Symposium addresses issues surrounding racial profiling

■ Killing of minorities and abuse by police officers among problems brought up by speakers.

BY ALEXIS EINERSON

Brutality against blacks by authority figures, especially the police and law enforcement agencies, was the topic of discussion at a symposium held Thursday at the UNL College of Law.

Walter Rucker, UNL history and ethnic studies professor, and Lela Shanks, former civil right activist, spoke at the John Rock and Charlotte Ray Symposia on Racial Profiling.

The topics at the symposium paralleled issues facing the legislature.

LB593, introduced by Sen. Matt Connealy of Decatur, would mandate that every Nebraska policy department develop a policy against racial profiling.

Shanks began the symposium by remembering her childhood.

"The first thing I remember being told by my parents was to do everything I could to never have contact with the police," she said.

Shanks identified what she thought was one of the most serious problems with racial profiling – the killing of unarmed minorities by the police.

Shanks said she felt this was possible today because of the practices of the first 13 colonies of the United States.

Shanks said the first colonies had slaves, which formed the basis for current racial profiling.

"It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that it would not have been possible for slavery without racial profiling," Shanks said.

The symposium's other speaker, Rucker, spoke about the presence of racial profiling, particularly in the abuse of police power.

"Racial profiling, DWB (driving while black/brown) offenses and police brutality – these are the issues," Rucker said.

Along with these issues, Rucker said he saw an important stereotype that formed after the slaves received their freedom, the stereotype of a "brute."

A brute, as Rucker described it, is a black male who is prone to criminal behavior.

Rucker said this was "a very dangerous stereotype" and continued by naming many documented instances where police had brutalized or killed unarmed black men.

Kari Mangan, a UNL law student, asked if there was some "inverse racial profiling" in black communities.

Shanks said she thought a large number, but not all, of blacks had moved toward bettering interracial relations.

She said she thought it was time for "white people of good will" to take steps.

"Nobody has ever done enough," Shanks said.

"It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know that it would not have been possible for slavery without racial profiling."

Lela Shanks
former civil right activist

But Shanks did give a positive statement among the hard topics.

"I'm always hopeful for the future," she said, "despite our history."

Students give Perlman food for thought

BY TOBY MANTHEY

Students meeting with UNL's top leader snacked on sprinkled cookies and drank Pepsi products. Their discussion, however, was a bit less frivolous.

About 20 University of Nebraska-Lincoln students attended an open forum with Interim Chancellor Harvey Perlman at the Nebraska Union Georgian Suite Thursday night.

The discussion, sponsored by UNL's Independent Student Association, addressed university academic standards, the union's homeless population, limited parking on campus and other student concerns.

Andrea Wever, a 24-year-old sophomore biological science major and mother of two, asked about child care.

Wever said finding child care for night classes was difficult.

She said it was ironic that the Campus Recreation Center provided child care.

"If I want to work out, I can drop my kids off, but I can't if I have a class," Wever said.

Perlman said the university considered designing child care additions within campus parking garages or at the Campus rec.

But the facilities were not licensed for that purpose and lacked outdoor play areas, so Perlman said other options will have to be explored.

Like Wever, most of the students at the forum were older than most college students.

Some said they wanted university credit for their job experiences.

But Perlman said he wouldn't support such a policy.

Instead, Perlman said he supported exempting students from courses they had mastered.

"I guess I'm a traditionalist," he said.

Many older students have to schedule classes on Saturdays to avoid conflict with their jobs, forum participants said.

Perlman also said he would look into their concerns about parking for classes during university football games.

"There's no doubt in my mind that academic courses have to continue, even on football Saturdays," Perlman said.

Other students said the university should be more lenient in admission standards and accept all Nebraskans.

But Perlman said lowering standards would only decrease the university's retention rate by attracting unprepared students.

Moreover, he said Nebraska high schools had "shaped up their act" when the university tightened its admission policy in the past.

Some students said the homeless should be banned from the union and could carry lice and ringworm into the building.

But Perlman said the union was an open, public building, and he had never heard any cases of those health problems there.

"We're not allowed to keep (the homeless) out and would have conscience problems if we did," Perlman said.

"There's no doubt in my mind that academic courses have to continue, even on football Saturdays."

Harvey Perlman
UNL interim chancellor

Jared Solomon, president of UNL's Independent Student Association, said Perlman was more candid than he expected.

"At the very least, he put a very considerable effort in meeting us in the middle," Solomon said.

And even Perlman said there was a limit to what a chancellor could do.

"All these issues come down to money."

Attorneys to argue against Reinhard suit

REINHARD from page 1

of the attacks, which caused him to lose money.

The story, "Bones of contention: UNL alleged possession of Indian remains would violate federal law," was the first to report allegations against Reinhard.

Reinhard said he couldn't discuss the specifics of the case against NU.

Thom Cope, Reinhard's attorney, was unavailable for comment Thursday.

The suit against the regents is Reinhard's third against members of the university.

