

OPINION PACES

Our VIEW

Blowing smoke

Blaming Joe Camel doesn't make sense

Last Thursday the Centers for Disease Control reported that, between 1988 and 1996, the number of American youths who started smoking went up 73 percent.

It stated that more than 1.2 million Americans under 18 started smoking in 1996, whereas only 708,000 started in 1988. The CDC doesn't have hard facts on these; they're merely estimates based on a survey of 78,330 Americans between 1994 and 1997.

With these estimates, the CDC has taken its study one step further by saying that the increase can be attributed to the Joe Camel campaign, which was used to advertise Camel cigarettes by R.J. Reynolds, that started in 1988.

The CDC claims it is when this campaign started that youths began to smoke more.

The Joe Camel campaign has been eliminated already because of its perceived threat of targeting children in its ads. Nevertheless, the government still sees fit to blame Reynolds for increased rates.

R.J. Reynolds has fired back, citing unfair accusations from the government. It claims the advertising practice was never aimed at children and that it is being blamed for something that is not its fault. It is a reasonable claim.

For one, it's dangerous for the CDC to make accusations based on estimated surveys. A group of 78,330 Americans doesn't necessarily speak for the entire country. Beyond that, the group surveyed wasn't only people under 18, but rather between ages 12 and 66. So the CDC is placing blame based on 13.6 percent of a survey group that is less than 1 percent of the population.

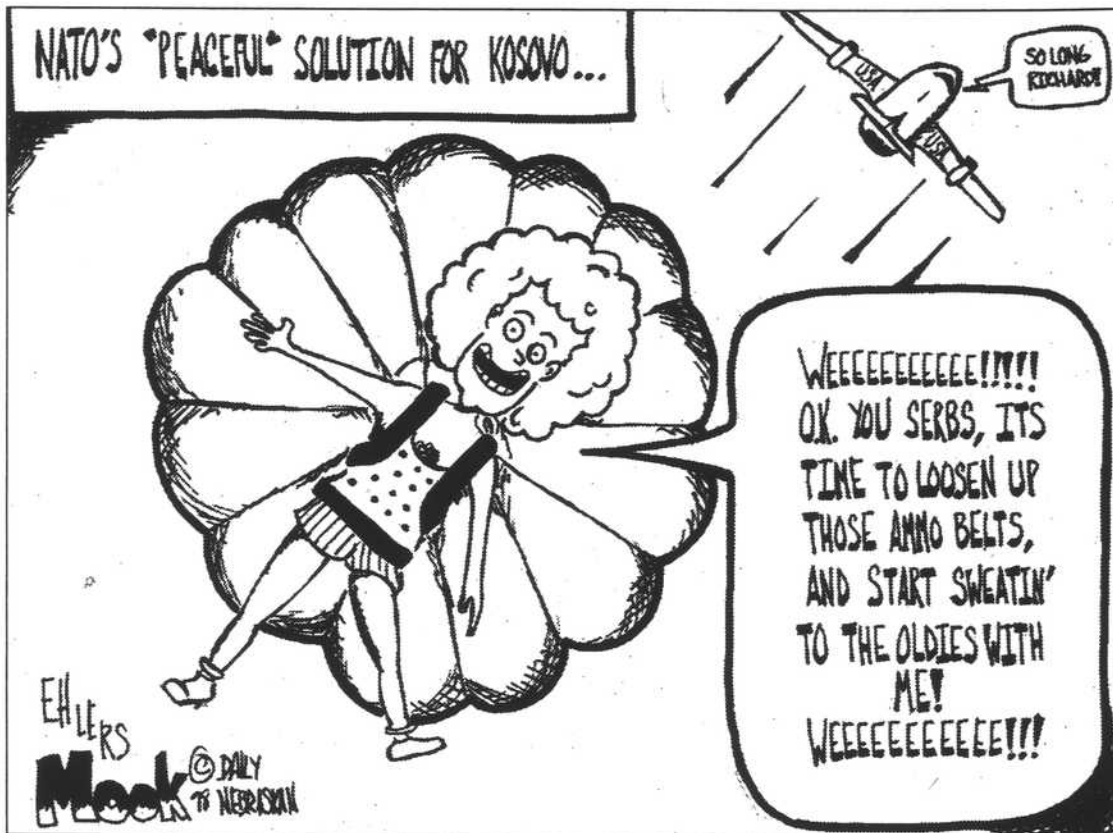
Furthermore, most children under 18 aren't even smoking Camel cigarettes. In the June 22 issue of the Washington Post, a government official said that probably only 20 percent of cigarettes smoked by youths were made by the Reynolds company. Sixty percent, the official said, were made by the Philip Morris Company, which make Marlboro products.

How much sense, then, does it make to claim the Joe Camel campaign propelled the increase in cigarette usage when it is nowhere near the majority smoked by youths? The equivalent would be to say Tony the Tiger is the driving force behind why children are eating more Cheerios.

We believe the real reason children smoke today has little to do with surveys and complex advertising, but simple peer and parent influence. When a youth is surrounded by a smoking culture, whether at home or at a party, the likelihood of that person smoking goes up.

