

OPINION PACES

Guest VIEW

Freedom of marriage Same-sex unions should be sanctioned

Daily Collegian
Pennsylvania State University

State College, Penn. (U-Wire) — Earlier this month, some people observed National Freedom to Marry Day. The event protested the Defense of Marriage Act, which was signed into law in 1996. The act essentially defined marriage as a union between a man and a woman, and in the event same-sex marriage was legalized in a state, other states would not have to recognize such unions.

The act does nothing to preserve or protect the institution of marriage. Instead, it merely singles out gays and lesbians as second-class citizens and invalidates any relationship they might have.

To label that which is considered "basic" for one group "special" for another amounts to nothing more than discrimination. Marriage is a civil right, not a "special" one.

Same-sex marriage is about extending those rights, privileges and responsibilities that heterosexuals take for granted to a segment of the population that has long been discriminated against.

Gays and lesbians have long been condemned for their alleged promiscuity, but when they ask for the right to establish socially and legally recognized monogamous relationships, their commitment is judged to be a threat to society.

Proponents of the act charge that marriage is an institution already in trouble and that expanding it to include gays would further weaken it. Why should gays and lesbians be punished, when they bear no responsibility for the weakened system? Marriage doesn't need to be defended from people who want to commit themselves to lifelong relationships.

Marriage is more than an emotional commitment, however. What many people don't realize (or take for granted) is that marriage also is about a host of legal and economic benefits currently reserved only for heterosexual married couples.

A woman can marry a man after knowing him only a short time and instantly gain legal and economic benefits and protections. If that same woman has a committed long-term relationship with another woman, the situation changes dramatically. If her partner falls ill or dies, she has no more legal authority than would a neighbor or roommate.

Not too long ago, our society prohibited interracial marriages on similar grounds.

The legalization of same-sex marriage is just one in a long line of steps that can bring us closer to what America should be — a place where everyone enjoys equal protection and benefits under the law.

The Defense of Marriage Act does nothing but stand in the way.

Haney's VIEW

—WHILE RECOVERING FROM A WEEKEND PLAGUED BY MALT LIQUOR AND CHEAP SCOTCH, HANEY BRINGS IN HIS YOUNGER BROTHER, TERRANCE, TO DRAW...



DN LETTERS

Keep on rockin'

I have appreciated the "Diversity in History" series published in the DN in honor of Black History Month. I hope that you will continue the series in March in honor of Women's History Month. Women, of course, are from every country, every ethnic group, every class, every sexual orientation (and) every physical ability. I look forward to a diverse, rich, informative series on women in March. For that matter, why not have a "Diversity in History" series run every single week in the Daily Nebraskan, celebrating the accomplishments of a variety of people not usually represented adequately in our curriculum?

Barbara DiBernard
associate professor
English and women's studies

Keep on rollin'

I appreciate Mark Bauermeister's concern in regards to the issue of race and its coverage in the Daily Nebraskan. I have to admit, though, that I found his critique of the DN's recent feature on soul music a little perplexing ("Other papers do it (why can't we?)" Wednesday). On the contrary, I remember reading the article and being pleased that the DN had devoted such a sizable and attention-grabbing article to the achievements of black musicians in America.

I have been impressed by the class and sophistication of the DN's new weekly series on the arts. These Tuesday features, if I remember correctly, are ALWAYS on the back page of the DN, whether they cover architecture, jazz or soul music. Unlike Mr. Bauermeister, I tend to think that a FULL PAGE on the back of the DN commands more respect and attention than a smaller article squeezed between the sports section and the crossword puzzle.

I agree with Mr. Bauermeister's assertion that something as subtle as an ill-placed article on soul music has the potential to impede positive race relations as much as it advances them. But in this case, I don't think that anything even remotely insidious is going on. (What a relief — one scandal fewer to worry about!)

The DN has done an admirable job in forwarding the dialogue on race this year, and the feature on soul was just one more indication of its tenacity. I found it mildly ironic that Mr. Bauermeister's letter, which accused the DN of cavalier disrespect for minorities, found itself between

articles on the Asian Student Alliance and LUPAE. And did he forget last week's coverage of the Big XII Black Student Leadership Conference?

It is true that we need to do a lot more on this campus to chip away at discrimination, whether it is painfully blatant or skillfully veiled. We are justified in holding the DN to the highest standards of intellect and sensitivity in regards to diversity issues. But before we criticize, Mr. Bauermeister, we should ask: If we measured ourselves as individuals by the same standards with which we judge our newspaper, how would we size up?

Keep the dialogue on diversity rolling, DN — we need all we can get.

Kara Slaughter
junior
international affairs and French

Ask those who know

I applaud your efforts to tackle a prickly subject like academic rigor and look forward to the series as it unfolds.

I am, however, disappointed that so far you have chosen to represent mainly the voice of the administration rather than that of the faculty. The administration has one view of this subject, a view that tends to speak to concerns of students and the public. This is not necessarily the problem as perceived by those of us in the trenches ... who must face the issue of rigor every day and every semester, in all of its complexity and prickliness.

Rigor is not an issue in isolation, and the problem of grade inflation to which it is constantly being attached is only one facet of a more complex phenomenon. Rigor occurs in the context of teaching, so it is first and foremost an issue for teachers. If you are to take the "in-depth" look promised in your first article, then you need to go talk to faculty.

Talk with ALL of the faculty and not just those who are most visible or available. Talk to members of the Teaching Council who have made a mission out of teaching, its improvement and reform. Talk to members of the Teaching and Learning Center who have done more than most to keep teaching on the front burner of academic concerns all these years. Talk to members of the Distinguished Teaching Academy. Talk to selected members of EVERY department in this university community, not just the standard and obvious departments

Then and only then will you have

derived a true picture of this significant issue. That is the kind of carefully constructed truth that your readership, mainly students, undoubtedly deserve.

Sean Courtney
associate professor
vocational and adult education

Actually, he's German

Klaus Marre, regarding your Friday article "Bring it on home: Update the Husker state with sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll," I have never been more disgusted with a fellow human being — an American no less — than I am with you.

You have been given a rare opportunity. You have been given a whopping half-page in a newspaper in which to write. You could write about anything. ANYTHING AT ALL. And yet, you chose to write drivel. You chose to make a mockery of the First Amendment. At least, I assume it was you who chose to write about making Nebraska "the bong of the world's pot basket" because I highly doubt that your editor came to you and said, "Klaus, we really need you to write about this — because it's crucial that UNL students and faculty hear it."

What is wrong with you? Either you are just entirely uncreative, or you just smoked a little too much last night. Anyone could come up with something better than the delusional crap you wrote between trips to the refrigerator to satisfy your "munchies."

Why don't you look to Malcolm Kass for topics? He seemed to have something fairly important to say about grades at UNL. Or ask someone on the street, "What pisses you off the most?" and write about that. Ask one of your professors what he or she worries about on a daily basis — what bothers him or her? Write about that. Maybe you should write about the epidemic-scaled tendency among Americans to take their constitutional rights — especially the First Amendment — for granted.

Write about what you think about that. Write about anything, but for God's sake, write about something RELATIVE to the REAL WORLD instead of a ridiculous fantasy that begs the question, "Who the hell's gonna hire this brain cell deficient pot head when he graduates?"

Martha R. Stockinger
Lincoln

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