

OPINION PAGES

Guest VIEW

No Leashes

Court decision 'cuffs' media's ability to report

From The Daily Orange, Syracuse University

SYRACUSE, N.Y. (U-WIRE) — Out of order: The watchdog of society may be in trouble with restrictions on news-gathering practices.

Wednesday was a sad day for the American media.

A federal jury in Greensboro, N.C., awarded a supermarket chain \$5.5 million in punitive damages from an ABC expose about the poor quality of its food.

The chain, Food Lion Inc., accused ABC of fraud, contesting that producers submitted fake resumes to get undercover jobs in food services for the "Prime Time Live" report.

The story showed Food Lion employees selling expired meats and washing poultry with bleach to destroy the smell.

Although ABC producers did indeed use questionable ethics in reporting this story, this verdict is an affront to the entire free press and the American people.

Regardless of how ABC obtained the information, the report was true. Food Lion did not pursue a libel case.

ABC was fulfilling one of the most important roles of a news organization in a free press — that of a watchdog.

If Food Lion was getting away with selling hazardous meat products to consumers, the public has a right to know.

And when the Food and Drug Administration did not do its job, ABC stepped in.

While ABC did commit acts of fraud, the criminal fines for any average person would amount to a mere \$1,400, which ABC paid in December.

This case has serious and disturbing implications for a press that seems to have completed a public service.

Ethics in journalism is an issue that needs to be debated, but not through frivolous civil lawsuits. Food Lion was deserving of defamation, and it should not be compensated for losses from the story. Restrictions such as these are nothing less than constitutional violations.

ABC News President Roone Arledge could not have said it better:

"If large corporations were allowed to stop hard-hitting investigative journalism, the American people would be the losers."

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Mehsling's VIEW



MEHSLING *of the Daily Nebraskan*

Kasey KERBER

Looking in the mirror *Please don't buy into the beauty, self-image culture*



I saw a really interesting commercial on television last week. No, it didn't feature stunning special effects or a punch line that made me laugh.

It was simple — a camera shot of a young woman's back. She had long red hair, but that was about all you could really see.

As the camera zooms in on her head, you hear her say: "Do you want to see me? Would that make you think I'm beautiful?"

The commercial then shifts to a man who says: "We make products that make you look beautiful on the outside, but we never forget that true beauty lies on the inside ..."

And the commercial ends. I can't remember the name of the company that made the commercial, as it was on television for only a few days.

Maybe it wasn't producing enough sales. Maybe the company had made its point. Maybe, maybe, maybe ...

But have we gotten the point? Probably not.

We're living in a society where beauty is on the face of a magazine cover, in the eyes of a famous Hollywood actress or in the walk of a runway model.

The same society where the content of your average woman's magazine is 75 percent beauty and clothing ads, where Barbie is a little girl's best friend, and more Americans say they need a hair dryer more than a personal computer (Parade Magazine, Dec. 29, 1996).

We're in a society where beauty is an industry and most of us have

bought into it.

Yet too often we're trying to achieve a beauty we were never meant to achieve.

Now I'll be talking mainly about the female side of beauty — honestly, we guys aren't as concerned about it.

Sure, we guys want to look our best — but we don't spend nearly as much time and effort as women do to achieve it.

Which brings forth another question: should women be extremely concerned with the way they look and are perceived?

Now coming from a family with three sisters, I've heard all the arguments for beauty — the most common being, "we do it for you guys ..."

If you're driving yourself to look slim, toned, well-dressed, funny, sexy, intelligent or beautiful for guys' attention, you might be changing yourself for the wrong reason.

Guys will come and guys will go — but the one who stays will do it because he loves you. Not because he loves the color of your eye shadow or because you ate Slim Fast shakes for breakfast.

He will stay with you because he's in love with the beauty within. Whether it be the way you make him smile, the way he can tell you all his problems or the way the two of you can just talk for hours — never running out of things to laugh about.

He'll love you for you — not what you've become.

Which brings us to guys. We're just as guilty when it comes to judging beauty — only for different reasons.

We tend to look no farther than the flesh.

Argue what you will, but when was the last time a guy ever asked out a girl because she's "funny" or has a "great personality?"

Sure, those qualities may have been a few of the things that were

attractive, but they weren't the main ones. You looked at the girl and liked what you saw.

And that might very well be the problem with beauty these days.

It's a typical Dick and Jane world. Jane sees Dick. Dick sees Jane. Dick and Jane like what they see. Dick asks Jane out. Dick and Jane go out. Dick discovers Jane has multiple personalities, and Jane discovers that Dick is a serial killer. Dick and Jane decide a second date is not necessary ...

OK, so maybe it's not your typical example, but if two people take a little time to get to know one another, they would have discovered their differences a little earlier.

Yet I'm not in the position to say beauty is either right or wrong — there comes a time when both people will discover the right answer for themselves.

Ask yourself a simple question when it comes to beauty.

Should I really change — or be the person God intended me to be?

Kerber is a sophomore news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.



AARON STECKELBERG/DN

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