

Heather
LAMPE

Gender Wars

Sexism isn't dead, even in late 20th century



I'm very confused, more than usual that is.

Somehow I was led to believe that the world had changed in the last 50 years. I naively thought that society had finally accepted the June Cleavers of the world throwing off their aprons and stepping out from behind their shiny stove tops. But a recent discussion with my younger brother has proven to me that people's ideas aren't much different than they were when the Beav was little.

Last week, I spent the weekend at my dad's house with my 14-year-old brother, who I will call "Moron" to protect his identity. While I was visiting Moron, I decided to prepare a meal for Dad, Moron and me.

The meal apparently impressed Moron because after finishing, he said to me, "That was really good Heather. Dad should get a woman around here to cook for us."

Not believing that Moron and I could have come from the same gene pool, I tried to gently explain to him that if he wanted to, he too could crack open a box of Hamburger Helper and go wild.

Unbeknownst to many a sexist pig out there (Moron included), there is no gene for cooking. Contrary to

popular belief, there is no link in a female's DNA that makes her prone to bake. When girls hit puberty we don't suddenly get flooded with hormones that want to make us cook and clean.

Imagine a mother saying to her 12-year-old daughter, "Honey, you're blossoming and becoming a woman, so along with a training bra, I've purchased you a sponge mop and a deluxe set of Teflon frying pans."

Men and women might differ in sexual plumbing and our faucet fixtures may turn on differently, but we don't differ much more than that. Men can color coordinate just as well as women, and women can change the oil in a car. My husband is proof positive that there isn't a gene that makes men handy with tools or automotive parts. He can't spell carburetor, let alone install one into a car.

There wouldn't be a war between the sexes if there weren't those few insecure cavemen out there who still want to drag "their women" around by the hair. Besides my little brother Moron, I read a newspaper story a few weeks ago about one such caveman.

We'll call the caveman in the story "Peon" to protect his identity. Peon was featured in an article about how the era of the nude calendar girl posters in the automotive establishments was on its way out. The story featured interviews with women who take their cars to be fixed and the owners of these garages. Peon was one of the employees of a garage. He was upset because he didn't feel he should be denied his enjoyment for the sake of his female customers.

"If I want to see some boobies, no damn woman is going to stop me." (This is my interpretation of the interview.)

For those of you who haven't had the distinct pleasure of viewing one of these fine works of art while waiting for your car to be tuned up, let me describe one for you. These calendars usually have a scantily clad or nude woman lying seductively on the hood of a car. Sometimes she is straddling the fender and sometimes she is licking the hood ornament. There are many varied positions.

These pictures are purely for the pleasure of men like Peon. Because frankly I have never woken up one morning and said, "Gee, I feel like throwing off my top and humping the roof of a car." Nor have I ever cared to wait for my car at a Quicky Lube and have to stare at "a set of headlights" on their yearly calendar.

I don't suppose Peon or most men would enjoy walking into an insurance agency, grocery store or any business and having to see a big penis celebrating the month of February. So they should understand why women don't care to go to Peon's garage and see a giant photo of the birth canal celebrating the month of May.

Every time I open a magazine, the Virginia Slims lady keeps trying to tell me that "You've come along way baby." I think Miss Slims has never met Moron and Peon, or maybe they've been filling her cigarettes with more than tobacco.

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Steve
WILLEY

All tongues

Speaking Spanish can be eloquent, embarrassing



Don't you folks just hate those columns that start out, "I'm a journalist; I make my living with words."

Every time I see a sentence like that, I think, "You know, it's a good thing I'm holding this super-absorbent newspaper because I'm going to need something to wipe up this pile of vomit that just ejected from my mouth at supersonic speeds."

Why can't journalists be truthful and say what they're really thinking: "I'm a journalist and I, like everyone else on this freakin' planet, use words all the time. Also, I would like to have Walter Cronkite's child." (That last part by the way, only applies to me and my editor.)

Anyway, I promised myself that I would never write a column that began that way, but yesterday my editor gave me an ultimatum. He said if I refused to write my required "I'm a journalist" column, he would personally see to the "extinction" of both my pinky toes.

Being quite fond of my pinky toes — I use them to spoon out mayonnaise while I'm eating — I decided to get it over with. So grab a vomit bag or anything ever written by Ayn Rand and get ready to chuck.

Yes, I'm a journalist, and I do make my living with words. Though, it is not a very good living. In fact, I rank slightly below a raccoon in terms of yearly income.

But it's true; I do use a lot of words in this business. Sometimes I even use foreign words, which is really what this column is about.

You see, as part of the curriculum of my news-editorial major, I'm expected to become fluent in a second language. This semester I will complete all of my requirements in Spanish. That's right, folks. I'm bilingual. But even despite having two lings, I can also speak Spanish.

I chose Spanish over Swahili because, quite frankly, I thought I'd have more of a use for Spanish in my life. Boy was I wrong. Seems like every other day, some Swahili-speaking guy is coming up and asking me if Tom Osborne really used to date a bowl of pasta.

But that's not to say that I haven't used Spanish in my life — it's the easiest way to order a mayonnaise enchilada in some restaurants. But despite my years of excellent counsel from some of UNL's finest teachers, I'm still not very good at precisely conveying my thoughts.

Inevitably, I end up unintentionally asking the person why his or her mother chose a career in professional roller derby.

But getting beat up by Spanish-speaking people isn't the only disadvantage of not mastering the language. At times, you can also make yourself sound pretty ignorant.

My Spanish professor told me something pretty funny the other day and I think it's a prime example of unintentionally looking like an ass. He said that students, when asked their age, will usually reply by saying, "Tengo veinte y dos años." (The años is pronounced "an-yoss.")

This is a correct response; it translates into, "I have 22 years" or

"I'm 22 years old." But sometimes students mispronounce the años and say, "Tengo veinte y dos anos." (Anos this time is pronounced "a-noss.")

Now the poor student has just proclaimed that he or she has 22 anuses.

But this is by no means an isolated case in the Spanish language. There is another sentence — which moral integrity will not allow me to print in Spanish — that is equally appalling and just as easy to mistakenly say.

By leaving off the letter "a" in this sentence, you can completely change it from, "Hi, how you doing, dude," to, "I am a monkey woman; let us sit on this toilet and obtain the seven-year itch together."

Isn't it amazing! All that from merely dropping the letter "a."

But despite the sometimes too-easy methods of sounding stupid, Spanish is really a sexy and romantic language. C'mon, what woman out there wouldn't want to be lying on a "playa" (beach) with an "hombre" (man) named "Rico" (Jerome). Later, you would dance the "Lambada" (a forbidden dance), drink some "vino" (wine) and have a "competencia escupir" (spitting contest).

I know I've got chills just thinking about it. But maybe those are just excited chills thinking about my career as a journalist. Knowing Spanish will certainly make me more marketable to employers.

That is, until they hear me speak it. Oh well. If nothing else, it at least made my required "I'm a journalist" column a little easier to swallow.

Willey is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

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