

Changing minds

Tolerance, humanity must be found in one's own way



ADAM KLINKER is a sophomore English, history and philosophy major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

It seems that it will be difficult for me to write columns any longer.

For the most part, my opinion has disappeared, and I have no idea where it went.

In truth, it's always been a struggle for me to get down on paper some idea about something of which I can see both sides. I like to live life in the gray area between good and bad, right and wrong, acceptance and indifference.

Not always did I live my life as such. Six months ago, I relished living life to the lees in concrete definitions

of what was perfect and what was terrible.

Needless to say, I was not a very tolerant person.

But since that time I've learned a little something about life. Not everything by any means, but a little thing; and even with that thing, I have no idea what it is. But it's made me better.

I don't know what I think, but I think I know that America is a good place that is corrupted by people who could be good, but choose to be bad, as programmed by man's innate wickedness.

I think I further know that this job has taught me something that is not learned in books, or by celebrating diversity or Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday.

I have learned tolerance. If the University of Nebraska-Lincoln really wants to get people together and increase the diversity base and fulfill all of the other buzzwords of the day, then they should offer a course in solid opinion writing.

The university is obviously not going to do it with diversity councils and guest speakers and days off from classes.

It's farcical to think that at a university such as UNL — where the student body is 89.72 percent white — that reaching out in the name of racial and ethnic harmony means a day off on the third Monday in January.

It is further absurd to think that on this third Monday in January, students who do not have to go to class are going to roll out of bed and go to a diversity lecture at the Lied Center, unless they have been assigned to do so.

In keeping with my new-found enlightenment, however, I think I know that there are some students who will go, will learn and will better themselves with their choice to attend.

But what are the other options at UNL on the third Monday in January?

It is good to pay homage to a man such as Dr. King. What he did for America and what his legacy continues to do is worthy of praise and observance — but perhaps not as a date on a calendar.

But again, what can you do? The answer is somewhere between nothing and everything. Are you beginning to gather what bliss it is to live in a world of entirely gray areas?

The issue is not Dr. King. The issue is not tolerance. The issue is people and attitudes, and the failure inherent in the ability to change them.

Only certain things will sway certain people. But to achieve the utmost in the art of tolerance and diversity, a person needs to become entirely without opinion.

However, as human nature involves rational and reactionary thought, there can, never be such a person in our day. But we can always try.

And it starts with being able to learn, which means being able to think. With that, one can gain a new lease on the way they view life. Being able to think about both sides of an issue will eventually lead to a better grasp on tolerance and diversity.

This being the case, having many opinions is the optimum, for in that way a person can truly garner a deeper respect for the other side of the argument.

It really cleans a person out, writing these pieces. One can argue anything and one can accept anything. A person becomes more human. And humanity is not something that comes from a university or a university-

sponsored program, or anything of that sort.

It must be lived. As Dr. King said, "Make a career of humanity ... and you will make a greater person of yourself, a greater nation of your country and a finer world to live in."

It doesn't make any difference which day we single out for celebration of diversity and tolerance. Be it the third Monday in January or the second Friday in May, or the fourth Tuesday in October, people will not change.

And unless they make a conscious effort and devote themselves, independent of the influences of their university, church or family, people will not change. But they could at any given moment.

If a person has enough desire to change, they can see that anyone can do anything.

A person can become tolerant. They can accept things or change them, but they can remain balanced. It's all in that gray area.

And of course, everyone can find that.

And oh yeah ... I guess I'll stick around for a while longer.

All smoked out

Getting past pot clears way for seeking out life's priorities



TODD MUNSON is a senior broadcasting major and a Daily Nebraskan columnist.

Given up on that New Year's resolution yet?

If you have, just strengthen your resolve for the upcoming Chinese New Year. If you're still plugging away, just keep plugging like the wind.

New Year's resolutions are always amusing. By the way, Campus Rec has been looking extra meaty; 1999 looks to be the year of washboard abs and butts as firm as marble cutting boards.

But, is a butt that you could dice carrots on really going to have life-changing effects?

I hope not, unless of course you happen to be a Hooters girl.

This year, I didn't make any resolutions, just one requirement. I thought it'd be amusing to get all A's just once in 17 years.

And I know I wouldn't be in a position to think of getting a 4.0 if it weren't for a resolution I made three years ago.

