

Daily Nebraskan

Since 1901

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Nothing new Debate only reinforces Gore's, Bush's reputations

While the good times roll economically and socially for most in the United States, the presidential candidates tried Tuesday to convince the American people that things need to change.

Unfortunately for Republican Presidential Candidate George W. Bush, who, behind in national polls, had the most to lose in Tuesday's debate, convincing Americans the country is in dire straits is about as easy as convincing them he has a firm grasp on the English language.

Democrat Al Gore, on the other hand, riding on the coattails of a soaring economy, painted himself as a well-informed – if not Beltway-connected – populist who will continue the good times, while being all things to all people.

The debate solidified Gore's reputation as an issues monger and master orator, and further besmirched Bush as an academic lightweight and oratory joke.

But despite the hoopla and fanfare surrounding the first of three nationally televised debates, the 90-minute session told us little more than we already knew.

Perhaps the format for the next two debates – one a talk show, the other a town hall – will better highlight the differences between the candidates and not allow them to dodge key questions.

When asked whether he'd work to outlaw RU-486, the so-called abortion pill, Bush hedged, saying simply: "I support a culture of life."

Gore, in one of his most pointed statements of the night, laudably stated his position on abortion rights, despite what one may think about the issue, without hiding behind rhetorical tricks: "I support a woman's right to choose."

But, when criticized by Bush for his alleged campaign-finance violations involving a Buddhist temple, Gore refused to explain himself, instead painting the Republican candidate's valid attack as an out-of-line character assassination.

Gore's preparedness was obvious, as his missteps were few, while the harried Bush seemed to fumble during several answers.

Both spouted prepared sound bytes, from which neither seemed willing to deviate – Gore's constantly repeating that he would put Social Security funds in a "lockbox," and Bush's contending that Gore uses "fuzzy math."

Even veteran television news man Dan Rather, the CBS anchorman, said the debates were a canned snooze.

"Pedantic, dull, unimaginative, lackluster, humdrum – you pick the words," Rather quipped after the debate.

"Governor Bush's father was criticized for looking at his watch during the presidential debate in 1992, but there were many across the country tonight doing much the same thing," he said.

At a time when the country is relatively prosperous, perhaps these debates are destined to be mundanely scripted and lacking substance.

