

OPINION PAGES

OUR VIEW

Sewn sorrow AIDS memorial quilt is no comforter

Patch by patch, each the size of a human grave, the AIDS epidemic unfolds before us.

In Washington, D.C., last weekend the Names Project AIDS Memorial Quilt was laid out over 15 city blocks. It stretched for more than a mile in length and bore the names of more than 70,000 people who have died since the AIDS epidemic began to spread.

Had the names of all Americans who have died of the virus been represented, the quilt would have covered closer to 75 city blocks. It would have stretched nearly five miles in length. And it would be growing daily.

The quilt, a symbol of warmth and comfort, bears a cold reality.

According to the World Health Organization, 6,000 people are infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, each day.

"HIV" and "AIDS," "dirty needles" and "safe sex" have all become a part of everyday conversation. School children speak of the disease with fear that one day they might contract it.

The virus has become a fact of life for many people.

And it's becoming a big factor in death. The World Health Organization estimates 3 million people have already died of AIDS. The organization has proclaimed the disease the world's fastest-spreading epidemic. By the year 2000, it estimates 30-40 million men, women and children worldwide will have been infected with HIV.

In the United States, AIDS is already the leading killer of people ages 25-44, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

And the face of AIDS just keeps getting younger.

In 1994, 40,000-50,000 new HIV infections occurred in the United States. Of those, one in two happened to someone 25 years old or younger; one in four happened to someone 20 years old or younger, according to the Centers for Disease Control.

The epidemic is spreading, and the facts are laid out before us, yet the issue of AIDS research continues to be swept under the rug — pushed aside by more "pressing" election-year concerns.

Memorials and vigils have their place in the cause. The dead should be mourned. But we must also realize that those of us left behind still have to live with this disease — and hope that we don't have to die by it.

We are our only hope. If we don't push for AIDS research, if we don't put our time, money and effort toward the cause, who will?

No matter how hard we try to ignore AIDS, it is not going to go away of its own will.

We can't just curl up in the national quilt and cry.

Ignorance is death.

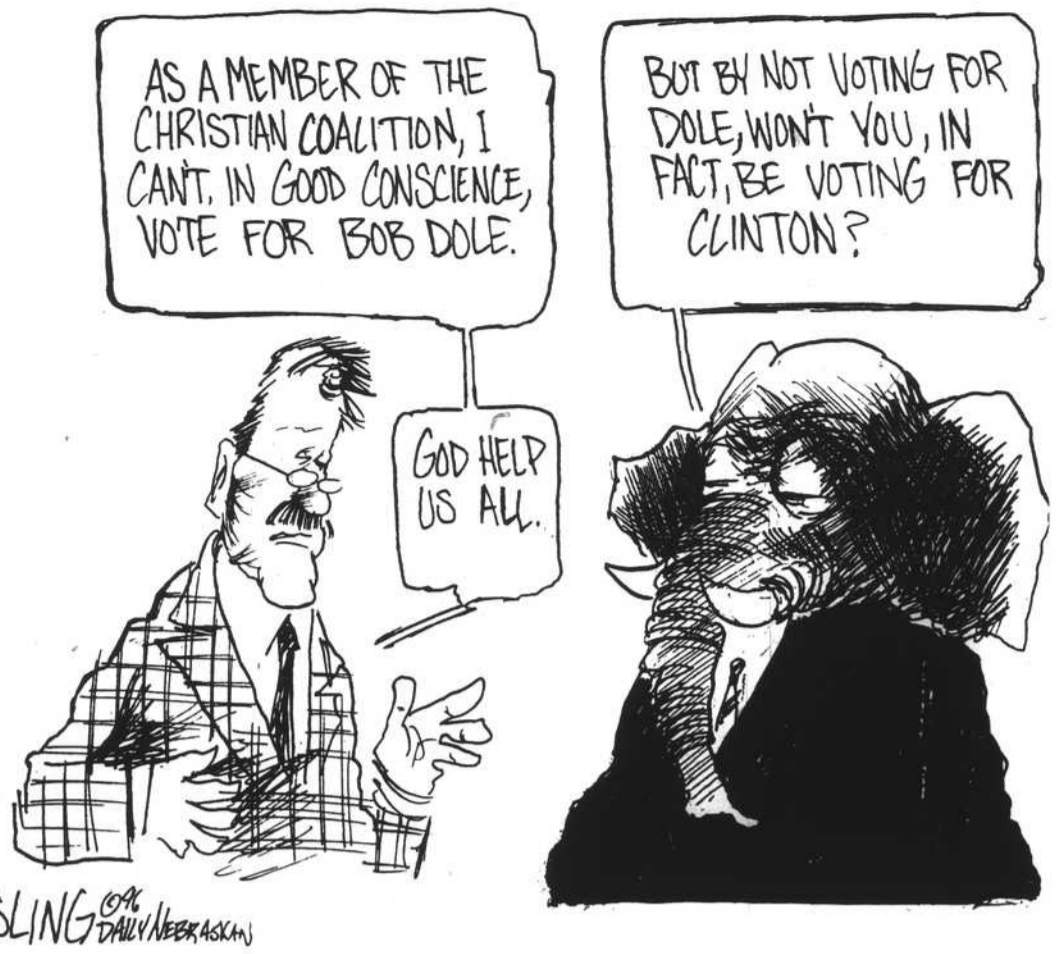
"The quilt, a symbol of warmth and comfort, bears a cold reality."

