

Sonia
HOLLIMON

Twisted sisterhood

Oldest child's station in life is unenviable

If I have to tell my sisters to clean their rooms one more time, I am really going to have to go off. It seems that since the day they were born, I've been running after them to



pick this up, don't pick that up — most of my phone calls in high school were interrupted by me stopping to yell, "Shawn! Stop messing with the girls!" or "Sophia and Shana! Leave your brother alone!" Being the oldest of four children certainly gets you ready for responsibility.

My mom used to tell me that as the first-born, I was special and her "little helper." That seemed like a cool position until I realized that I seemed to be a kind of built-in baby sitter. I'm sure I could have put a down payment on a car with the money my parents saved on baby sitters.

Last weekend, I went home to take care of my two younger sisters while my mom went to visit my brother. I have to admit that I wasn't thrilled about baby-sitting them; after all, Sophia is a sophomore in high

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school and Shana is in eighth grade. When I was their age, I was watching three younger kids, and pulling down good grades in addition to making sure I got my household chores done. It just kind of irritated me.

Anyone who has ever taken care of younger siblings understands what I'm saying. I realize that taking care of them, in addition to participating in school activities and church groups, helped to make me a responsible, independent person. There are times, however — especially now that I'm older — when I really feel a little resentful. I was glad to help out, and at the time, I was proud that I could be counted on by my folks. I was the "responsible one." Now that I'm older, it seems

like all that role-modeling was for nothing. When my mom shows me my sisters' grades and talks about "improvement," I really have to bite my tongue sometimes because, if I had brought those grades home, there would have been a 45-minute sit-down lecture, along with a 10-minute discussion on what I was going to do to "get along better with others" and "respect authority figures." I hated that discussion. I figured, hey, those were all A's on that piece of paper — why did I have to be good on top of everything?

Like most people, my teen years were my most rebellious stage. At the time, I'm sure my mom thought that something had overtaken my body, and her daughter was forever lost.

Even then I would say to her that my rebellion was puppy chow compared to my friends. I can honestly say I never once sneaked out of the house, smoked a cigarette or drank. Now that my brother and sisters are older, I think she realizes that I really wasn't that bad.

I'm not in any way trying to proclaim myself as the one Hollimon who was truly heaven-sent. I certainly drove my parents crazy, and I was no saint in high school either. But I do think the glue-on-the-toilet incident was a stroke of genius — but to just finish my little tantrum, I'll sum this up by saying it's not fair.

Being the oldest is no picnic. Sure you get to get out of the house first, but the second you leave, it seems things start getting good, and the parents relax. My sisters still only get three minutes on the phone, but they do get to talk to boys, which is something I couldn't do until I was 16.

The positive explanation for all this is that my mom had more time and attention to give me, and that's why I am the way I am. But I still wouldn't mind that down payment.

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Anthony
NGUYEN

Not-so-neighborly conduct

United States should keep to its own business

A few weeks ago, the United States threw its weight around in the United Nations. There's nothing wrong with our country attempting to press its own claims in a world



forum, but there is something wrong when the reasons aren't justifiable.

The United States vetoed Boutros Boutros-Ghali for re-election as U.N. secretary-general in a 14-1 vote of the Security Council. What this did was create an uproar among the entire 185-member General Assembly as the question of "equality" within the United Nations came to the forefront.

With its stance toward Boutros-Ghali, the United States found itself diplomatically isolated. Not only was the United States the sole opposition to Boutros-Ghali, but the threat of a veto from China toward any U.S.-supported nominee was increasingly likely.

The main impetus of the United States' unilateral action rested solely upon the fact that the U.S. Congress would not pay the \$1.5 billion in monies owed to the U.N. if Boutros-Ghali was not replaced.

I think it's time for the United States to adopt a "put-up or shut-up" stance regarding foreign policy. We need to stop acting like the petulant, spoiled rich kid of the neighborhood, and start becoming the mature, well-behaved one.

That means either we choose to be the "world's policeman" or we accept a less vocal, but still important, role in the world. The former involves risks — risks we aren't willing to take anymore. Which leaves us with the latter. A less vocal role can be achieved, at the expense of some of our congressional representatives'

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egos, but it can be done. Unfortunately it doesn't look that way.

I'd dare say that some members of Congress probably think their opinions matter all over the world, and that when they speak in front of Congress, people all over the world listen. That's why our country sometimes gets such a bad rep in world politics. The Boutros-Ghali situation is showing our obnoxious and overbearing side to the others in the United Nations.

Remember, the United Nations is an organization of sovereign nations, not a world government. The United Nations provides the machinery to help find solutions to disputes and problems among its member nations — as well as any matter pertaining to concerns of the world. The United Nations doesn't legislate, but it does provide a means for rich and poor, large and small nations alike, to have a voice in shaping policies of the larger, international community.

The General Assembly of the United Nations, composed of 185 member states each with one vote, makes recommendations on all matters within the scope of the U.N. Charter. The Assembly cannot force any member state to acquiesce — but it does carry the weight of world opinion. And it is this world opinion that the United States has scorned in its attempt to remove Boutros-Ghali.

The United States shouldn't base its policies solely on world opinion.

If one day the world decided slavery was OK, we shouldn't be like lemmings and follow. But in the Boutros-Ghali situation, we don't have just cause. The American Congress doesn't approve of the manner in which Boutros-Ghali is handling U.N. affairs, and the threat of not paying any of its debts leaves the United Nations in jeopardy. Just as we did not support the League of Nations during the post-World War I period, today we are not supporting the United Nations.

And support of the United Nations doesn't require us to bend over backward to appease all the nations of the world. But it does require us to act maturely and responsibly. The United Nations does a lot of good worldwide that we don't see, and frankly, that we don't care about anymore. That's a tragedy. If we were a Third-World country, perhaps we'd appreciate some of the aid the United Nations provides. If we had bitter fighting on our shores, we might feel angry at foreign intervention — but then again it's world intervention, not a single nation. World opinion should carry more weight, and I think it does, but only when it meets with American Congressional approval. Is that fair?

It's planet Earth, people. Not the United States and everybody else goes to hell. We're not the majority. We do carry a lot of clout — but clout should only be used to foster good will and relations, not

obstinance over policies. It's like this: If I haven't paid my rent in a couple of years, do I have the right to bitch to my landlord about the neighbors upstairs who fight over the pool? Do I have the right to complain about the neighbor who doesn't use his water properly, but I waste mine on a daily basis? I don't think so.

If I lived in such an apartment complex, I certainly wouldn't intervene in a squabble between neighbors unless I knew what was going on and if I could really help. Analogously, the United States sets deadlines for troop movements to settle problems. If we're going into a foreign country, then we need to accept the risk. I'm sympathetic to families of our soldiers, but I don't agree that foreign policy should be based solely on deadlines. It's clear and defined goals.

So, in that apartment complex we might have a bigger place, or a nicer view, but it doesn't imply we're better. We'd certainly lead most of the tenant meetings, but in no way would we be the "landlord." But with Boutros-Ghali, instead of acting as tenants of the United Nations, we are trying to be the landlord who doesn't want the landscaper to be Fred, when everyone else thinks Fred's doing a good job — all because Fred didn't work on our view first.

The United Nations provides the United States an opportunity to spread its message of democracy without alienating others around the globe. We can live in the complex and be seen as a next-door neighbor who has some good ideas, or we can be seen as the obnoxious, overbearing neighbor who everyone hates. I'd rather be the nice one.

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