

Daily Nebraskan

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Scouts' blunder Midlands organizations should withdraw support

A recent conflict pitting the venerable Boy Scouts of America against the gay community and its supporters has no real winners.

On one hand, some public entities and businesses are withdrawing their support for the Scouts, saying the organization, which forbids homosexuality in the ranks of its leaders, is discriminatory.

On the other hand, the Boy Scouts, an organization that has undoubtedly contributed to the positive growth and development of millions of youth, could be ostracized from the very communities it aims to help.

The situation calls for leadership, which some companies and public entities – though not as many as erroneously reported in The New York Times earlier this month – are demonstrating.

Mostly on the coasts of the United States, companies have withdrawn their support for the Scouts; charitable organizations have purged the Scouts from their donation lists and public schools have forbidden the Scouts to recruit during school hours.

Unfortunately, Midlands organizations haven't followed the lead of their more socially conscious coastal cousins.

Support for the Boy Scouts among Lincoln companies, including the local branch of Wells Fargo Bank, the local chapter of the United Way and the Lincoln Public Schools, remains.

It's this kind of complicit stance taken by the community that will allow the Boy Scouts, an organization with some laudable goals and accomplishments, to continue with its self-defeating discrimination.

Certainly, pressure will mount that will eventually force the Scouts to drop their ban against gay leaders.

But until then, organizations that support the Scouts, be it through monetary contributions or meeting space, are giving their OK to the Scouts' discrimination.

No business or public body would support an organization that forbid blacks, women or people of certain religions from serving as leaders – and, in fact, would be lambasted if they did.

But in today's social climate in the Midlands, it's acceptable to exclude gays.

A representative from Lincoln's United Way, in a Daily Nebraskan story today, said that because Nebraska state law doesn't forbid discrimination against gays, the Scouts' gay ban doesn't affect the charitable organization's giving.

Another church official said the Scout's service to boys and the community as a whole outweighed any controversy over the blatant discrimination of homosexuals.

It's that kind of an "it's not our problem" attitude that will allow the Scouts to continue its hateful and intolerable ban against gays.

Until businesses and public organizations take the road, as the Scout code dictates, that is "morally straight," by refusing to support an organization that discriminates, the Scouts have no reason to change.

It's time the Midlands got a backbone and forced them to.

Editorial Board

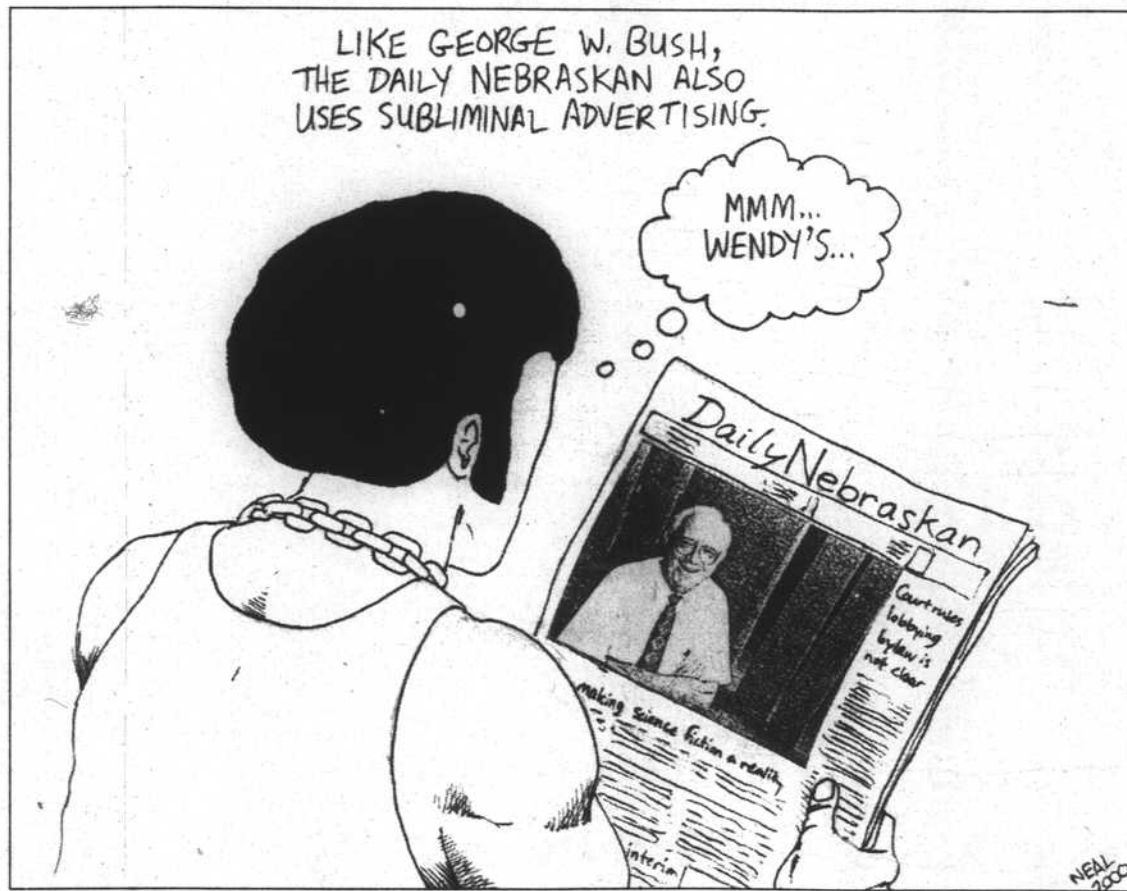
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A jelly-brain cowboy scene

