

OPINIONPAGE

Our VIEW

Birthday break

Academic Senate should honor rights

Give us a break. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Academic Senate voted Tuesday to deny students' requests for a fall break and for a day off honoring Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday in January.

The senate, by its actions, has missed an opportunity to recognize a world-renowned civil rights leader and give more than lip service to cries of diversity and creating a welcome campus for minorities.

While the university tries to tout its move to generate more support for minorities and encourage more minority students to remain here, it has failed to really back up its support with action.

Several students already wanted a break, both in the fall and spring, which would give them a few precious days to catch up.

While the fall break would have been a nice gesture to both students and faculty, the spring break would have broken crucial ground in extending a salute to King with the hope of boosting the confidence of all minority students at UNL.

A day off to celebrate King's birthday would give students an opportunity to attend some of the numerous events that go on during this day. Students would then have the opportunity to learn about him and his peaceful revolution. If students would be able to become informed by having a day off, then they need to be encouraged, by a day off, to do so. In this way, students wanting to attend these events need not worry about missing a day of class.

King's birthday deserves to be recognized by a day off because of what he represented. King represented qualities that make mere men into leaders. King's dedication to peaceful revolution was at the same time brilliant and effective. Through peaceful means he was able to change the way Americans think of human rights. Because of King's efforts, the idea that all men are created equal and that all men have certain basic rights has taken one step closer to becoming reality.

People such as King are special. They elevate the human race to a higher level because of their humanitarian efforts. These kinds of efforts are few and far between and need to be recognized. There is no better way to recognize King's birthday than by giving students a day in which they can have the time to recognize him.

Since the Academic Senate can only offer advisement to the NU Board of Regents on this matter, there is still an opportunity for the board to vote to give students a day off on King's birthday.

If the board were to vote to give students the day off to recognize King's birthday, it would be a gesture to students to go out and learn of King's monumental movement.

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Haney's VIEW



Shame, shame, shame

New approach won't eradicate society's wrongdoings



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Everybody's doin' it, doin' it, doin' it.

So it *must* be kosher.

Thus heralds the impending millennium's top law scholars, who say, hit the road, handcuffs; be gone, billy clubs; ciao, corporal punishment; adieu, authority.

The whole idea is that we can eradicate wrongdoing and uphold norms with the power of something much stronger than perfunctory punishment — something that calls to mind yet another childhood hoot.

Shame, shame, know your name. And if the shame fits, it's yours — made ready-to-wear, haute couture.

Anyone who has been dealt a DWI, possession of a controlled substance, curfew or probation violation, or failure to appear in court knows the current routine for keeping all in check: Read it in the papers; then weep.

You're *hardened criminals* on parade.

In black and white, no less. For all your current employers, family members, worship leaders, ex-lovers' mothers, high-school clique rulers and what-have-you to peruse — and use — be it for keeping score or refrigerator decor.

So it is with the up-and-coming device for social control: If an action out-steps the bounds of mainstream

“Even so, this approach is a bit too tangerine trees and marmalade skies for me to digest.”

behavior, allot shame accordingly. This way we can use one another to assuage our public pains and return our societal ills to the shelf of grace from which they once fell.

A few courts across the nation are incorporating the shame tactic into inflicting punishments: In California, a shoplifter succumbed to wearing a T-shirt that screamed, “I Am a Thief”; a New York woman slipped into a sandwich board that listed her specialty as, “I Am a Convicted Child Molester”; a slumlord apartment manager was forced to fend for herself among the roaches and rats that roosted in her residences.

Harsh stuff, here.

Hang those heads! Gimme 50 mea culpas! Look CONTRITE, soldier!

Whatever. Are courts planning to hire Sister Tarsissia to administer the wrist-slappings and ruler-whappings?

Sign the board for shoplifting! Slap two checks behind your name for that pipe in your backpack! Tobacco, my butt! Recess? NEVER!! And finish your milk, or I'm calling your mother!

My mind reels with all the dictionary entries I may have to memorize in the case that I should wander astray from the flock.

How can shame possibly be used as a deterrent? I know the “crimes” for which authorities plan to use this force are nearly as petty as the proposed punishment. Even so, this approach is a bit too tangerine trees and marmalade skies for me to digest.

But the thrust is to traipse along

with the norm, they say.

So when I organize a campuswide German Alcoholics Pride Day, nobody will have anything to Old Crow about, right?

Whatever, to the second power. That is, whatever trounces in with the tide goes — even Coca-Cola caught on to this idea.

With this view we can have groups like Be Kind to Your Spouse-Beating Brethren, Optimize Time With Your Neighborhood Sex-Offender, Licentious Lawyers Without Borders.

Doing the regular drug-dealer thing would be nothing more than keeping up with the Joneses.

So far, so good. And so much for shame as the ultimate vice of vice.

None of these people care.

I guess I can't blame those who postulate shame as the social cure-all; no other social or political enforcement has worked thus far, at least as far as parting the waters between social patron and social pariah.

I think it's more or less an eeneymeeney approach to broadening the schism between good and bad. I mean, who decides for certain? The “normal” social set? The “normal” lawmakers? And how do these people choose what's right or wrong? And who chooses the caliber of these offenses?

I guess the answer's in everybody pickin' her shame and eschewin' it.

Whatever. Whatever goes, that is. Not only does that mean something, I guess that means anything, shame or no. Take your pick.

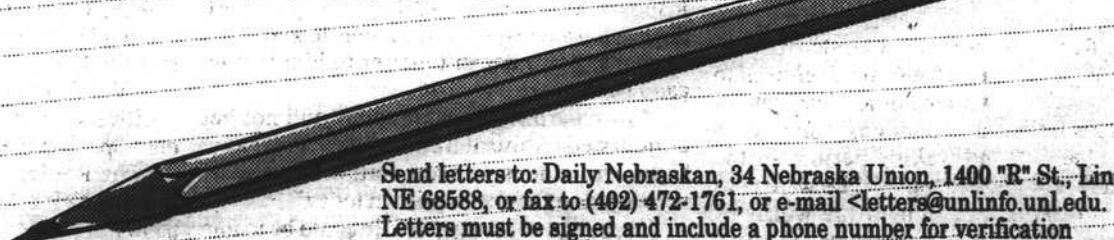
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