

# OPINION PAGES

Our  
VIEW

## Dead profits

*A rap on industry:  
young, rich, deceased*

If nearly every one of the headlines, interviews and feature stories written in the past year or so regarding violence in the entertainment industry are to be believed, most people are fed up with it.

A gradual increase in family-oriented programming, the implementation of a TV ratings system and several testimonies before Congress also seem to point to the same conclusion — there is far too much violence in the media.

And then came Biggie Smalls.

In one week of record sales, Smalls (who is also known as the Notorious B.I.G., and whose real name is Christopher Wallace) has produced the largest-selling pop album since the Beatles' "Anthology" and has thrown nearly 690,000 copies of his new album, "Life After Death," into the face of conventional wisdom regarding America's true attitude toward violence.

In case you haven't heard yet, here's the lowdown.

Smalls, a leading figure in the recently developed genre of gangsta rap, was killed in a drive-by shooting last month in Los Angeles. Smalls' self-fueled reputation as a former crack dealer and a lifelong thug would seem to have been a fitting premonition to his violent death.

In addition, Smalls and the record label he worked for, Bad Boy Entertainment, were widely known arch rivals of equally demised rapper Tupac Shakur and his label, Death Row Records.

Where this cross-country rivalry fits into the issue of violence in the media is evident by the money it has produced.

In a country where nearly every political figure has — at some time or another — denounced media violence as an unwanted and unnecessary part of the entertainment industry, the people with the true power — the consumers — seem to be contradicting that very argument with their dollars.

Gangsta rap continues to flourish, shoot-'em-up action films continue to roll in and out of movie theaters and — with the advent of a ratings system to hide behind — television executives seem even more likely to broadcast violent images (as long as they have a TV-M rating slapped on them).

What it all comes down to is the issue of whether the entertainment industry determines its own content or simply bows down to the public's desires. Because it is a business, the latter choice is the obvious one. And nothing short of outright censorship will stop entertainers from doing whatever they can to make a buck.

So until the government decides to take larger and more destructive steps in derailing the train of media violence (which would create an even bigger problem), perhaps everyone who wants to put a stop to the blood-and-gore imagery of the entertainment world should focus their attention on their own corner of the world without trying to do the same for the rest.

Because even if you think 690,000 Notorious B.I.G. fans may be wrong, don't expect the entertainment business to think so, too.

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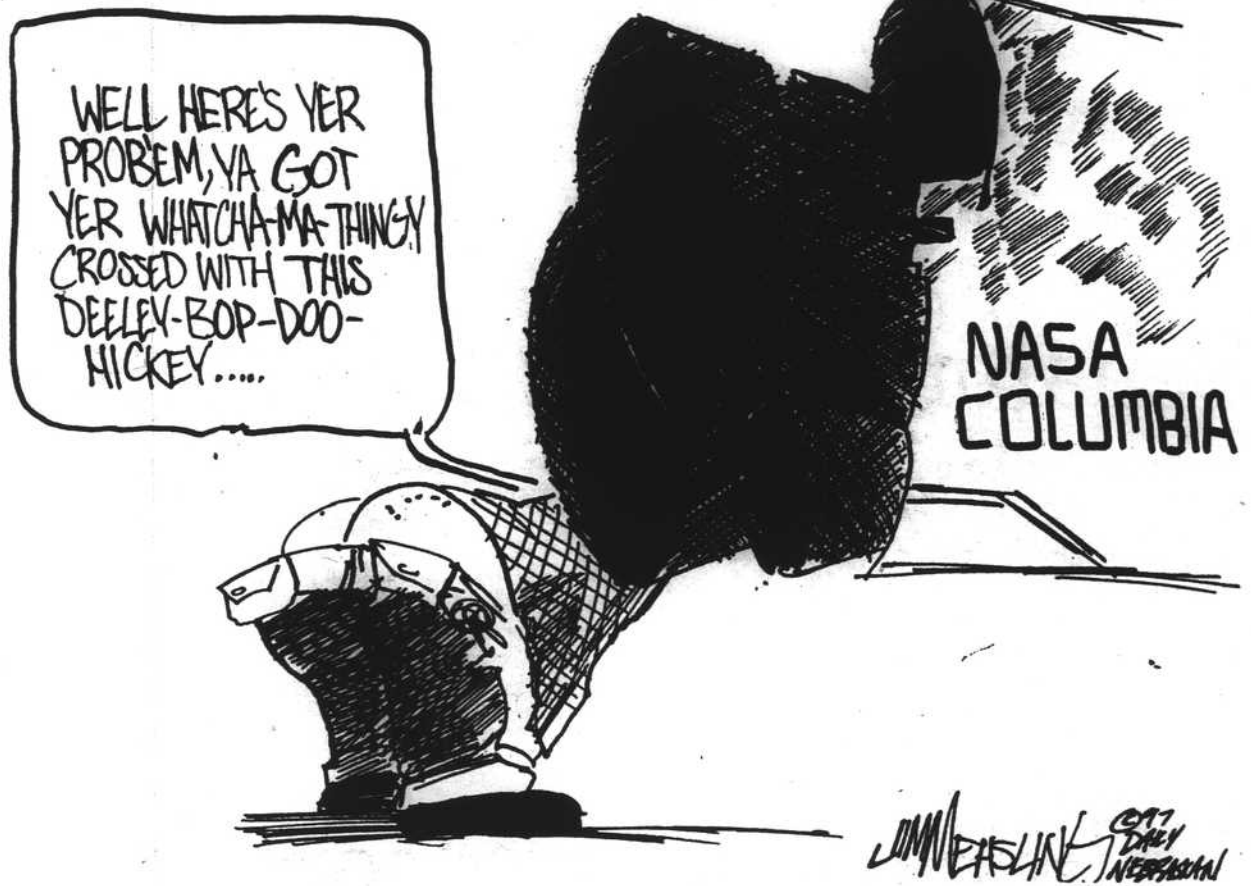
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Mehsling's  
VIEW