Editorial Board

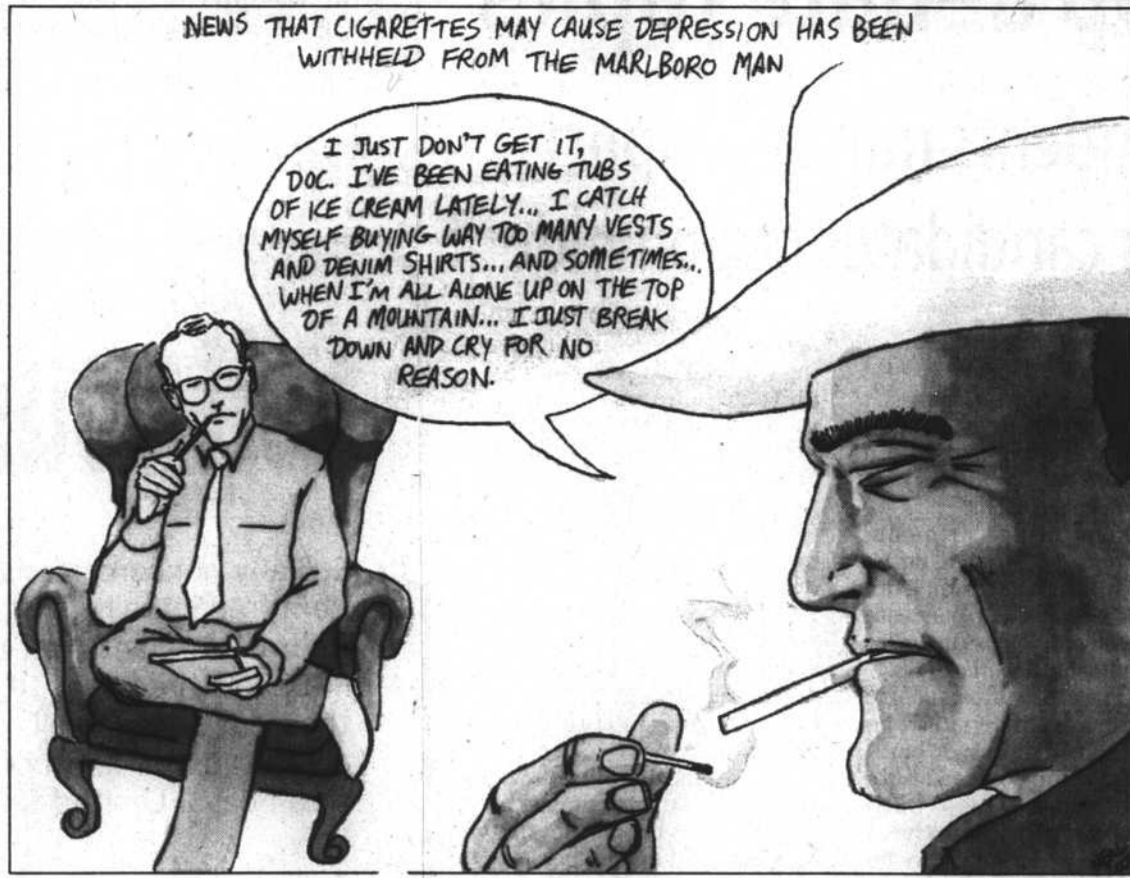
Sarah Baker, Bradley Davis, Josh Funk, Matthew Hansen, Samuel McKewon, Dane Stickney, Kimberly Sweet

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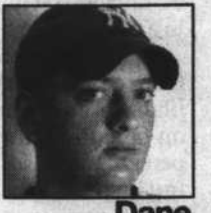
Editorial Policy

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Silence in a chaotic state of conformity

After the horns, drums and chanting of the crowd, it's over. All the fans finally sit down, and a conversation begins.



Dane Stickney

"Oh my God," a voice says over my left shoulder. "I'm in love."

"Where?" another voice says. "Right down there, in the tank top?"

"There's like 100 girls down there in tank tops," the second voice replies. "What color: red, white or black?"

"White," the first voice says, annoyed. "She's right there."

"In the jeans or the khakis?" "She's wearing the red capri pants, see?" the first voice says again, even more annoyed.

"The one with the thing in her hair or not?"

"Yes, the one with the thing in her hair," the first voice says again. "She's so hot. I should go down there."

"She's OK, but what about the other one?" the second voice says.

"Which other one – the one in the tight red tank top with khakis, or the one in the looser tank top with jeans, or the one with ..."

And so the conversation continues until the a loud voice comes over the HuskerVision speakers singing, "Who Let the Dogs Out," which leads into a beat with deep drums and bass much like that of a Gap commercial that aired around Christmas. It starts with a typical Christmas song, "Sleigh Ride Together With You." But the familiar beat gets all messed up with heavy bass and electronic sampling.

Then dancers, maybe 20 of them, come dancing out – all wearing the same clothes, of course. Khakis with different colored sweaters.

Then, out of nowhere, about half of the dancers morph into each other, and they swirl around for a while. Then those dancers meld into about five dancers. Then there is three.

Then at the end, it shows a profile of one single dancer. All of the rest had morphed into her. Wearing the same clothes wasn't enough; they had to turn into one person. As the profile of the dancer disappears from the screen there is a moment of total black silence much like that of the Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery. Up the marble staircases lined in black iron, above the droves of people wearing black, munching on hors d'oeuvres and bidding on art, there is silence.

Black silence like there is between TV commercials.

