

# South African wisdom

*Archbishop peace-pusher can teach Nebraskans lessons on reconciliation, forgiveness*



Christ has returned, and he has set the date, time and location: tomorrow at 3:30 p.m. at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Lied Center.

OK, so it's not Jesus Christ, but anyone who knows the work of Archbishop Desmond Tutu knows that his work has made him the most likely candidate to be the reincarnation of the Messiah. And what better place is there for him to make his first post-millennium declaration than the heartland (Nebraska) of the Babylon of the New World (America)?

The archbishop's message transcends such artificial terms as culture, language and nations. His message transcends time and space, striking at the core of the human experience.

His native South Africa is in many ways a microcosm of global human

order; every word he will say tomorrow is just as applicable in Johannesburg as it is in Lincoln. His words resonate in each of our souls, awaking eternal values of fraternity and community:

*"God created us for fellowship. God created us so that we should form the human family, existing together because we were made for one another."*

He won the Nobel Prize in 1984 for his peaceful campaign against South Africa's defiant apartheid regime. However, he will gladly tell you that the well of his wisdom is the Bible and that he cannot separate his actions or activism from his spirituality.

And his activism has heralded around the world as the best model for conflict resolution, a model based on the Christian values of forgiveness and reconciliation.

The word reconciliation epitomizes his native South African homeland, ironically a place long regarded as the world's leading producer of racial hatred and conflict.

In South Africa, whites had set up an extreme racial hierarchy, which has

systematically exploited, massacred and destabilized the cultural integrity of native Africans, or "Bantus" as they are called.

The Dutch landed in South Africa in the 17th century at present-day Cape Town. What started as a temporary supply depot for Dutch mercantile ships, turned into an independent white nation in a Bantu land a couple hundred years later.

With the advent of industrialization and the international labor shortage around the turn of the 20th century, this white society of "Afrikaners" took control.

Apartheid means "apartness." The Afrikaners, or white population, will tell you that the idea was originally to keep two separate societies living a separate existence. They hoped to create a westernized white bubble of modernization in the middle of a black land.

In 1948, the Afrikaners had only 20 percent of the population. By hoarding nearly all of the economical and political power in the country, though, the whites essentially made it illegal for any non-white society to prosper.

The white population uprooted

several million Bantus and exported them to resettlement camps. This solidified their power and ensured that they would have an infinite supply of cheap labor to work in the mines.

Wretched living conditions for the Bantus ensued, characterized by utter despair and social decay.

Bantu resistance to apartheid slowly gained momentum. However, all political representation for Bantus was banned.

For every dollar spent on a Bantu child's education, 10 dollars were spent on the Afrikaner's children. In a blatant attempt to destroy the Bantu cultures, the only legal language of instruction in schools was Afrikaans, a 17th-century Dutch language that was completely foreign to rural Afrikaners.

In the 1976 Soweto rebellion against this policy, at a peaceful rally, students were mowed down by machine-gun fire by the South African police.

After the fall of legal apartheid in 1994 and the election of South Africa's first black president, Nelson Mandela, many people feared that the worst retaliation by the whites was yet to come.

Experts predicted the violence could be 10 times worse than that experienced prior to the election. Some projected that 50,000 would die in a matter of months or weeks. Also it was believed that half a million Bantus would become internally displaced refugees if Mandela won.

He won.

The world's prayers and anxiety flooded South Africa. A racial war was about to erupt with both sides prepared to take heavy losses.

But that's not what happened.

Tutu's message of non-violent reconciliation, combined with the charisma and enchanting trust of Mandela, diffused a historical time bomb.

He has saved tens of thousands of lives in the post-apartheid era of South African society and has set the standard for progress and peaceful coexistence in the new millennium.

He led his people back to their promised land, peacefully, to enjoy the fruits of their labor through an arduous and patient process of reconciliation and forgiveness. He is one of my people of the century, an African messiah and an international pillar of morality in a morally deteriorating era.

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## Cowboy and teacher

*Honky-tonks can help us learn lessons, too*



I have a brother. His name is Brandon. He is a cowboy. I am not a cowgirl. Despite this difference, he has been an unexpected teacher.

We actually hated each other during a major portion of our childhood. He spent his time avoiding me, and I spent my time trying to embarrass him.

There were rare times when we would ban together and sing Run-DMC songs in the kitchen while doing our after-dinner duty. These times were precious and few.

Soon Brandon was listening to country music and wearing shoes to match. I tried to follow him the way little sisters try to follow older siblings. It didn't work, though.

I didn't understand this cowboy way. Did it make him feel good? Respected maybe? Did he just need a place to fit in? One thing I was sure of, this was just a passing phase.

Brandon went away to college. I saw him less often, but when I did see him, he was still wearing his boots and Wranglers. He got a job on a farm.

When he would come home though, I noticed something was happening between us. We spent more time singing Run-D.M.C. songs in the kitchen. We would sit around for hours making fun of our mother. Brandon and I have only grown closer since our initial days of hoopla in the kitchen.

About a year and a half ago, Brandon followed his cowboy fantasies and moved to Montana. There he is free to live his cowboy-ness to the fullest. He trains horses and rides bucking broncos. He has a handlebar mustache.

I was apprehensive about Montana. It seems Brandon chose the only state to beat Nebraska in raw cowboy power. Evidently his lifestyle choice wasn't just a phase. Brandon was turning into a full-time cowboy.

