

Dangerous presumption

Cartoon quick to provoke unfair accusations of racism

We are offended by and disappointed in the campus community.

In the past week, this newspaper has been mischaracterized as racist by many who presupposed discrimination without understanding the meaning or intent of our political cartoons.

Our long-standing commitment to diversity and covering issues important to campus remains unwavering. The articles published each day in the Daily Nebraskan are evidence of that.

Last Tuesday an article about Eddie Brown appeared on our front page in recognition of his recent leadership award.

Brown's involvement and accomplishments were chronicled, and near the end, Brown explained how those things prompted some people to look to him as a spokesman for minority students — a role he never wanted.

The university has included Brown in recruiting videos and posters. When prospective students visit campus, Brown is held up as an example. And the Daily Nebraskan often has quoted Brown.

Our political cartoonist noted all this and decided to highlight how Brown has been used as a mascot for this university. Brown's profile seems to exceed that of Herbie Husker or Lil' Red.

We feel that our cartoonist made an excellent observation — one that all of us who have put Brown in this position should heed.

But some who read that cartoon perceived something else. Perceptions can be dangerous, especially when they are not based on the truth.

There was no racist intent in the cartoon. If a white student leader had been used in Brown's place, there would have been no objection, but Brown's unique position on campus was the entire reason the cartoon was created.

It is disappointing that so many people leapt to characterize this cartoon as racist. If the same commentary would be acceptable with a white student, shouldn't it be acceptable with any student?

The University of Nebraska is challenged to foster diversity when its campuses are centered in a very homogeneous state. There are many people who work to ensure that campus is receptive to all students, but that does not mean that we should be hypersensitive to racial issues.

The Daily Nebraskan will remain committed to diversity and fairness in its pages and on campus. We welcome informed comments and criticisms on our work.

Editorial Board

Josh Funk (editor) • J.J. Harder • Cliff Hicks • Samuel McKewon • Dane Stickney • Kimberly Sweet • Lindsay Young

Letter Policy

The Daily Nebraskan welcomes brief letters to the editor and guest columns, but does not guarantee their publication. The Daily Nebraskan retains the right to edit or reject any submissions. Submitted material becomes property of the Daily Nebraskan and cannot be returned. Anonymous material will not be published. Those who submit letters must identify themselves by name, year in school, major and/or group affiliation, if any. Submit material to: Daily Nebraskan, 20 Nebraska Union, 1400 R St., Lincoln, Neb. 68588-0448 or e-mail to: letters@unl.edu

Editorial Policy

Unsigned editorials are the opinions of the spring 2000 Daily Nebraskan. They do not necessarily reflect the views of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, its employees, its student body or the University of Nebraska Board of Regents. A column is solely the opinion of its author. The Board of Regents acts as publisher of the Daily Nebraskan; policy is set by the Daily Nebraskan Editorial Board. The UNL Publications Board, established by the regents, supervises the publication of the paper. According to policy set by the regents, responsibility for the editorial content of the newspaper lies solely in the hands of its student employees. The Daily Nebraskan strives to print fair and accurate coverage; any corrections or clarifications will be printed on page three.

Obermeyer's VIEW

640 Personals

David Baker

23, likes origami, swing dancing and hip hop.

Sarah Baker

22, likes drinking, dancing, drinking and making sure she looks hot.

Margaret Behm

19, likes people shorter than 6'.

Tony Bock

21, likes breasts and college radio, particularly Hot Lunch, Mondays 11pm-1am on 90.3 KRNU.

Diane Broderick

22, likes people with penchant for Prince.

Karen Brown

22, likes vampires, sheep and vampire-sheep.

Silas A. DeBoer

20, likes humor, long hair and weightlifting.

Dave Diehl

19, likes sports, the outdoors, fishing, hunting

and walking along the beaches of that park with two lakes over by I-180.

Chris Gustafson

19, likes large women with big rosy muscles.

J.J. Harder

21, likes ballroom dancing, cool jazz and introspection.

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DN: Desperate Newsies
20 Nebraska Union
1400 R St.
Lincoln, NE 68588

Cliff Hicks

23, likes music, technology, creative anarchy and aggressive women.

Trevor Johnson

22, likes people who can move.

Tim Karstens

29, likes turquoise jewelry and prison movies

Adam Klinker

20, likes women with knowledge of Henry James.

Shelley Mika

23, likes smarts.

Neal Obermeyer

21, likes potassium.

Michelle Starr

21, likes "The Goonies," police scanners, handcuffs and anywhere but the basement of the Union.

Mike Warren

23, likes Guinness and cartoons about Eddie Brown.

Lindsay Young

21, likes George better than John or Paul.

Jill Zeman

19, likes chocolate and exotic dancers.

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Letters to the EDITOR

The Obermeyer bridge

Obermeyer's cartoons have consistently addressed the credibility gap between actions and words on and off campus. His cartoon on Wednesday questioned the credibility of the university in extrapolating the achievements of one student as representative of the entire student body, much like a mascot embodies an entire team. As a student at UNL, I would choose a student who has explored his own leadership possibilities over a fuzzy plush-toy suit and a plastic blow-up doll every time.