Black silence like the color of reflection in the big window on the west side of the building.

Black silence like the feeling of Hopper's paintings.

Amidst my search for silence, there on the wall, huge in front of me, my ignorance is magnified. An original Andy Warhol. The time spent waiting elsewhere was wasted. I could have been here looking at an original Andy Warhol.

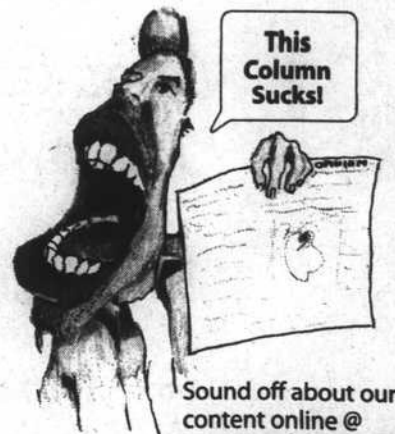
It's simple, really. Mickey Mouse repeated four times on a blue background. Nothing special – just four panels of a regular-looking Mickey Mouse. Black, charcoal-looking lines circle Mickey's curves.

Moving right up to it and not being able to touch it seems harsh. An original Andy hidden in Lincoln. Two people move in behind me. I move aside to let them look at Andy's work.

It's two girls and a guy. One girl is wearing a tight tank top with khaki capri pants. The other has on a tight T-shirt with short sleeves and flared jeans. The guy is wearing a visor, cargo pants with seemingly 200 pockets and a weathered T-shirt. They're all wearing Doc Martins.

"I just don't understand it," one girl says. She flips a strand of highlighted blond hair behind her ear. The roots are brown. "What is the point?" The other two barely look at the painting and move on.

My bitter laughter breaks the black silence.



Sound off about our content online @ Dailyneb.com

Letters to the editor

Spacing it Out

I am an avid reader of the Daily Nebraskan and consistently read the editorials and opinions. While I do not agree with all, I respect the opinions of those writing and can usually make sense of their views.

However, in the case of Monday's editorial I feel the editorial board are way off the mark.

I simply want to inform you that you do not speak for all NU students. Your survey was very limited, and your view even more shortsighted. Students do have alternatives to drinking, but this was not even the intent of the program last Thursday.

The program was intended to encourage students to use spacers, eat high-fat foods and various other techniques to reduce the likelihood of getting drunk.

Also, it may benefit you as well as your readers to know the facts. The money you refer to as yours is far from yours; it comes to this campus through a grant, not your pocket. So please, when writing your opinions in the future, realize students actually do read this paper, and we expect factual information and not just your ramblings.

John D. Conley
Sociology
Senior

Bock on Bikes

As a competitive road cyclist, who rides thousands of miles a year on Nebraska roads, I am disgusted by Tony Bock's piece on cycling and cyclists in Thursday's DN.

What disgusts me about Bock is not so much his idiotic arguments about banning biking, as they are so obviously moronic (to use his own terminology).

What makes me furious is his opening and closing scenario where Bock recounts, what I only hope is, an imaginary dream where he kills (runs over) five cyclists on a mountain road because they had the audacity to temporarily slow him down.

Bock, do you realize how horrifying this image is? Do you think it is funny, the killing or injuring of a defenseless person? Or did you bother to think at all?

Cyclists have every right to use public roads. That right is indisputable legally and ethically. That people like you, who take a human life so lightly, terrify me.

What is wrong with you that a cyclist or a group of riders, who require you to exercise caution when passing them, incites you to a murderous rage?

You really need to step back and examine what you have said, and while you're at it, you should apologize for being such a savage jerk.

Robert Aguirre
English
Graduate Student
UNL Cycling Team

Pro-life decision from indecision

I gave my muse the week off.

I've been working her to the ground recently, so when she applied for the time off a month ago, I felt obliged to give it to her. We filled out the proper paperwork and submitted it to the appropriate authorities, so now my muse, whose name is Edna, is cruising somewhere off the coast of Crete.