EDITOR
Doug Kouma

OPINION
EDITOR
Anne Hjersman

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

MEHSLING'S VIEW



MEHSLING
DAILY NEBRASKAN

GUEST VIEW

Censorship has foot in door at UNK

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following guest column was written by Matt LeMieux, executive director for ACLU Nebraska.

Last May, students in the University of Nebraska at Kearney's Theater Department began preparing to put on a performance of John Ford's "Tis a Pity She's a Whore." The director, who is a tenured theater professor, adapted two scenes in the play to include non-frontal nudity.

Late last week, the administration decided the scenes containing nudity were morally reprehensible. Soon thereafter, the director said he was removing the scenes because he feared for his job. A few days later, the university's chancellor agreed to meet with students to discuss why the administration wanted the scenes removed. Then ACLU Nebraska entered the fray, and the university's tune changed rapidly.

Speaking to about 200 students, the chancellor said that she did not condone censorship, but she also had a moral obligation to ban the nudity. Now, maybe I missed something here, but when you ban speech, or artistic expression in this case, you are engaging in censorship. By late this week, the university appeared to have figured this out, and began issuing statements that it did not ban the nude scenes, and it was actually the director who censored his own play.

By Thursday, just five days before the play's opening, the director said the American Civil Liberties Union's involvement was unwelcome. No surprise there. It takes an incredible person to put a 26-year teaching career on the line to fight against censorship.

What was frightening, though,

"Just five days before the play's opening, the director said the American Civil Liberties Union's involvement was unwelcome. No surprise there. It takes an incredible person to put a 26-year teaching career on the line to fight against censorship."

was the lack of response by Nebraskans over this egregious act of censoring the arts. For years, those of us in the ACLU have been warning Americans that allowing government to censor obscenity or to ban so-called pornography on the Internet would ultimately lead to censorship of the arts. In Kearney, the ACLU's prophecy has become a reality.

The fact is, no one was forcing the chancellor or the citizens of Kearney to go and see this play. If the chancellor and others thought the scenes were immoral, then they had the option not to view the play. Instead, the chancellor imposed her own moral standards upon the director, actors and those individuals interested in seeing this director's

adaptation of the Ford play. Some will say that the chancellor, as head of the university, had an obligation to act on this matter. But who is she protecting by her actions? Do adult students and adult viewers actually need the chancellor of a university telling them what is and is not moral, and what is and is not art?

Furthermore, the controversial scenes in this play were not degrading to women, which is the age-old argument used by some feminists and conservatives to ban magazines like Playboy. The scenes were also not meant to appeal to the lustful interest, which is the argument used by Christian conservatives to ban what they see as pornography. This was an artist's interpretation of the scene, which is artistic expression at its best, and protected speech under the First Amendment.

Now that UNK has been allowed to ban nudity from its theater, where do you think the next act of censorship will take place? Will art history books be reviewed by the administration, with pictures of nude paintings and sculptures, like Michelangelo's "David," being removed? Will plays dealing with politically or religiously controversial issues be censored because they may be morally offensive to some in the community?

Think this can't happen? Think again.

ACLU Nebraska is celebrating the 10-year anniversary of its victory in Brown v. Regents. Long-time Lincolmites may remember this as the "Hail Mary" case, where an influential senator place pressure upon the Mary Riepma Ross Theater not to run the religiously controversial film "Hail Mary." Thankfully, in that case the First Amendment won out. Unfortunately, we cannot say the same for the arts at UNK.

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. 68588-0448. E-mail: letters@unlinfo.unl.edu.

P.S. Write Back



Send letters to: Daily Nebraskan, 34 Nebraska Union, 1400 "R" St., 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.