

OPINION PAGES

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Our VIEW

Web wars

Parents, not laws, should decide rules

It's over, censors. The war over the Internet is done. You lost. Get over it. You listening, Virginia?

A few years back, Congress passed a law called the Communications Decency Act. It basically said that anyone caught posting something "illicit, indecent or immoral" on the Internet where children could have access to it would be guilty of a crime.

The Supreme Court laughed it out of existence. The law took far too many liberties and infringed on the First Amendment far too much.

It also just doesn't work practically. The Internet doesn't know how to discriminate

“The Internet doesn't know how to discriminate between one person who's 15 and one who's 85.”

between one person who's 15 and one who's 85.

A bigger problem is that the Internet is a global force, not a local one. Laws such as these drive business out of the United States and into foreign countries. The problem doesn't go away.

In July, Virginia passed a law that would bring back the CDA. Except, of course, that the Supreme Court's already said the CDA is unconstitutional. Yet, Virginia is adamant that its law has a good purpose behind it.

What makes Virginia's law any different from the CDA?

Nothing, really.

The law makes it illegal to "knowingly display" Web content deemed "harmful to juveniles." It also makes it illegal to display this material "for (a) commercial purpose (and) in a manner whereby juveniles may examine or peruse" the material.

The burdens this places on Internet providers alone is enormous. Under this law, the state can go after the service provider and the person who made the Web site. It's the equivalent of suing a landlord for what a tenant hangs in an apartment window.

Laws such as Virginia's and the CDA seem appealing on the surface but sink much lower into much less-wanted effects.

Censorship gives people a chance to screen out what they don't like, but the law says people always have the right to talk, so censorship is, for the most part, illegal.

In several of the Supreme Court justices' writings about the CDA, many of them stressed that parental supervision is the solution, not censorship that infringes on the rights of millions.

We couldn't agree more.

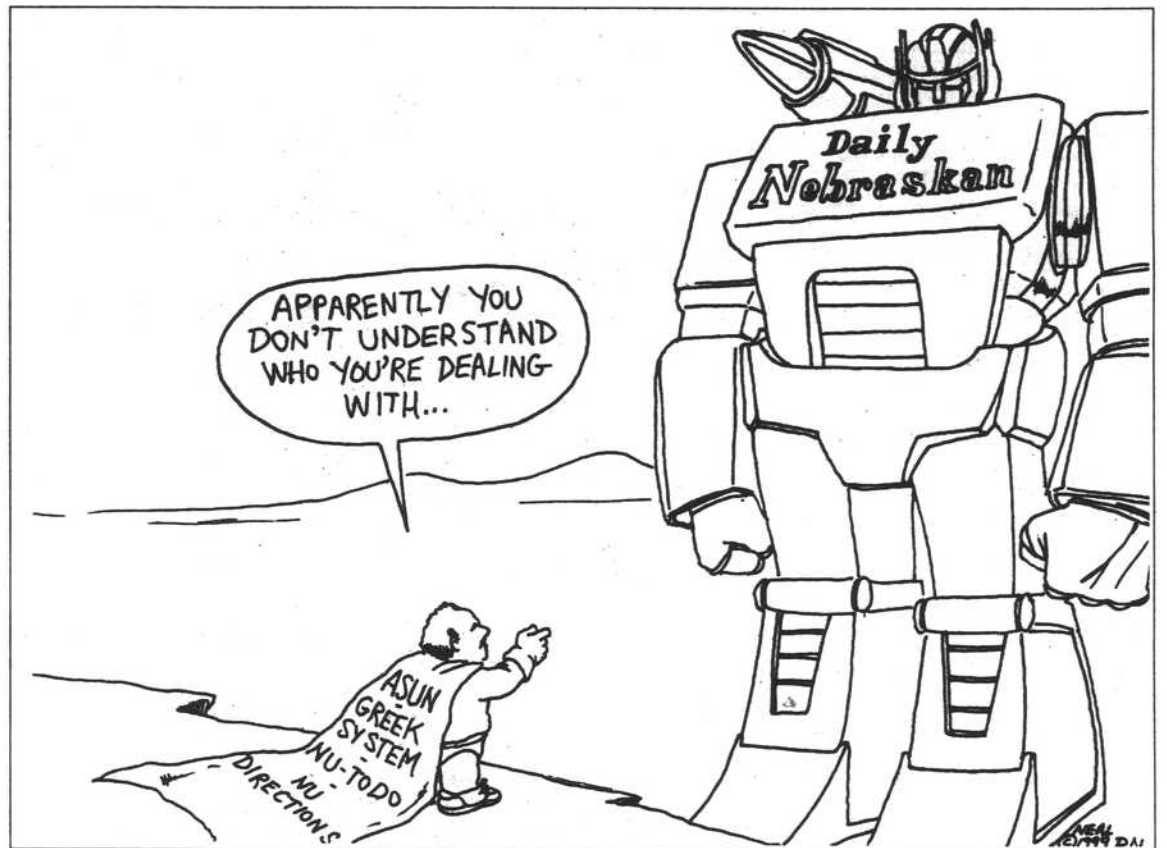
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Obermeyer's VIEW



DN LETTERS

Love Letter

Trevor, I just wanted to take the time to thank you for your column, "Love from a distance" (DN, Wednesday).