Of course, one cannot write without proper muse-ing, so I had to hire a temporary muse. Her name is Jude.

Jude and I were discussing possible column ideas. I could tell her forte wasn't in the literary arts, because many of her ideas were too specific – she suggested, for example, discussing the validity of Schoenberg's monotonal approach to music analysis, as compared to that of Schenker – for use in a column.

"C'mon," she said. "It would practically write itself. Schoenberg was such an old goat, anyway. He was bitter about being in California and how Stravinsky was getting all the gigs."

"Jude, you're right," I say, "but we've got to think about the reader, about keeping the reader's interest, about writing something timely and relevant." She gave me a nasty look. "And don't look at me that way. I try."

"Well, if not Schoenberg, and you want to do something relevant, how about abortion?"

"Abortion? How blah ..."

"No, think about it. You're pro-life, right?"

"Yeah."

"And you're an atheist, too, right?"

"Yeah?"

"So you go with that, you write how you manage to come up with what is usually a religious stand on an issue when you start from your particular viewpoint."

I mulled this over. "Eh, not enough material. I mean, it all comes down to how you think about humanity."

"How so?"

"Well, the question of the morality of abortion rests pretty much with when, from conception to death, the being is a human and when it is not." I watched as Jude took in my words. "Since the killing of a human is wrong in most cases, if you can determine when a being is human or not, you can determine when it is moral to kill the being or not."

"Where are you going with this?" Jude asked, taking out a cigarette.

I offered her a light. "So the question of whether it is OK to kill a fetus or an embryo can ultimately be solved by deciding if they are human or not. If



Jake Glazeski

they are not human, then you can say that, since we kill non-human things without abandon, it makes no sense to morally prohibit ourselves from killing a fetus. If they are human, then they deserve the protection of law as humans who are not able to defend themselves."

"So that's why it rests with the nature of humanity?" Jude asked.

"Yeah." I took out a cigarette of my own and began smoking as well. For a moment, I just watched the smoke from our two cigarettes mingle together. "I mean, what does it mean to be human? To have 26 chromosomes? To be viable? To be capable of thought? Or further, to be capable of rational thought? What is ultimately the difference between killing a small child without a sense of self and an unwanted puppy? One is more morally wrong than the other; why is that?"

Jude just shrugged. She found a stray ashtray and flicked some ash in. I motioned for the tray, and she held it out for me. "Perhaps it comes down to the instinctive protection of the young," she said. "We want to sustain our species, so we are naturally driven to protect the young, or at least the healthy young."

I laughed. "Unfortunately, we cannot build law on our instincts. But I think it is clear that we consider it murder once the human has been born, and cognitive processes vary so much from birth to death, that to draw the line of humanity at some level of brain activity would be arbitrary at best."

"So, genetics, then?" Jude asked.

I nodded. "It's a possibility. But then consider; before a human is a baby, fetus, embryo, it is a zygote, which is to say it's a bunch of cells that are all essentially the same. What is the nature of the zygote's existence?"

"Is it at all comparable to the human's existence? If it is wrong to kill a bunch of cells that are neither arms nor legs nor eyes, then why would it be acceptable to kill any other creature which has some degree of sentience simply because it doesn't share our genetic code?"

Jude laughed now. "So you eliminated development as a possible boundary between human and not-human, and then you consider the genetic dimension of human existence, but you find fault with that because of a question of early development."

"Yeah, I suppose you could say that."

"So wouldn't that be a contradiction of sorts?" I shrugged. "I guess it's a question I can't answer. Which is why I end up pro-life. I just figure, if you can't decide for sure, why err on the side of more dead humans, potentially?"

Jude leaned back, crossing her arms over her chest. "People aren't going to like that kind of conclusion."

"Yep." I extinguished my cigarette. "Which is why I'm not going to write it."