In the minutes directly after my mother tosses the carrot of antagonism regarding my sister in front of my princess-shaped mouth, the air seems dead. When you squint real hard, you can see particles floating between the pockets of wind, like air plankton.

I squint now and see nothing; the air rots of inaction and hangs oppressively in my room. It makes me want to sleep, but I can't.

So I cavort to the living room to find mother Nadia, in her terry cloth robe, lounging on the grape couch, dangling a stray piece of rhubarb just above her cave of teeth. For no reason than to continue a dead conversation between us, I plop down next to her feet, toenails all painted up, and say the difference between my sister and I, the fundamental tenet of my superiority, is my avenue of choice, the ability to exist outside the paradigm of chunky slipshod whoredom. That I can transcend fate, be the exception to rules.

Nadia hates me for saying it because she regrets having felt the same way once upon a perfect figure, retaining it through her diligent stomach muscles and yet arriving at the same depot as the tired eyes and saggy boobs.

Regret, she tells me is the real fundamental tenet, produced by the recognition of fate.

And that fate, maybe its hand for me, is to buy into my own theory, and leave me to muck things up by my own, guilt-ridden measures. That fate could tempt me to determine that I have transcended it, and its words continue to be written unbeknownst to me shaping its web in my ignorance.

That it could happen to me, as it did her, who once was me.

She props herself up on her elbows.

"You want what others want for you," she whispers. "Or you reject what they want, just to reject it."

"Hear it? Tabled eggs. Lost badura. Dead-zone phrases waiting to be caught."

My brain is jelly in response.

"Don't you hear it?" she says. "The hole in the language?"

I have no logical answer. I'm not sure logic applies in a conversation that lacks a point.

"We're in the mind clutter stage, in the midst of a discarded scene."

Jelly, jelly, jelly.

"Sometimes they fold back upon themselves, like those hairs you write about."

She knows about the hairs. She's been sifting through my personal words.

"So one scene matches the events of a previous, only in reversal, for ironic standing."

Jelly bean. Jelly donut. But an angry jelly donut, because she read my words.

"Want to really burn your bean? Think about why they fold upon each other."

Nadia rises from the couch, cinches up her robe and smiles. She grabs my chin and stokes it, smiling. College educated beauty queen. What torture.

"Icons," she says, "go from scene to scene to scene to scene to ..."

Lavender walls breathe. The ceiling evaporates into open sky and buttercup canaries, in the thousands, descend and surround me. Nadia draws her hand away. Heaters whirl. A car halts outside. And the movie shifts to the end of the dock, where a woman carries a parasol. She turns to regard me above in the window, but the sun glare obscures her smile; I do not see it. The moment, the last smile to push lust over the brink to love, is lost.

I turn and survey behind me. Nadia is gone, the room detached from my bed replaced by an underground mall, with this big bulb sign that says DALLAS!

with me in it, wearing my buttercup sundress, and this cowboy, wearing a ten-gallon the shade of violet, a short cropped crew underneath, on the other side of the potted-fern median of the



petaluma watson

mall, and, upon seeing me – my move, my hair, my sunglasses (hiding my browns), my lips, my neck, full of its perfect nothing, my shoulders, bare, save the innocuous straps of the dress – I, shift my gaze toward him, shining his belt buckle my way, because he's seen the girl of his dreams, and there is his smile, which makes sense, because he's always been the confident one, who could buy any girl (but not any me) a drink.

And I can go through him, his mind, as he imagines me, silently, knowing full well there's nothing like me at his Rusty Nail Saloon or his Gordie's Cactus Bar tonight, because nobody fills out that dress (the name of which he does not know, of a color he cannot accurately detect) like I do and he knows that to get to me, he has to reverse his tracks, move around the fern median, or possibly lose me forever and be left with the one glimpse burned deep into the back of his minds as he picks through salted beasts with too-tough tans tonight.

