

OPINION PAGES

OUR VIEW

Too graphic? Ignorance is no defense — or excuse

"Remember kids, don't try this at home."
Most of us grew up hearing that phrase — in science class experiments, Saturday morning television programs and even before daredevil stunts at the circus.

We don't hear that much anymore. At some point, common sense must prevail.

The Daily Nebraskan Tuesday published a story on homemade pop-bottle bombs found around Lincoln. With the story, we ran a graphic showing the components of this type of "MacGyver" bomb. Some readers — and apparently one local TV news outlet — objected to that decision.

The headline, "How a bomb is built," may not have been the best choice of words in this case. While harmful, this type of bomb has a blast equivalent to an M-80 firecracker — not the Oklahoma City-type image such a headline may produce.

But more than its firepower, it is the crudeness and simplicity of this device that make it dangerous.

When one Lincoln man last weekend found two plastic bottles sealed with tape on his porch, he picked them up and carried them inside, unaware of what they were.

Tuesday morning, a similar bomb was found outside an elementary school. Imagine if a student had carried the pop bottle inside the classroom, unaware of its contents.

The purpose of the Daily Nebraskan's graphic was twofold:

- To inform readers of exactly how this type of device — something as simple as aluminum foil, glass cleaner and an empty bottle — can be dangerous.

- To put these bombs into perspective. The term "homemade bomb" conjures up many images: the World Trade Center in New York, the federal building in Oklahoma City, and Centennial Park at the Atlanta Olympics. These bombs are simply not on the same scale, and Lincoln should not scare itself or its children into thinking they are.

Our decision to publish the graphic came to whether or not we should provide information on what these bombs are and how to identify them — in hopes that people would take greater steps to protect themselves — or whether we should withhold the information in the fear that someone might use it irresponsibly.

An analogy illustrates this point: If a burglar breaks into a house through an unlocked basement window and the Daily Nebraskan reports exactly how he gained entry, is that responsible journalism?

We say yes. We don't deny that such a story could describe to a potential burglar an effective way to break into a house, but we hope that most readers would take precautions to ensure their windows were locked.

We hope our readers will use the information presented in Tuesday's graphic in the same way.

And if we have to say it (we shouldn't have to): "Remember kids, don't try this at home."

MEHSLING'S VIEW



LETTERS

WHITE WHINER

Well, here we have another angry white guy crying about affirmative action.

First, before dealing with Nick Wiltgen's column, I want to say this. I'm from the South — Mississippi — and we don't use archaic terms like "ballyhooed" any more. When we want to offend someone, we just say "Yo Mama!"

That said, I don't usually respond to neo white supremacist, sexist arguments. I have come to realize those arguments are like boogers in your nose — you know they are in there, and you eventually use a napkin or a finger to root them out and flick them away. But for a change, I am not going to offer up the customary counter empirical argument, which can refute every point that Nick made, because that does not address the real issue.

Affirmative action was only a band-aid for a larger problem — the problem of white supremacist cultural hegemony, which has created the societal divisions along racial, class and gender lines.

For instance, you can oppress women and deny them gender equity; kill the Native Americans, who in your own stories fed and kept you alive when you arrived here (Thanksgiving); and in your own Constitution regard black people as three-fifths of a human being — animals — yet still rape black women behind your white woman's back.

So, I don't know why people act surprised when they see columns like this. It is ultimately reflective of an element within a culture that lacks any reliable spiritual values.

This could almost have been predicted, because if you believe that your own individuality is the ultimate reality, you will not only kill off the environment, but, eventually kill the God concept as well.

Reynaldo Anderson
graduate student
communication studies



AARON STECKELBERG/DN

SODA SELECTION

So, the University of Nebraska asked Pepsi, Coke and Mid-Continent Bottlers (7-Up) to make bids for a contract to sell only their line of beverages pretty much everywhere on campus. On the line here is several million dollars for UNL. However, the loss of choice for us students overshadows the possible benefits of having a contract with one of the three companies.

First, I am one of the "die-hard Mountain Dew" drinkers mentioned in the third paragraph in the article. I tend to have about two cans of Dew a day — one in my morning English class and one in my Computer Science class in the afternoon. I do not want to have my favored drink removed from campus just so UNL can get a couple more dollars for the budget a month. Nor should a "die-hard Coke" drinker have their favored drink removed.

Second, I do not think that the money gained from the contract would be that useful to the group most affected by the contract: the students. Yes, the money could be used for scholarships and improving the honors program, "information

technologies," or the swamp that is our parking system. However, I am somewhat doubtful that the money would be used for those things and instead of just being absorbed into the university's budget. Also, the question of the loss of our choice remains adamant.

And third, I appreciate the university consulting ASUN President Eric Marintzer for the "student input" factor, but I believe that this issue, which affects almost everybody on campus, deserves to have more input — perhaps in the form of a vote.

I do believe in the positive aspects of capitalism, but I hope that the university can in fact "look the other way" past the dollar-bill blinders and not confine us students to only one company's beverages. Thank you.

Shannon Magnuson
freshman
computer science

EXPLOSIVE GRAPHIC

I find it ridiculous that you'd print a graphic in your newspaper that shows the reader how to make bombs (Nov. 12 DN). The article was fine, but when you include an illustration of the steps required in the making of a bomb, you are just asking for trouble.

Yes, the information is easily accessible on the Internet and in various books, but why make it easier for those who wouldn't normally seek out this information? I'm all for free speech, and I admit that I used to make these very same bombs when I was younger. But they are extremely dangerous and only a trained bomb expert should experiment with such a thing.

You shouldn't have had that diagram in your paper, and I wouldn't be surprised if there's a rise in bomb activity because of your irresponsibility.

Jason Flatowicz
sophomore
general studies

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