In this media-savvy society, it's unlikely teens are going to fall for a cartoon camel smoking away; it's more likely they will mirror what their friends and family do.

Mook's VIEW



DN LETTERS

Replacing the "H" word

Congratulations on your open-minded editorial about anti-gay discrimination. Now, if you could just bring yourselves, editorially speaking, to use the word "gay."

Gay people in the 1990s feel about the word "homosexual" the way African-Americans felt about the word "Negro" in the 1960s - it is the word the enemy uses and does not convey respect or tolerance.

We no longer approve of the word "Negro." When we feel that way about "homosexual," we truly will be a tolerant society.

You can do it. We put out a 100-page magazine every two weeks without using the "H" word.

Bobbi Dugan
assistant editor
Echo Magazine

Zero tolerance

"I hate fags, man. If I ever met a fag, I'd kill him."

I still remember these words spoken by a high school classmate. I remember being the only person in the room to confront his statements.

"Have you ever met a gay person?" I asked him.

"No. I hope I never do. I'd kill him."

The memory of this conversation came back to me as I read about the Wyoming torture and murder of Matt Shepard. The "gay murder victim" had a name. He had a family. He had friends. He was a person.

His murderers probably never considered this. To them he was just a "fag." I wonder if they ever expressed sentiments like those of my former classmate. I wonder if anyone had ever

had the guts to challenge their words.

How about you? How many times have you heard such comments and done nothing? How many times have you laughed at a friend's "gay joke?" How many times have you told one?

It is everyone's responsibility to take a stand against bigotry. It is not a matter of being "politically correct." It's a matter of doing what's right and respecting your fellow human beings. By allowing people to spout bigoted and hateful comments without a challenge we are condoning their attitudes - the same attitude held by Matt Shepard's murderers. The next time you find yourself in a homophobic, racist, sexist or otherwise intolerant environment, take a stand! You don't have to be the butt of the joke to see the underlying hatred. Do something! If you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem.

context and presented to mean something else. The author, Paul, was trying to say it is best if one does not marry but it is also acceptable for one to marry. They both are acceptable choices. There is not a contradiction, just misunderstanding.

Another example is the story of Lot and the Sodomites. It seems on the surface to be a very poor choice on Lot's part, but if you read the context, you will find a much different story. The men he invited into his home were angels, not just men. These angels were messengers sent to deliver a message and Lot had to obey God and protect them. Not only that, but the ancient custom of the day was for the host to protect his guests, at all cost. Lot had no choice. He was not sinning but following the law and fearing God. Again, the context is very important.

I also believe that Miss Kuxhausen proved the Bible has to be true in the opening part of her column. The fact that the Bible has 40-plus authors, spanning over hundreds of years, from many different countries, and yet they all agree on every subject and write it in such a way that it can be relevant today, is amazing. That certainly shows that the Bible is more than some ordinary book. That translation had to be so accurate that it took monks years to translate it just so it would be right. There was no margin for error.

The basic sins of our society are the same today as they were then, and we are still running from God. We as people need to decide for ourselves about the Bible, but more importantly, we have to know the facts first.

Angela Hatcher
senior
English
member of Allies Against
Heterosexism and Homophobia

The word of God

I am a Christian and I believe the whole Bible and try to follow every word it says. The Bible itself is either all true or all false. It says in 2 Timothy 3:16 that all of scripture is "God-breathed" and therefore true. If God lied to us, then that would make Christianity a farce and that is simply not the case.

I do, however, see that many people pull scripture out of context and then use it to attempt to disprove the validity of the Bible. For example, the quote about marriage from Terry Cain's book was totally taken out of its

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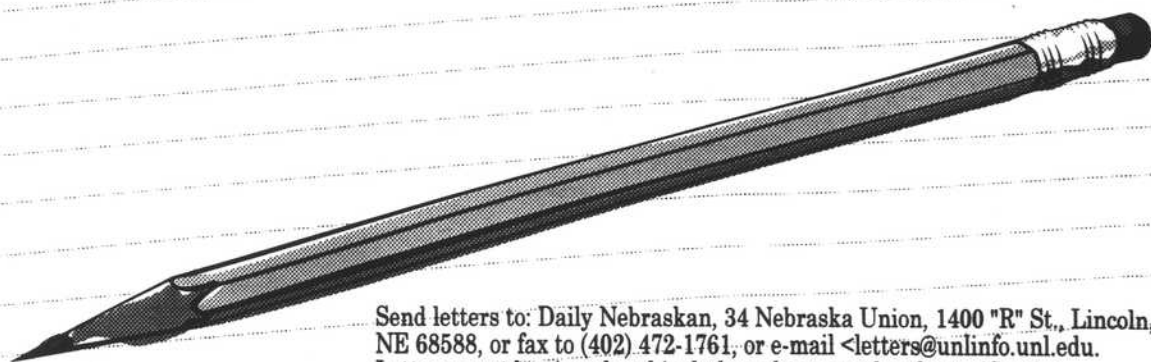
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