimon is a senior broadcasting major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

EDITOR  
Doug Kouma

OPINION  
EDITOR  
Anne Hjersman

EDITORIAL  
BOARD  
Doug Peters  
Matt Waite  
Paula Lavigne  
Mitch Sherman  
Anthony Nguyen

### EDITORIAL POLICY

Unsigned editorials are the opinions of the Fall 1996 Daily Nebraskan. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, its employees, its student body or the University of Nebraska Board of Regents. A column is solely the opinion of its author. The Board of Regents serves as publisher of the Daily Nebraskan; policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board. The UNL Publications Board, established by the regents, supervises the production of the newspaper. According to policy set by the regents, responsibility for the editorial content of the newspaper lies solely in the hands of its student employees.

### LETTER POLICY

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor and guest columns, but does not guarantee their publication. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit or reject any material submitted. Submitted material becomes the property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned. Anonymous submissions will not be published. Those who submit letters must identify themselves by name, year in school, major and/or group affiliation, if any. Submit material to: Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St. Lincoln, Neb. 68526-0448. E-mail: letters@unlinfo.unl.edu.

### P.S. Write Back

Send letters to Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 "R" St., Lincoln, NE 68526, or fax to (402) 472-1761, or e-mail <letters@unlinfo.unl.edu>. Letters must be signed and include a phone number for verification.