DN  
LETTERS

### Inaccurate Portrait

I was very disturbed by the recent column of J.J. Harder ("A broken bond, DN, Friday) and the response letter of Josh Dieckmann ("Right On", DN, Tuesday), regarding the issue of same-sex marriage.

Beyond the typical scapegoating of gay and lesbian people and the invocation of God's name in condemnation, which are themselves tactics of desperation, the authors of these writings created an image that is almost completely incompatible with my own experiences of gay and lesbian people. Please allow me to paint an alternative picture, which I believe reflects my own authentic experience:

Gay and lesbian people are fully and equally human beings, with the same respect and dignity deserved by all people. Gay and lesbian people are not only capable of forming loving, caring, long-term bonds, but also of raising children with at least as strong and commendable of values as children raised in "normal" households.

They are also people with great spiritual gifts that are not contradicted by their sexual identities and they can be people of tremendous religious faith and inspiration.

I am an active Christian, and I have experienced congregations that are welcoming of openly gay and lesbian people as part of their communities. Without exception, I have found these communities to model the "family of God" and to treat each other as children of God more convincingly than most other churches.

I really don't think that God hates gays, or I would not see so much of the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives and ministries of gay and lesbian people and those who are supportive of them.

I don't know for sure, but I suspect that the writers to whom I am responding do not know very many gay or lesbian people, or I can't imagine they could still

"condemn them for what they are" so certainly.

Jeremy Vetter  
senior  
President of Allies Against  
Heterosexism and Homophobia

### Strong Household

J.J. Harder would have us believe that it is impossible for a gay couple to raise a child without a negative impact. While I lived with my mother and father my home life was not good.

It wasn't abusive, there just was not much love in our household. It was not a house that promoted growing and emotions. When I was in sixth grade I moved in with my mother and her new partner.

It was hard at first and our family still goes through rough periods but we do it together. Now I live in a house that promotes growing. I am encouraged to discover myself and push myself to see just how much I can make out of life.

It seems that growing up in a lesbian-run household has not adversely affected me. In fact, I would go so far as to say that I have learned much about acceptance of diversity that I would not have been able to elsewhere.

Maybe Mr. Harder would like us to believe that it is unhealthy to be accepting and love other people. I think these are good qualities and ones that I learned from both my mothers.

Craig Willford  
freshman  
computer science

### Sick of It All

There's been a lot of hoopla lately over homosexuality and related issues and since several other people have already shot their mouths off over it, I'd like to throw in my nickel-and-dime's worth.

First of all, I personally disapprove of homosexuality and I think it's rather repulsive. If you want to call me a homophobe or claim that I'm uncomfortable with my own sexuality — go right ahead. You can't hurt me with epithets.

Secondly, sex is not intended to be used solely as a procreation tool. In many cases, children are the result and can be a wonderful addition to the lives of the parents. However, I believe sexual intercourse, or more accurately, love-making as it really should be, is as simple and as difficult as the ultimate party of two people committing themselves to each other. Obviously, intercourse has been used by both gays and straights in far less admirable ways. But some (not all) of the "Victorian" attitudes we carry are there because they've been proven true through time and trial.

Like I said, I do not now and probably never will condone homosexuality for various reasons. However, since they do have basis in religious beliefs and many of you apparently dislike anything religious, I offer a compromise: We'll allow gay marriages in the state of Nebraska as long as those concerned agree to two stipulations that we'll write into law:

No. 1: Don't have children of your own.

No. 2: Don't adopt someone else's children and raise them as your own.

I've already stated that I dislike homosexuality. If you want to be legally recognized as a loving couple with all the insurance benefits and everything else, fine. You may have a hard time finding people who will really accept you as a married couple, but if you can take it, go ahead and do it. I only ask you to keep the children out of it because children, especially adolescents, have enough to worry about with other issues of growing up. They don't need an extra thorn in their side.

As an ending note, I don't care whether you're homosexual, heterosexual or bisexual. Whatever you are, I don't give a damn about your sex life and I'm sick of hearing all the hubbub about it. If you're interested in having a serious conversation about sex, I'm more than willing. If not, quit whining!

John Flaherty  
senior  
meteorology