

OPINION PACKAGES

Our VIEW

A noble decision

Moeser, officials do right thing with remains

University officials made a seemingly unprecedented and bold decision Tuesday to bandage harm caused by the inappropriate disposal of American Indian remains on campus.

The decision seemed unprecedented because Chancellor James Moeser approved a proposal to repatriate bones after it was read by representatives of 17 tribes at 3 p.m. Tuesday.

Often, sweeping university decisions are made only after weeks of gaining approvals by various boards and committees.

But that day, Moeser and other University of Nebraska-Lincoln officials met with tribal representatives starting at 9 a.m. and waited for an hour outside the meeting room while the proposal was drawn up.

They may have been thinking about the American Indian remains since some were discovered in Bessey Hall last fall, but Moeser only took a minute to think over Tuesday's proposal before he gave it a solid thumbs-up.

That decision was admirable because it required a significant level of cultural understanding and swiftly gave away what, to many not close to the issue, sounded like nothing more than university research material and a precious bit of East Campus landscape, as well as a significant commitment of university time and resources.

According to the proposal, the university will return the remains of about 1,600 American Indian people, enclose areas of East Campus where incinerated bones were scattered in 1965 and 1967, examine records to identify culturally unaffiliated remains and release identified remains within 30 days.

That approval was dually bold.

First, it was bold because it could set a precedent. Any university that holds culturally unaffiliated remains should feel pressured to re-examine those remains and, if needed, repatriate those bones and make amends with the proper tribe's descendants.

The decision was also bold because administrators decided, in this case, that one people's cultural and spiritual beliefs weigh more heavily on the scale of justice than do the goals of others' scientific research.

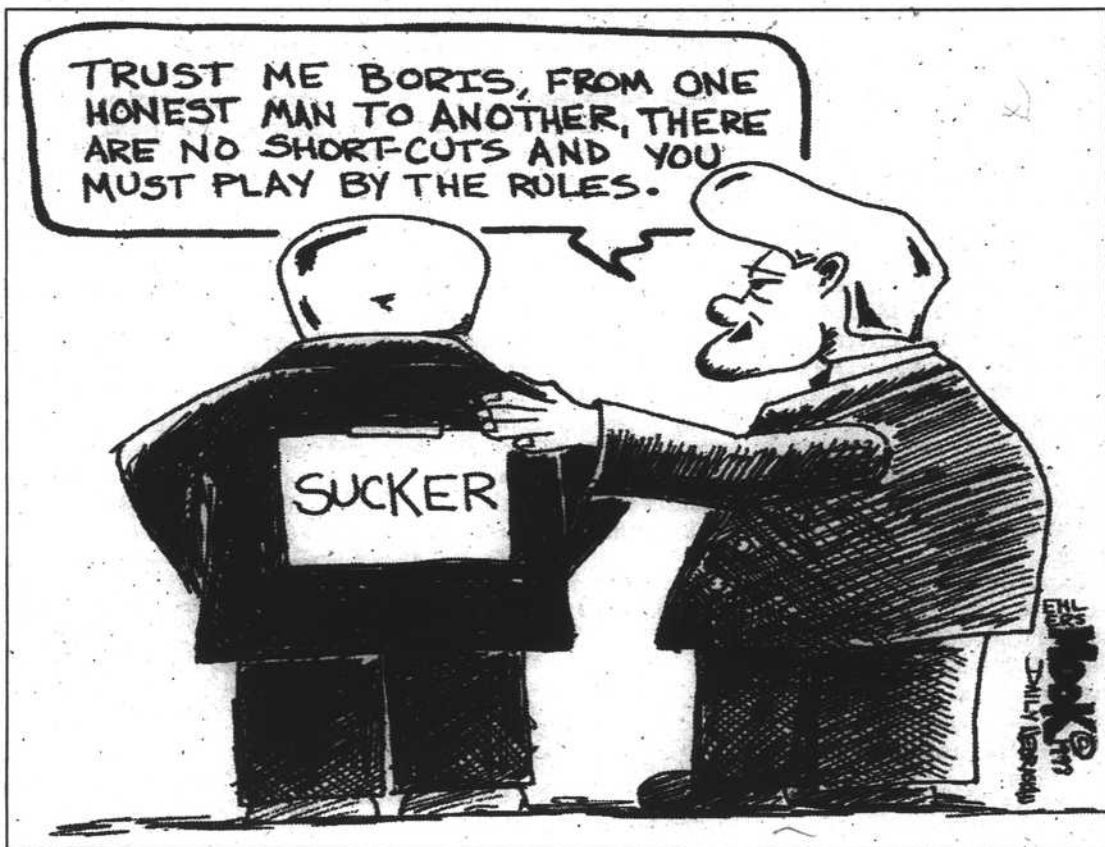
Surely it would have been easier for administrators to claim the man who incinerated remains in the 1960s was ignorant and no longer employed by UNL, and the rest of the bones were obtained legally. They could have taken a public relations black eye in stride and left repatriation in the dust, but they did not.