It really hit home. The key to my girlfriend's future dreams lie at the University of Findlay in Ohio ... more than 800 miles away.

Being on campus and watching couples walking to classes hand in hand can be torture to a person when his or her love is so far out of reach.

Knowing and hearing from people who share in my torture makes it a little easier to handle.

Jesse Koepke
freshman
computer science

Get it Right

In response to Betsy Severin (DN Letters, Wednesday): To call Jessica Flanagan's blatant lies "The Truth" is an outrage to me as a Christian, a student and a human being.

The fact is: Being gay is not the same as being a pedophile. Ms. Flanagan keeps writing about agendas - the Women's Studies agenda, the gay agenda - but I question hers.

Keep praying, Ms. Severin. The Truth is still out there.

Jane Wright
senior
English

No Justice

I would like to respond to the column by Daniel Justice, "Fight against history: Columbus Day a celebration of racism and savagery in 'White America'" (DN, Wednesday).

I genuinely dislike the term "white." I come from an Irish, German and Swedish background. This does not make me a drunken, Nazi, neutral.

I am not a European-American but an American. I was born here, not in another country. I guess I have to apologize for being born "white."

Where exactly do you get off blaming the problems of America on the "white" population? I personally wasn't around in 1492, and I'll assume that Daniel, and other complainers, weren't either.

I have some advice: Stop complaining, and do as Gandhi said: "Be the change you want to see in the

world."

Nicole Walden
freshman
broadcasting

Hysterical Events

I'd like to express a rebuttal to Daniel Justice's comments about Columbus Day.

One thing I resent is the modern tendency to put 20th century standards on historical events.

In regards to racism, I believe it was simply a matter of a superior force overcoming a lesser force.

In regards to genocide by disease, explorers didn't know the peoples they would meet would not have the ability to fight the bacteria they brought.

In regards to slavery, although it is abhorrent, it was an accepted trade in its day.

There are several instances where cultures bought and sold their own kind, and they were just as cruel to their kinsmen.

Keep historical events in the context of their time, not ours.

Steve Hunt
BA in history
1997 UNO

Arts and Entertainment

I'm pleased to read an article about Jim Thompson in the DN. He is, after all, "one of our own."

His brilliant, twisted noirs are known, imitated and routinely appropriated.

His work resulted in such classic films as "After Dark, My Sweet" and "The Getaway," and more recently an unpredictable, well-directed post-modern noir, "This Life, Then the Fireworks," which stars Gina Gershon and Billy Zane.

Few people know that Thompson attended the University of Nebraska. A recent issue of "Bomb" published one of Thompson's previously unpublished short stories, "Sympathy," which was written during Thompson's sophomore year in the College of Agriculture.

His attitude toward women is sometimes misogynist, but he was equally misandrist. He seemed to loathe the human race, even as he empathized with it.

To some degree, he shares his mis-

anthropy with the brilliant Nebraska author Weldon Kees.

I'm glad to see that Thompson's finally getting some attention here in the Midwest.

Check out his work sometime, and check out the films based on his work.

Gwendolyn Foster
assistant professor of film studies
Department of English

The Greek Disease

Attention: All those sorority members who feel they have been violated by Panhellenic and Greek Affairs: GET USED TO IT.

The disease called Greek Affairs has already infected many fraternities, leaving them stripped of their independent pasts. And now, the disease is spreading to you, the sororities, promising to bring you to your knees, screaming for Panhellenic forgiveness.

As a greek member, you give up most of your personal rights (such as moderate drinking before a game), and you receive an ultimatum: Comply, or get the hell out.

I can guarantee that you will be promised independence, leadership, a "clean slate" if you will, by complying with every proposed agreement. BEWARE.

Once your house passively rolls over for any greek governing body, you will begin to feel the reins of control slip through your fingertips - until decision-making is nothing more than a distant memory.

I respect the strong voice of Melissa Gonnion (DN, Thursday).

Her words convey sincerity and concern for her sorority. At the same time, the article in which her words appear, "Drinking accord sparks discord," leaves me shaking my head in disappointment.

Certain members, leaders of the sororities nonetheless, failed to speak out because they "feared punishment." What kind of communist organization do you belong to?

Well, sorority girls, I see two options for you: Stand up for yourselves and speak out like Melissa Gonnion, or grab your ankles again, and again, and ...

Ben Novotny
junior
environmental studies