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VIEW

Scout's dishonor

Boy Scouts violate anti-discrimination law

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Providence, R.I. (U-Wire) – Three years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court heard *Hurley vs. Irish-American Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Group of Boston*. Hurley helped organize a St. Patrick's Day parade, and when gay rights activists asked to march, he sued them, claiming his First Amendment right to associate or not associate with whomever he pleased.

The notoriously conservative Supreme Court ruled in favor of Hurley, who was evidently within his rights to exclude pro-homosexual messages from his parade.

Monday, the New Jersey Court of Appeals proved itself more honorable than the High Court. A three-judge panel ruled the Boy Scouts of America's ban on gays violates the state's anti-discrimination law. The Boy Scouts used much the same defense as Hurley used three years ago – that as a private group, it decides "who can and cannot join."

But the court ruled that because the Boy Scouts are essentially a public service (despite their private status), it must obey the law.

Regardless of how judges water down their decisions with jargon and legal technicalities, they know gay rights are a moral issue. The answer to the question of where morality lies in the Boy Scout case should come easily after hearing both sides.

The plaintiff, James Dale, was kicked out of the Boy Scouts when the group found out he was gay in 1990. The spokesman for the Boy Scouts argued that his organization "has a right ... to teach youth the traditional values that it has taught since 1910 and to establish membership and leadership standards."

The Boy Scouts have long been considered the moral bedrock of American society – the organization that will guarantee America's continued moral superiority. When America's moral center is forced to accept gays, it makes us feel like gay rights might be getting somewhere.

Unfortunately, legally speaking, the New Jersey decision does not mandate that the Boy Scouts of America let in gays. It does not declare discriminatory practices against homosexuals unconstitutional. All it means is that in New Jersey, legal protection for gays and lesbians must be extended to members of the Boy Scouts.

Still, if the lower courts continue to challenge discrimination against gays and lesbians, then the Supreme Court will have to overrule them every time, positively affirming the moral and legal acceptability of homophobia.

But if the Supreme Court justices have any of the integrity that is supposed to be a requirement for their appointments, then perhaps they will be shamed into doing the right thing.

Haney's
VIEW



'Bricks' of drinking

Alcohol abuse hurts the innocent

“*Drunken drivers destroy not only the lives of others, but their own lives as well.*”

KATYA OVCHARENKO is a freshman English major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

This week in Cather Residence Hall there is a program about alcohol. One part of the program is a wall with paper bricks on it, where anyone can write and share his or her bitter experience with alcohol anonymously. It says: "Alcohol abuse touches everyone's life. Please put your brick on the wall."

Reading the terrible examples that students wrote there, I thought how many hearts and lives were broken.

"My mom is an alcoholic and none of us kids go home anymore." Drinking had stolen a mother from her kids! Children had to leave their homes, places that should have become their shelter for the rest of their lives; they had to abandon their mother whose personality was destroyed by alcohol.

"My best friend was killed in a drunk driving accident."

"My 17-year-old cousin was killed by a drunk driver when she was taking her infant nephew for a walk."

Best friends and relatives just disappear. Lives fade in the middle of flourishing. Life is simply taken from these people.

"I was at a party and got drunk and was raped."

And now, think how this girl will learn to trust people again. How can she forget that? The bleeding wounds will remain. They won't heal. The memories will bring her back again and again to that party.

"My friends were driving and

were all drunk and got in an accident. One is now paralyzed and just learned how to walk again."

Drunken drivers destroy not only the lives of others, but their own lives as well.

I want to have a look at this problem. Why is it such a widespread problem in America?

I'm not trying to emphasize that alcohol is a problem only in America, but in this country more attention is paid to it.

The happy birthday of 21 brings us freedom: We are allowed to drink! But by that time, most of us are not excited about drinking, because we already have had enough of it.

There's hardly anything interesting here for teen-agers to do. They are involved in many things in their high schools, but apart from school they are left to their own devices. Are there a lot of things they can do? Do they go to performance theaters or discotheques? And what kinds of activities are they interested in? Partying and cruising – it's almost all they can do to entertain themselves and not be bored to death.

And there is hardly a party without alcohol. The most frequent response to the question, "What did you do this weekend?" is "Well, I was hanging out with my friends on Friday and Saturday. Nothing special, just drinking beer." Of course, I agree people are different, and therefore not everyone is supposed to go out and drink every weekend. But, on the other hand, staying at home knowing your friends are having a good time is not the way out.

It's important to be conscious enough and to see yourself as a part

of a community in which everyone is tied together, in which the damage in one link may cause the ruin of the whole chain. There's a perfect rule of life saying "Do whatever you want to enjoy yourself, but do not disturb others!"

This is the real freedom.

Freedom of living in a society, with respect to the other members of it. The best friend wouldn't be killed, the girl wouldn't be raped, kids would have a real family and there would be no hurt. If only people could follow this golden rule. ...

You may argue and say America is the country of freedom and we are free to do what we want, but again, this is the country of respect. Why do we have to be problematic to the world we live in?

I don't want to bring up all that stuff about how alcohol influences your health, as well as your physical, mental and spiritual states. You all know this and heard about it a long time ago. In the case of alcohol abuse, it's the society's problem already, not just your own.

I'm strongly against drinking of any kind, even if it's only two cans of beer. If alcohol abuse touched your life or the lives of the people you care about, you'd never get drunk. You'd never cause the situation in which innocent people could die just because you filled yourself up with beer without thinking of the consequences.

Does that mean you have to go through the loss and hurt to understand the seriousness of alcohol problems? Of course not.

But next time, before you go to a bar or a party to get drunk, try to think beforehand. It may happen to you.

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