Along with Brandon's cowboy appearance came cowboy values. He believes in a hard day's work, and he admires his grandpa and his father before him. He believes in an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Because of his sometimes old-fashioned outlook, Brandon and I often disagree on current issues.

Sometimes (unwillingly), he listens to me talk about race relations and gay rights. He listens while I ramble on about women's rights and postmodern feminism. None of these topics interest Brandon other than that I want to talk about them.

Brandon has become more tolerant of listening to me talk about these things. This tolerance has also clouded his view. He has started using politically correct terms for homosexuals,

American Indians and women (refraining from the word "broad").

I can't say that I saved my brother from a potential black hole of thought. That would be a lie. Brandon has saved me from prejudices, too.

Cowboys are not what I thought them to be. My brother has a friend named Jamie. Jamie only has one arm. He owns a ranch where Brandon works. Jamie is a computer programmer by day, who *literally* single-handedly types 50 words per minute.

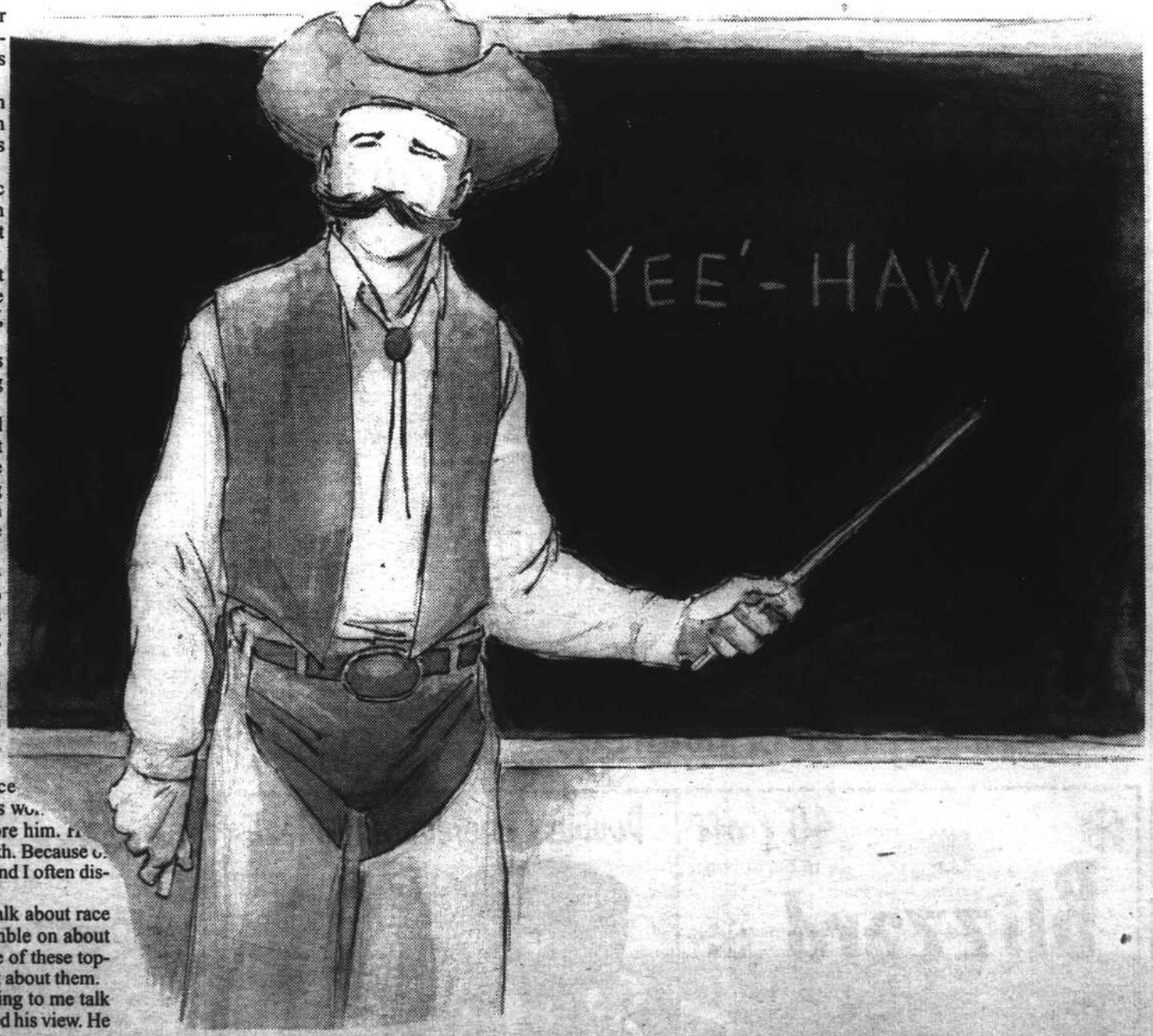
This past summer I went to visit Brandon in his new home of Montana. It was a culture shock with all the ma'ams and hat

tipping going on.

One night while we were out, Jamie and I discussed art. In the truck that night Smashmouth and Fatboy Slim played on the radio. Everyone sang along.

Brandon has been two important things to me. He has been a pupil and a teacher. He has broken through prejudices I never thought possible. He has shown me that I have prejudices I never thought possible.

My brother is a cowboy. He is also something I never thought he could be. He is my teacher.



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