Instead, their decision may have opened the door for other groups to oppose research and scientific test material. For administrators, it could mean many more meetings, many more apologies and many more sacrifices.

We commend the university and involved officials for their nobility and sensitivity in dealing with a matter that some researchers once steeped in secrecy and ignorance.

Though the damage done cannot be repaired, we hope it can be soothed.

Mook's VIEW



Passing the buck

Society's shirkers need to assume responsibility



JOSH WIMMER is a senior news-editorial major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Hey, folks.

OK, last week, as you may remember, I urged you to drink, smoke and make merry.

(I guess, though, if you followed my instructions to the letter, then you probably don't remember.)

Anyway, rumor has it, a few of our university administrators were a little upset.

They didn't think it sent an appropriate message to you, my fellow students.

And they probably didn't think it portrayed this university in a particularly flattering light.

They'd probably have preferred something like this:

Don't drink and drive.

Smoking kills.

Use a condom.

(Or a dental dam, when appropriate.)

And this concerns me a little.

You see, the J-Dogg doesn't work for the Man.

And while I'm sure these folks have our best interests in mind — university administrators always do, after all — I feel compelled to remind them that life isn't safe and pretty all the time.

This paper isn't a public relations brochure for the university.

Even if it were, I just can't see a lot of potential students being turned off by drinking and sex. ("Whoa! Chicks and beer? Get me outta here!")

This paper also isn't a handbook to college life.

I think you're all old enough to know by now that drinking can be dangerous, smoking is unhealthy, and sex should be safe — even if using a condom doesn't feel as good, which, no matter how "ultra-thin" it is, it doesn't.

In fact, if I did devote an entire column to preaching the evils of substance abuse, I don't think any of you would read it.

Because, let's just admit it — those columns mostly suck.

I don't see it as my job to tell you those sorts of things. This is good, because I'm in no position to say any of them.

Anyway — this will relate — in USA Today a few weeks ago, some dad wrote in all pissed off at Michael Jordan, who had the nerve to smoke a cigar after helping the Bulls win a sixth NBA championship.

Christ almighty.

He's Michael Jordan. I don't know anything about basketball, and even I have to admit he's superhuman on the court.

I think he's earned the right to smoke a cigar.

This guy was ready to blame Jordan if his kid started smoking, because Michael Jordan is a role model.

No, he's a basketball player. Dads are role models.

If parents' 12-year-old kids start smoking and they're that pissed off, they should look at themselves first.

Winona Ryder gets flak all the time, too. Parents fume at her for smoking in her movies, she's said.

She tells them she's not a role model. She's an actress. And she's right.

If you think kids start smoking because someone in a movie does, you're as crazy as those people who accused Black Sabbath of making teen-agers commit suicide.

And on a note closer to home, I'd like to talk about my Godzilla cup holder now.

I love Godzilla. I thought the film was just fine, and I touch myself when I watch the cartoon.

So naturally, my heart skipped a few beats when I walked into Taco Bell, and they were offering a Godzilla cup holder for just, like, \$2.49.

You hang it on your car door, and it holds your beverages while you drive, looking fearsome the whole time. Pretty simple.

But it came with instructions. And three warnings.

The first warning said not to

let your little kid eat the cup holder.

The second cautioned that, if the beverage held by the cup holder were hot, it could spill and burn someone.

And the third warned reminded you not to bump into the cup holder while you were driving and crash your car.

Is it any wonder the French think we're stupid?

I mean, if we're gonna put warnings on things, we should put it on the stuff that deserves them.

Your TV should be labeled: *Warning! "Win Ben Stein's Money" could appear at any time.*

Matchbox 20 albums should read: *Warning! If you buy this, you're going to suck.*

Of all things, girlfriends should have warnings plastered all over them. And ex-girlfriends should have to walk around in blaze orange carrying signs that read: *I could go nuts for no reason RIGHT NOW.*

But I digress.

My point is, somewhere along the line, stupidity infiltrated our society ...

No, check that. Irresponsibility infiltrated our culture.

Sometime, probably in the '80s, people decided they weren't going to blame themselves for spilling coffee. Or for their kids drinking. Or whatever.

So they started suing people, which was annoying. But it's progressed now, and it's worse.

Companies are forced to do everything they can to prevent idiotic lawsuits being brought against them.

Basketball players, actors and other public figures are supposed to be living saints, because otherwise, parents say, the children of America will be junkies when they grow up.

And newspaper writers aren't supposed to even joke about sex or drugs.

I don't buy that.

I know you, my readers, aren't stupid.

And, for the life of me, I hope our administrators — who must, after all, think that we are smart enough to devote their careers to — as well as the rest of the "adult" world, figure it out for themselves.

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