The Chancellor's interpretation of Obermeyer's depiction as racist is perhaps a knee-jerk reaction to seeing an African-American student compared to two white mascots. Had the depiction been of any other student on this campus, Obermeyer's message would have been unchanged: It is misleading to elevate the image of one student to portray an entire student body.

John Kastning
senior
chemical engineering
and German

No apology needed

I don't believe Mr. Obermeyer owes anyone an apology. In today's society, people are all too willing to use the term racist when a minority is involved in any situation. Obermeyer's cartoon was poking fun at the university more than at Eddie Brown. I think the chancellor should have tried to understand the cartoon before he started throwing around such a dangerous term as "racist."

Chris Rodgers
freshman
computer science

False image

Neal Obermeyer has just as much right to feel that Eddie Brown is being used as a mascot as others have the right to feel that Eddie Brown is actually a real campus leader. I believe that Eddie Brown is a campus leader to a certain extent, and I also believe that the university uses him as a mascot.

A mascot isn't just a cartoon

character. I believe it is a symbol of some greater institution. It seems as though Brown is put out there in that way in order for UNL to say, "Hey look everybody, we're culturally aware." To me, he's being used so UNL can carry out a false message that it is culturally aware.

Eddie has done good things for the campus, but a spokesman for blacks? Please... whether he wanted that mythical position or not, Eddie Brown speaks for me as much as my left shoe does. The only reason why he has been made a voicebox is because Eddie Brown seems to be the only black person ever asked about anything.

One point I do agree with in that "wonderful feature story" is that many people have done some great things both on and off this campus. Too bad their works are overshadowed in the name of exploitation and false images.

Gabriel Stovall
sophomore
news-editorial

He's a big boy

Why is everyone jumping to fight Eddie Brown's fight for him? I would assume that if he were offended by Neal Obermeyer's cartoon portraying him as a recognizable representative of this university, he would confront Obermeyer himself. But rather, he has everyone, including the chancellor, strapping their gloves on to beat down Obermeyer.

I'm sure anyone who has ever had satire written about him or

her that depicts him or her in a light he or she feels is degrading has feelings of hostility. But if the cartoon did offend Brown, let him deal with Obermeyer himself. He doesn't need an entourage to throw stones back at Obermeyer. Find a fight of your own.

Ryan M. Jennings
UNL alumnus 1997

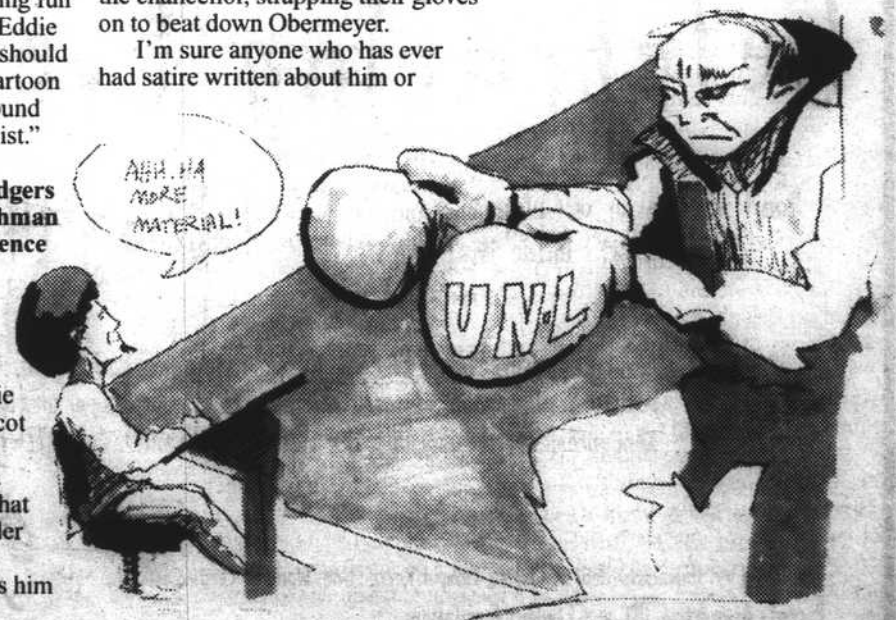
Blinding spotlight

I can't claim to agree with many of the viewpoints expressed by Obermeyer in his cartoons. However, I do think his cartoon involving Eddie Brown has been over-criticized. Obermeyer actually may have had a good idea. I think it's sad that what one college student draws in a newspaper can be instantly construed as racist. Even the chancellor was quick to label it "a new low in tastelessness."

Does everything have to be racially motivated?

If you don't look at the cartoon as comparing a person to stupid pieces of cloth and instead consider it as ways the university could be perceived, it presents a very good point. Perhaps one way to foster relations on this campus is to stop doing everything possible to make each situation into a racial one.

Jayson Bishop
junior
computer engineering



Delan Lonowski/DN