Reinhard first sued Stan Parks, a former UNL graduate student who talked to local newspapers and accused Reinhard of changing inventory records and mistreating remains.

In the suit against Parks, Reinhard listed several comments made by Parks that included statements Reinhard said were false, including:

■ Reinhard ordered inventory records of American Indian remains be changed so no one would know about the existence of soft tissue items.

■ Reinhard placed a hat on a child's skull and snapped the jaw open and shut as if the skull were talking.

■ Reinhard took remnants of small shoes and walked and danced them around the table.

Reinhard settled the case out of court with Parks in 1999.

The second suit, filed last spring, was against Robert Hitchcock, associate professor of anthropology. The case is still pending.

NU's motion is scheduled to be heard by Lancaster County District Judge Karen Flowers.

Chavez has no regrets

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because of their ignorance.

Chavez said extra red tape and hefty taxes translated into burdens on employees as well as business owners.

Lawmakers can serve both workers and owners by easing laws and tapering taxes, she said. Both plans create a healthier economy for everyone involved, she said.

But Chavez warned nothing could happen until the hostile atmosphere in Washington D.C., changed.

If the political climate remained bitter, she said lawmakers were doomed to partisan bickering, which produces ineffective legislation.

"We need to get beyond demonizing people," she said.

Legislative Notebook

Committee considers giving counseled couples a break

LB236, introduced by Sen. Jon Bruning of Omaha, would give couples who received premarital counseling a discount on their marriage licenses.

Members of the Judiciary Committee considered the proposal Thursday.

The bill would raise the cost of a license from $15 to $25, but couples who take the counseling classes would receive a $20 discount.

Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha opposed the measure because he said it was intrusive.

Legislature to take a bite out of election crime

The Government Affairs Committee heard testimony about a bill Thursday that would force Nebraskans to bring their drivers' licenses to the polls.

The purpose of the bill is to stop election fraud where people vote under the guise of another citizen.

LB395, introduced by Sen. Adrian Smith of Gering, would mandate voters to show a driver's license, passport, certified birth certificate or any other official identification.

The bill didn't move out of committee.

Committee senators consider streamlining recall elections

Senators on the Government Committee considered a proposal Thursday to expedite the recall election process.

Currently, disgruntled citizens can pass around a petition requesting the removal of a city official.

If the petition gains enough muster, the state holds a recall election. And, if necessary, it holds an election to select another official. In the interim, a temporary officer fills the position.

If LB428, the bill the committee considered, passes, only one election would be held addressing both the recall and new election. The bill would remove the necessity to hire an interim official.

Compiled by George Green

Law & Order

Accident victim dies after crashing van into post

The driver of a van that crashed into a concrete post died early Thursday.

Thomas Bermaster, 76, ran into the post in front of D/Rocks Music & Loan at 21st and O streets around 2:45 a.m., Officer Katherine Finnell said.

Bermaster suffered severe internal injuries, which caused his death, Finnell said.

She said police didn't know why Bermaster crashed his van.

The man was transported to BryanLGH West, where he was pronounced dead.

Woman wakes to find intruder in her home

A 22-year-old female awoke to find an unknown person standing right outside her bedroom door.

Finnell said the female called the Lincoln Police Department around 2:39 a.m. to report that she had been asleep in her home near N. 63rd St. when she awoke to find someone standing near her bedroom wearing a ski mask and dark clothing.

The woman went up to the man, and he hit her several times before leaving, Finnell said.

Finnell said the man may have entered the home by using a garage door opener that was left in an unlocked car.

The man was described as a white male in his 20s, 5-foot-8 inches tall and about 180 pounds, Finnell said.

Police arrest woman for vandalism, arson

An arrest was made after a 41-year-old female tried to speak to her ex-boyfriend early Thursday.

Two men who lived in apartment D4 at 1317 L St., called Lincoln police around 1:45 a.m., reporting that Denise Vasa had come to the apartment to talk to her ex-boyfriend, who lived there.

Vasa pounded on the door, then broke the glass encasing a fire extinguisher and also broke a hallway window.

When nobody answered the door, Vasa placed her bra next to the door and set it on fire, Finnell said.

Vasa was arrested for disturbing the peace, first degree arson and vandalism.

Police stop results in arrest on eight charges

A simple stop made by Lincoln Police led to one person arrested on eight different charges.

Lincoln police stopped Jamie Allen, 32, for false license plates and not signaling a turn, Finnell said.

After a search of the car, officers found a bag with 12.9 grams of methamphetamine, a scale and other drug paraphernalia, Finnell said.

Police also found $346 and a loaded .38-caliber semi-automatic handgun in the car.

Allen was arrested for driving with a suspended license, failure to signal, no proof of insurance and fictitious license plates.

Allen received two felony charges: possession of a controlled substance and possession with the intent to deliver; and two misdemeanor charges: carrying a concealed weapon and possession of drug paraphernalia.

Compiled by Jill Conner

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