

OPINION PAGES

Our VIEW

In the debris Heaven's Gate visit a warning sign to all

"We know whatever happens to us after we leave our bodies is a step forward" — videotaped message by Marshall Applewhite, leader of Heaven's Gate.

Last Wednesday, 39 members of Heaven's Gate, driven by the belief that the comet Hale-Bopp as it swooped to within 122 million miles of Earth was actually "the arrival of the spacecraft from the Level Above Human to take [them] home to [the extraterrestrials'] world," committed suicide in a Rancho Santa Fe, Calif., mansion.

Over a three-day period, fueled by the belief that Applewhite was dying of cancer, the members put on uniforms of black pants, shirts and new Nikes — ironically emblazoned with the white comet-like "swoosh" trademark — and ate a concoction of applesauce and pudding mixed with phenobarbital, washed down with vodka. Placing plastic bags over their heads, the members settled down on comforters — \$5 bills tucked in their pockets — waiting for death.

On Monday, the Daily Nebraskan reported on Heaven's Gate's visit to this very university in 1976.

At the time of their visit, Heaven's Gate was a small group of people with outlandish ideas and beliefs. The DN reported it as so. The word "cult" did not even appear in the articles. Rather, "a sect of Unidentified Flying Object (UFO) evangelists" spoke to about 100 people about a "higher level" of existence.

And tragically, 20-odd years later, members of Heaven's Gate thought that by committing suicide they would move to this higher level of existence.

As members of this university community, we should use the Heaven's Gate group as an example. Similar groups can still be found today at UNL and on other college campuses, seeking young, enthusiastic minds to join their causes.

It's easy to discount those groups; to not take them seriously.

But if ever there were an example of what one small group springing up through grassroots recruiting can become, one need only look at Heaven's Gate 1976 and Heaven's Gate 1997.

“As members of this university community, we should use the Heaven's Gate group as an example.”

Mehsling's VIEW



Jessica KENNEDY

With open eyes Neighborhood requires citywide support

Three kids, two parents, two dogs and one cat later and we're still missing one Easter egg.

It's really only a minor concern this Easter season. For a holiday that's supposed to spread hope and joy, Lincoln has a surprising lack.

Gun shots ripped through a north Lincoln neighborhood almost two weeks ago, leaving a huge gash in the city's collective consciousness.

The situation brewing at 29th and Dudley has left Lincoln citizens shaking their heads. Nestled in "safe" neighborhoods, the clashes seem removed. Almost as if the fighting is occurring in another city.

The violence is a shocking reminder that Lincoln is not a little city any more. As it enjoys the benefits of growth it must also deal with the costs.

As you drive by the Burger King, Walgreens or Laundry Land, peer down the residential side streets. You will not be struck by immaculate lawns, upper-end autos or sprawling homes.

The Clinton neighborhood is not wealthy; poverty is very present.

It is also a very loyal neighborhood.

Area businesses have pledged to stay in the area, despite the possibility of decreasing profits because of the perception of being in a "bad" neighborhood.

Obviously, family and friends are willing to risk life and limb for loved ones and territory.

Yet the troubles between the "Mississippi" group and the "Lincoln" group are not new. Recent incidents are only the first to be thrust into public view. The strife has been going on for more than a year.

There will be more name calling and fighting.



There may be deaths. The police say, thus far, that the incidents are not gang related.

Maybe they aren't, maybe they are. Does it really matter?

What we have are youths and adults acting out their frustrations in a violent and destructive manner, which is not going to get better without some serious help and intervention.

Maybe the problems will stop when they all end up in the city-county jail.

The worst thing that can happen, the one thing that will guarantee escalation of the violence is sheer indifference from the community.

I don't just mean people around 29th and Dudley.

I mean everyone — students, the police department, civic leaders, business people — must take an interest in the health of this fracturing neighborhood.

Looking the other way or driving the long way around will not help either. Igniting area businesses "just in case" will only hurt the entire city.

You must care. You must give a damn. You must worry that this violence is happening in your city.

Though the outbursts have been limited to a few city blocks in north Lincoln doesn't mean it's going to stay there.

These groups could spread their fighting to any place in the city ... O Street, Gateway, the movies, your neighborhood.

You must care. That doesn't mean you have to befriend tomorrow's front page news and it doesn't mean that you have to move into the neighborhood.

What it means is that you support those area businesses.

Caring means not closing your eyes and minds to the problems surrounding the violence.

Beyond the friction between the two factions are issues such as school attendance, family problems, poverty and cyclical criminal histories.

Support measures that address the behaviors rather than just the results.

Please don't abandon the Clinton neighborhood and don't abandon the people.

Mayor Mike Johanns is wrong to ask the Mississippi group to "go home." That's not a feasible answer. It doesn't solve any problems.

The city needs to be sensitive to the neighborhood's concerns. So far, I think the police department is being rightly cautious. But the worries are not over.

As the temperature rises, be prepared for tempers to rise also. It is going to take the entire city's care and concern to work through this.

Don't condemn the 29th and Dudley area.

Support peaceful solutions before somebody is killed.

Kennedy is a senior advertising and broadcasting major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

EDITOR
Doug Kouma

OPINION EDITOR
Anthony Nguyen

EDITORIAL BOARD
Paula Lavigne
Joshua Gillin
Jessica Kennedy
Jeff Randall
Erin Gibson

<p>EDITORIAL POLICY</p> <p>Unsigned editorials are the opinions of the Spring 1997 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 paper. According to policy set by the regents, responsibility for the editorial content of the newspaper lies solely in the hands of its student employees.</p>	<p>LETTER POLICY</p> <p>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. 68598-0448. E-mail: letters@unlinfo.unl.edu.</p>
---	---

P.S. Write Back

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