

# OPINION PACKAGES

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**VIEW**

## Separation anxiety

*Homosexuals seek solace in private school*

After ending separate-but-equal laws decades ago, a new private school in Dallas shows that for some students, separation from discrimination may be the only escape from persecution.

The school is geared toward high school-age homosexual students.

Students at Walt Whitman Community School told newspapers they had been the target of taunts and jeers from students in other Dallas high schools, and that the private school offered welcome relief.

Two veteran educators, now teaching at Whitman, said the school was "a dream." It's sad that "dream" can trigger so many nightmares for education and socialization.

What the school produces could be tragic. There is a group of students who spend their teen-age years attending a school because they know they are not accepted by students, who call themselves "normal," at other area high schools.

There is no need for a separate school for these students like there is for students with loss of hearing or sight, or with physical or mental limitations. Homosexuality is not a disability. These students can, and should, meet the academic criteria of their peers in a standard high school.

They'll be free from the taunts and jeers, yes, but only when they're on the school grounds. However, is it really better for them in the long run? When they graduate, there's a chance that they may be in for a shock. After being isolated for four years, they have to face the same general public that forced them into their solitude. Either they confront it, maybe win it, or their fear gets the best of them, and the discrimination continues within them.

They also could come out with their own brand of discrimination against heterosexual adults because there hasn't been teaching of integrated understanding and harmony among students of all sexual orientations.

But while the school may only widen the divide between both sides, it's also a last resort. For all the possible downfalls of what it might produce, this school is sadly the only place for homosexual teens to turn.

Taunting and teasing can create an environment that pushes the student to desperation, and robs him or her of an environment that nurtures learning and cooperation. It was their only way out, and that is very sad.

What needs to happen in schools attended by both homosexual and heterosexual students is for the teachers to take responsibility. Learning is not limited to ABCs, science projects and algebra tests.

When the topic of homosexuality, or any sexual orientation, can be brought down to an academic level at an early age, it may be possible to neutralize the issue and prevent discrimination that can result from Joey thinking Bobby is a "freak" because he doesn't like girls.

*Haney's*  
**VIEW**



## Tiny details

*Memories of sister resurface with niece's birth*



**GREGG MADSEN is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.**

It's funny how the slightest details always seem to stick in your mind.

One of the most vivid images of my childhood is a small detail — my sister's fingernails. You see, she is seven years older than me, and so whenever she wanted me to do something for her, she would convince me by taking a death grip on my head with her 1½-inch-long fingernails.

To this day, I won't let her live down the damaging psychological affects this brutal act obviously had on my young mind. Now don't get me wrong. Despite my sister's abusive behavior back when I was a child, I have a love and respect for her today that transcends it all.

But I still remember the fingernails.

Last week when I got on the elevator at St. Elizabeth's Community Health Center, I wasn't thinking of her fingernails at all. And when I walked into Room 439 and saw my sister lying in the hospital bed, all I could think about was how thankful I was that she was alive. Then my eyes shifted focus and I realized how thankful I was that another "she" was alive. Against the east wall of the room, in a tiny, elevated bed was Kianna, my sister's 6-pound, 10-ounce baby girl, born only two hours before I entered the room.

I didn't know how to react at the moment. The nurse was whispering kind words to Kianna as she performed what must have been the nor-

mal early life procedures. I stood silent. There was a life, a precious little baby girl, receiving the first bath of her brand-new life.

She rolled onto her side and a discontented growl escaped from her tiny mouth. I was completely enthralled with the wonderful creation before me. My niece. My first niece. I started to think of all that she has in front of her; the birthday presents I'll be able to spoil her with and the joy of hearing her call me "Uncle Gregg." There I was, at the beginning of something that will change my life forever. Then it happened.

I got to hold her. Her body warmed the white blanket in which she was wrapped as I gently rocked her back and forth in my arms. She sighed a little and continually smacked her lips together. I thought of how excited I would be when she was able to form words and speak with that same mouth.

Beneath her miniature, pink stocking cap was a thick mop of black hair, with her bright red skin — irritated from the birth — showing through. I noticed her eyelids, perfectly smooth except for the tiny eyelashes poking out from them. Those eyelids started to blink — once, twice, then open on the third try, and she looked at me. My heart melted as I instantly fell in love with my little niece.

She struggled a little to get her arms out from the blanket that surrounded her and as she did, out popped her two little hands, her ten little fingers. Exact duplicates of adult fingers, just a lot smaller.

Amid all the emotions of meeting my niece, all the great things I

can recount about her appearance, and all the things that went through my mind that day, there is one thing I'll never forget.

Her fingernails. There they were, sticking out from the ends of each of her tiny fingers. Those minuscule fingernails will never look like that again for the rest of her life. They were uncut, unaltered by any of the forces of life. When I saw them, my amazement reached its highest level. Everything about her was and is a miracle. But her fingernails just struck a chord in my mind that will reverberate as long as I live.

I couldn't help but remember two verses from Psalm 139: "I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth."

Those fingernails were wonderfully made, that is for sure.

I didn't realize it at the time, but what a dramatic piece of irony. The thing I remember most about my sister was also the thing that I'll never forget about my little niece. Funny how life sometimes works that way, isn't it? In the years to come, I'm going to do all I can to show little Kianna how much I love her. I'm going to take her to football games and teach her how to fish. We're going to have great times and make some great memories that will last a lifetime.

But for me, the most treasured moment will be that first day of her life, when I saw her for the very first time. And I'll never forget her fingernails.

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