But he knows not that I've felt the shine of his big belt buckle already, that I've seen this a million times before, maybe more than that, that I can feel the heat of male gaze even before it reaches me, that I can intuit it to the point of paranoia, even delusion, to the point where I can't regard any room, with any man residing in it, whether he's attached or not, with any amount of seriousness, because I feel the gaze, which may or may not be there, (if only I could stand back and tell!) and imagine me being certain that this cowboy has shined his belt buckle my way, but also knowing full well my occasional self-delusion may be tricking me into thinking such a thing while his gaze stays on a diagonal slant in my direction, slowly reaching parallel with me, and haze, haze, haze surrounds me, as his minds begin to force me out, and I lose perception, now really starting to wonder, to guess if I'm imagining this elongated stare is posed toward me, if it isn't actually something else he's looking at, an object of some sort, some giant television, with a huge wraparound screen, above me that I cannot discern, or if it's another woman, and imagine me totally tossed up inside about it, more than he ever could be, to the point where it is quite possible I will reverse my tracks and follow him, out of curiosity – maybe curiosity is what I want to call it – and engage myself in an entirely useless conversation with him, maybe even let him buy me a drink, flirt as he flirts, smile as he smiles, touch as he touches, but nothing more, and for no future date, but I need this, this exact cliché you'd expect from a girl like me, the exact cliché he'd expect from me, though he knows none of this, of what I'm thinking and not surprisingly, he tips his ten-gallon my way at this very moment, no words between us, but his name

... Calvin
and I'm smiling back, somehow, fighting the urge to wave, because there seems no proper response for a tip of a ten-gallon, as it seems more distinguished than the head nod, and it seems less reserved than the vocal hoot, and so there's me stumped, unlikely in a scenario involving men, but it happens anyway, motionless as he walks by, shining his belt buckle straight ahead once again, leaving me with the ferns, where I stand, and a loudspeaker booms "The world's largest rodeo!" over and over and over and over, and there are horses everywhere, and I look upward and see the name of another city, as bright as the DALLAS! sign except that it's in cursive, this girlish half-print/half-cursive and I think ... how tacky.

There is my leg, throbbing and bleeding, having hit this newspaper stand, right in front of me, right on the corner, hard, so hard, I think the bone is bruised.

Calvin is upon me, having traversed the ferns, surveying my leg, fingering it, popping some pimple inside my packed and privates.

"Ya know ya got sum bad hel damage?" he asks me.

And my face grows red, my hand rises to my neck – it is perfect nothing no longer – and I go blank, at a loss for his intentions, my intentions, and finally, for once, at a loss for

'Cider House' gives lesson on abortion

I am pro-life. Not the kind of pro-life as people who bomb clinics or carry around pictures of aborted babies.



Josh Knaub

But the kind of pro-life that is offended that this paper (and most other papers) chooses to use "anti-abortion rights" instead of "pro-life" in news stories.

I want abortion to stop tomorrow. I want the callous attitudes we, as a culture, hold about sex, child welfare and convenience to evaporate, making the procedure something no woman would ever consider. Something no woman would ever need to consider.

It was through my pro-life eyes that I watched director Lasse Hallstrom's "The Cider House Rules." The same flick that earned writer John Irving a Maggie Award from Planned Parenthood.

And it was with my pro-life mind that I decided "Cider House" is the best film social commentary about abortion this country has ever produced. A great film.

The movie, subplots and all, is the story of World War II-era orphanage director/abortion doctor Wilbur Larch and his protégé, the orphan Homer Wells.

Dr. Larch trains Homer to be a first-rate obstetrician. Homer is an apt and obedient pupil in every area except one: He refuses to perform abortions.

The plot outline is easy to guess from the beginning.

Homer comes of age and loses his "impractical idealism," ultimately returning to the orphanage and performing abortions, which were illegal at the time.

Exactly the kind of simple story the pro-abortion crowd should applaud and embrace.

But this picture is not the mindless propaganda activists reduce to slogans. Because "Cider House" is most poignant, most true-to-life, in Homer's journey, not his destination.

The movie shows the path of compromise, persuasion and pain that leads genuinely good, caring people like Homer and Dr. Larch to perform abortions.

Homer initially refuses to "do" abortions because he believes people should be able to control their desires.

But then he finds himself to be lacking control in a relationship, although it does not result in a pregnancy.

Homer objects to abortion because his own mother could have chosen to abort him rather than deliver him. But his objections lessen when he spends time with Candy, a girl who had a secret abortion and lives a normal New England life.

At the orphanage, Homer sees only women who choose to deliver or abort their babies. Outside, he sees a girl become pregnant when raped by her own father.

Faced with his own immorality, the heartfelt persuasion of Candy and the pain of a girl impregnated without her consent, Homer finally decides to perform an abortion. He decides to write his own rules.

This is what makes "Cider House" great: The path Homer travels is a road many honest abortion proponents have gone down. They, like Homer, support abortion, albeit reluctantly.

Many, maybe most, pro-lifers need to understand this journey and stop dismissing abortion supporters as either wholly corrupt or hopelessly stupid. "Cider House" provides a first step.

Great as it is, "Cider House" leaves me wanting one thing: A story as brilliant, as honest, as powerful about choosing life.

This story exists. All it lacks is someone to write it.

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