

OPINION PAGE

Our
VIEW

Bill's Bill of Rights

President deserves same rights as citizens

When news of President Clinton's alleged affair with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky hit the pages, the major news networks pulled Dan Rather and Peter Jennings off their assignments covering the pope's visit to Cuba and brought them back to Washington.

The call of the media circus was too strong to keep their attention — and the rest of the nation's — on the pontiff's historic visit to the land where he was unwelcome a few years ago. More important in most people's minds were the rumors and gossip in the United States.

But nearly one week later, the hard facts have yet to surface.

The accusations rest with former White House aide Linda Tripp, who secretly taped conversations with Lewinsky. Those tapes hardly meet the criteria for admissible legal evidence. And Tripp, who previously had accused Clinton of another affair, is the only person who has cast such charges. Lewinsky herself has denied in a legal affidavit that the affair took place.

Yet the media and the nation turn to Clinton for explanations and defenses. And those who aren't satisfied with his answers are screaming for resignation.

Americans, and especially American politicians, shouldn't be so fast to toss around words like "impeachment" and "resignation." Both of those words occurred only once each in American politics: Andrew Johnson was impeached (and stayed in office afterward) by a vengeful House after the Civil War, and Richard Nixon resigned because he was going to be impeached.

But does the private life of our president rest in the gossip circles of our citizens? Well, when the possibility of perjury exists, as it does here, we should be very concerned about what Clinton has done.

Burden of proof lies with the accusers, however, not the accused. Clinton shouldn't have to explain allegations that have not yet been substantiated.

Because the president is a highly public figure, it is not totally necessary to wait for a trial to find him guilty. The public has a right to answers, but the question first must be certain.

If Lewinsky herself can make her own accusations, then Clinton needs to step up and explain why she could make such charges. That's when he should explain why he gave her a dress, a book of poetry and other gifts, and explain all the other strangely suspicious details.

And if he did ask Lewinsky to lie under oath, then we can talk about impeachment. But until such guilt is proven, Clinton remains like any other U.S. citizen.

Innocent until proven guilty.

Haney's
VIEW



DN LETTERS

Letter wars

Thus far in 1998 the columnists at the Daily Nebraskan have demonstrated that there are less imaginative writers than the staff of the National Enquirer. I wholeheartedly agree with Mr. Rich Sheperd (DN Letters, Friday) and his analysis of the quality of the columns this semester. I was particularly appalled by Klaus (Marre's) column, "Out With the Old" (DN, Friday). It was riddled with stereotypes and thoughtless babble about a topic he demonstrated he knew nothing about. Compassion and humanity are a writer's greatest tools, Klaus. The style was choppy and his facts were inaccurate. (Did you even notice how many times he wrote "maybe" and "probably"?) The glib title by itself should have warranted rejection.

Ageism is as serious a problem in our society today as racism or sexism. Klaus, next time you feel like a senseless attack on another human being, I suggest you look in the mirror and within yourself.

NOTE TO MALE COLUMNISTS: Please, stop with the Spice Girls, Dirk Diggler and masturbation allusions. They are overdone and immature.

Denise L. Matulka
Lincoln

A new hope?

Since my freshman year, I have always tried to start the day with the DN. It is a decent paper, and fun to read over first thing in the morning. But in that time span, I've noticed an alarming abundance of ignorant letters from various student factions. I've tried to hold my tongue, figuring everyone is entitled to their views. But (Friday's) letter from Clint Keller and Matt Molsen is the straw that broke the camel's back.

First off, gays are not looking for "special rights," as they are often accused of. They are looking for the right to not be attacked on the streets by lynch-mob-mentality hatemongers. Gay marriage is not about corrupting society or something stupid like that. It's about being accepted by society. Until social acceptance is reached, there will never be true equality for these people.

Secondly, what's up with saying that the gay rights movement can't justify itself? You've obviously not read too many articles on the subject, my friends. I feel no need to rehash the arguments here; you'd probably dismiss any facts I tried to present as "liberal propaganda" anyway, just like such noted "public debaters" as Rush

Limbaugh (who never allows anyone on his show with beliefs in opposition to his own on his show due to a disastrous past record) say you should. And, as for the "totalitarian" argument, I feel I should remind you of another group famous for slogans and banners — the American Revolutionary forces. What you list as "propaganda techniques" are commonly used by our government and various corporations to drive a point home and spread the message.

Third, being homosexual is NOT a mental illness. Even if it is indeed genetic, as much research indicates, being gay does not detract from the individual's ability to function in society as would, say, schizophrenia (which, by the way, refers not to multiple personality disorder, a totally different disease, but to a loss of any sense of reality at all which leads the subject to totally incomprehensible behavior). When gays start barking at passersby and shouting obscenities uncontrolably, then I'll buy your argument, but until then, drop the mental illness standpoint.

And yes, I am heterosexual. I do see society crumbling, but not from the movement toward equal rights for all, which is the inevitable goal of any society. I see the crumbling as a result of far-right resistance to any kind of change and a government mired in old, failed ideas tearing us up in the middle. If society's standards are crumbling, maybe those standards shouldn't exist in the first place.

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The letter strikes back

It is truly scary that Clint Keller and Matt Molsen, both college juniors, can be so incorrect in their ideas and information. The two largest mental health organizations in the world reversed themselves decades ago in their former stance that homosexuality was a mental illness. Nebraska is one of the more sensible states that repealed their sodomy laws, but these laws still exist in 20 other states. They decry the use of propagandist tactics by gay people, while conveniently ignoring the massive level of propagandist activity by the Christian Coalition against gay people. Their letter claiming gays are mentally ill, and that heterosexual supporters of gays should be condemned, is anti-gay propaganda.

At least they admitted it was "their opinion."

Gary Rimar
Romeo, Mich.

Return of the letter

We found Charles Godwin's letter (DN, Thursday) to be a departure from the land of sound ethics and morality.

Mr. Godwin first argues that denying women the "right to abortion" would impose upon them children at inopportune times, thus perpetuating "cycles of poverty." He, presumably, holds that it is an act of "saving grace" to murder children who would have lived lives of poverty anyway. Abortion, then, becomes a cruel kindness. "Of all tyrannies," wrote C. S. Lewis, "a tyranny sincerely exercised for the good of its victims may be the most oppressive."

Next, Mr. Godwin presents two premises: (1) Life does not begin at conception, and (2) Life has been continuous since humanity began. Godwin would have us believe that these truths are so overwhelmingly evident that no further arguments are needed.

We understand that the first argument would be impossible to defend in a short letter, but it is one we cannot accept. We believe that "human life must be respected and protected ABSOLUTELY from the moment of CONCEPTION" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2270), and that "abortion always constitutes a grave moral disorder, since it is the deliberate killing of an innocent human being" (Evangelium Vitae, 62).

Perhaps we have misread him, but it appears that he has conveniently thrown in the obscure coup de grace, "since humanity began." We wish he would've explained that.

Furthermore, if life is "continuous" contraception and abortion must be unjustified, since they interfere with this "continuity" — a conclusion that Godwin would hardly want to lead us to, since he would then be arguing FOR the pro-life movement, not against it.

If life does begin at conception (and we hold this to be so), then abortion, whether "performed safely" or "under dangerous, clandestine conditions," is an intrinsic evil. Unless Mr. Godwin can properly provide stronger arguments, we pro-lifers must continue to call abortion what it truly is — murder. Let barbaric things have barbaric names.

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