

OPINION PAGE

Quotes OF THE WEEK

"We've got to put this behind us. Nobody's perfect."
Tight end Sheldon Jackson, after the Huskers' loss to Texas A&M

"No question about it, this is the biggest win of my career."
Texas A&M Coach R. C. Slocum, on his team's win over the Huskers

"Competitors will fight back. People that aren't will just fall along the way."
Nebraska Defensive Coordinator Charlie McBride, on the Huskers' game last weekend

"I had this guy from Germany buy a Rolling Stones and Miles Davis album, and he's asking me for a second order."
Backtrack Records owner Jeff Loos, on moving his business solely onto the Web

"Basically what the report says is that we should continue to do what we are doing in the department."
Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, political science department graduate chairwoman, on the report that found no hard evidence of gender inequity in the department

"Nobody questions the need for lower taxes in Nebraska. But I don't think this is right answer."
ASUN president Sara Russell, speaking against Initiative 413

"It is fabulous. It really is great. The first time someone asked me if all the characters were on drugs, I was stunned. I had never made the connection. But I thought it was really funny."
Pat Stevens, a visiting professor in the UNL Department of Theatre Arts and Dance, about "The Scooby-Doo Show," for which she provided the voice of Velma

"I live in extremes. I learn from trial and error."
All-American cross-country runner Jeroen Broekzitter, on his health ailments

"(His head) sounded like a bowling ball bouncing on concrete."
Vernon Hayes, about the blows his girlfriend, Francisca Pleines, inflicted on her 22-month-old son, Wyatt Campbell, that led to his death

"More of the cost of college is being shifted to students."
Craig Munier, UNL director of scholarships and financial aid, on the costs of higher education

"We don't have the luxury of time."
Gary Aerts, manager of administrative systems for Information Services, on Y2K

"We have got to get back the power game. That's an area that has to improve a great deal."
NU Football Coach Frank Solich, on what the team needs to improve

"Your circumstances are not your problem, it's your attitude."
John Harris, special assistant to the vice chancellor for student affairs, who will be leaving UNL at the end of the semester

Mook's VIEW



Judge not

Open your eyes and mind to differences



MATTHEW EICKMAN is a senior finance and economics major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

A 21-year-old man died this week. He wasn't in an accident, he had no terminal illnesses, and he wasn't committing a crime.

He was killed because he was gay. Matthew Shepard, 21, died Monday in a Fort Collins, Colo., hospital. He was a gay student from the University of Wyoming.

He had been lured away from campus by two men pretending to be gay. He was beaten and tied to a split-rail fence in near-freezing temperatures last week.

The two men pistol-whipped him and smashed his skull so badly that doctors could not even perform surgery.

A man tragically lost his life, and people are reacting.

They're calling for stronger hate-crime legislation to protect gays. President Clinton has become involved by urging Congress to expand federal hate-crime laws to protect offenses committed because of sexual orientation.

Unfortunately, it took a man's death to stir up interest. We were aware of the homophobic atmosphere in the United States, yet the president gets involved only after a man is severely beaten.

Gay rights activists recognize the need for legislation, but they also point to a fast-growing level of intolerance.

The intolerance is evident in the way people of different religions, sexual preference or color are treated. We have reached a point where people need to become comfortable with differences because, hey, everyone's got 'em.

We live in an imperfect world. Bad things happen. People are different. Nothing goes as expected.

Unfortunately, we also live in a world where people frequently sit in

judgment of others.

Someone's skin is a different color than ours; we stereotype them.

Someone practices a religion different from ours; we criticize their beliefs.

Someone holds different sexual preferences; we taunt and exclude them.

Whether these attitudes come from our upbringing, our individual experiences or national advertising campaigns, they are wrong. We are holding back our country by holding ourselves above others.

Much of the intolerance of homosexuality is being fostered by religious political organizations. The Family Research Council, Focus on the Family and the Christian Coalition began yet another new advertisement campaign last week.

The ads send the message that gays should change their sexual orientation.

These groups are asking us to judge others. They must feel that someone else's sexual preferences will affect us.

Last year, during Coming Out Week, we walked around campus only to see anti-gay messages covering our sidewalks.

Do you remember how you reacted to these writings? Were you confused, amazed, offended or amused?

The sidewalk chalkings delivered an intolerant message. The message did something that gays have not done—forced their intolerant opinions upon us.

Our intolerance has led to a large outbreak of homophobia. Homophobia develops because people view homosexuality as unnatural, a choice, an attack on the family Bible or an opinion forced upon others.

But why does a fear of something harmless develop? Who's to say what is natural for someone else? Why can't others make life choices that don't negatively affect others?

The attack on the Bible is not a valid reason for judging gays because the interpretations are too inconsistent. In searching for religious reasons to criticize gays, people point to the Bible.

They look at an incomplete translation of I Corinthians 6:9-11 for condemnation of homosexuality. However, the term "homo" has been added to the translation because it is incomplete.

I Corinthians 14:34 can be interpreted as Paul condemning women

preaching. I Timothy 2:11 condemns gold and pearls.

So, in deciding that being gay is wrong, we must also disregard all women who wish to spread the Word of the Lord, and we should criticize those who hold gold and wear pearls?

Homosexuality is not being forced upon anyone. No one has ever asked me to become gay, and no one has asked me to give it a try.

Matthew Shepard was not forcing his opinions on others. Rather, it was the two other men who used force to settle the situation.

University of California-Davis researchers Gregory Herek and Eric Glunt believe that the least homophobic people are "political liberal, young, highly educated, female or know a gay or lesbian person."

They are describing the leaders—the young and educated, and the people who have the power to make a difference.

While our lawmakers will see to stricter legislation, we have another power. We can use our leadership to erase the intolerance that clouds our nation.

We shall not judge others if we wish them to not judge us.

The Thomas Jefferson Memorial is inscribed, "All free men shall be free to profess and by argument to maintain their opinions of religion."

Do Christians need to criticize Buddhists? Do Muslims need to criticize Jews?

The answer is "no."

A man died because we sat in judgment of him. We ostracized him for something that was a part of him and didn't affect the way he treated others.

Matthew Shepard died because of our intolerance. He died because two idiots felt they were better men. He died because the idiots used ridiculous force to prove their superiority.

The absurd actions were wrong, and the motives were just as cruel. We must show those two men that they are not better than anyone.

Open your eyes and mind before judging someone based on sexuality. Force is not the answer to any problem.

Don't beat the hell out of someone because they are different from you. Experience and learn from diversity.

If the two men from Wyoming were more mature, Matthew Shepard would be attending classes today.

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