Kids, keep your arms and legs inside the vehicle at all times. We're taking a ride in a souped-up DeLorean specially modified for time travel.

It was the fall of 1994, a most interesting period in time. Grunge was beginning to choke on its own vomit and the Backstreet Boys had yet to be potty-trained.

Somewhere in the middle of all this, I had just started college.

I have nothing but fond memories of living in Abel Hell: chicken nugget night, dodging broken glass in the communal bathroom and watching Monte Christo grind a chick on the very dryer I happened to be using down in the laundry room.

Then, there's all the new friends I made.

It's kinda fuzzy, but I remember the time I met a fella who had this really cool pencil holder. Dave just

laughed and handed me a lighter. Approximately 2.2 seconds later, I realized this pencil holder did a bit more than keep all of Dave's pencils in one convenient place. Oh yeah, I also had this uncontrollable urge to yell "Ricola" at the top of my lungs.

Pot/weed/dope/grass, meet Todd. Todd, meet pot/weed/dope/grass.

For the rest of freshman year I and several others became permanent fixtures in Dave's room.

He had the art of smoking dope without getting caught down to a science, and that's what we did and did and did and did. Every night, rain, shine or test the next day, it was a session in Dave's room, and we took enough bong hits to ensure that we weren't just baked, we were fried.

Because of this, my memories of freshman year vaguely consist of single-handedly keeping Q4Kwik in business with my nightly purchase of a microwave burrito and box of Junior Mints, thinking "Tank Girl" was the

best movie ever and sitting in the same chair for 36 hours without getting up. (I was really comfortable, OK?) The only productive thing we did was form an intramural kickball team.

This trend continued when we moved off campus as sophomores. By the end of first semester, things began to change all at once. Half of us realized getting loaded every night wasn't an activity conducive to scholarly success. The other half kept on keeping on.

That was January 1996. Today,

those of us who stepped away from the pipe could be considered productive members of society. We've either graduated, or will soon, or have moved on to something else. I don't exactly know where all of the other half is. They've either gotten menial jobs, moved back home or are still on the couch pulling tubes.

I didn't really give much thought to stopping pot-smoking. I wasn't addicted or anything. I just realized that living with my eyes half open wasn't a good way to live my life. Besides, I'm a naturally unmotivated person and smoking heaps of dope really didn't help things out. I can safely say that if it weren't for our beloved land grant university's easygoing curriculum, I wouldn't have made it past my freshman

year. My friend Justin didn't. He flunked out with a 0.86 GPA, and that's cumulative, mind you — he kicked it in second semester. Flunking out meant more time to get stoned. Looking down the barrel of a 3-foot-

er and the prospect of delivering pizzas for the rest of his life, he signed up for the Navy. He failed his pee test with flying colors, but they took him anyway.

I got an e-mail from him the other day. The Navy declared him Sailor of the Quarter, and gave him his own parking spot. He was even nominated for Sailor of the Year, but lost because he wasn't "Surface Warfare Qualified." He's out in the Persian Gulf working on that one right now. He's calls Japan his home and has literally been around the globe — all because he stopped smoking pot.

Justin is the perfect case to the point I want to make.

If you want to accomplish your goals, being perpetually stoned isn't going to help, unless of course you want to sit in a chair for 36 hours. Don't worry, I won't get all preachy on the supposed dangers of pot. We're adults here and as adults, we are free to choose our own paths.

We're also free to change directions at any time. When made the leap back into reality, I was shocked at all the fun things a person could do when not baked to the gills. In fact, I could proudly say I had a plethora of free time. Several months went by before I took another hit.

Yep, I took another, but I did it because I knew I had the ability to say no and possessed something that many of my departed friends lacked — self-control.

Since that fateful day back in 1996, I know that, if I had just a couple of extra digits, I could count all the times on my fingers and toes that I've gotten loaded.

Until my new and eternally wise roommate moved in, I'd never been able to put my finger on my attitude toward smoking pot. When I told Patrick that for three years I'd smoked pot on an every-now-and-again basis, he replied, "Oh yeah, it's a lot like masturbation. It's a lot of fun and feels great, but it's something you can't do every day. I mean, if you sit around stroking your junk for eight hours a day, every day, you're gonna mess yourself up."

I should have known something was up when the only thing he had to move in was a 1,000-page tome of his deep thoughts.



SHAWN BALLARIN/DN