

Daily Nebraskan

Since 1901

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On the edge

Eminem's Grammy night bound to turn sour

His name could be from Sesame Street. His lyrics are from the red light district.

He's Marshall Mathers, a.k.a. Eminem. And tonight, on stage with Elton John, he takes the biggest stage of his career, culminating the onslaught of attention he's received after garnering four Grammy nominations, including one for best album of the year.

The Board is split on just how talented an artist Eminem is. His lyrics rail against homosexuals and depict domestic violence. The music goes right up to the edge of risqué, and Eminem's image is such that he's able to clown about his lyrics and strangely take them seriously at the same time.

We don't exactly know how to take him.

But we do know that tonight's show is a big deal of sorts, and not only because a Grammy victory in the best album category would validate Eminem's work in a way few people could have expected. His performance with John, a spirited and energetic showman himself, ought to bring the house to mixed views about Eminem and just how much his lyrics mean.

It'd be different if Eminem weren't in trouble as much as he is. On one song on the "Marshall Mathers LP," he speaks of killing his ex-wife Kim (who is still his wife in real life), slitting her throat out in the middle of the forest after killing her new husband and his son. In real life, Eminem was arrested for assaulting a man who was talking to or near Kim.

So it seems clear that while Mathers is a musician, he also lives dangerously close to an edge that aides his music.

What could be alarming for some is Eminem is not only critically acclaimed, but popular.

A best album award, in a sense, validates that popularity in that it allows those who enjoy his music or, in a negative fashion, buy into it, to believe their enjoyment is OK. That's not a problem for people who see no further than the music.

But for those who look at Eminem as a speaker of the truth and, moreover, as a believer of his own lyrics, this validation could continue the same type of intolerance that broke over and resulted in the death of Matthew Shepard a few years ago.

The lyrics, taken at face value, are repugnant and hateful, though some may say that because Mathers turns the microphone on himself and hates himself in the process, it's OK. But self-loathing is not a virtue.

As a result of Mathers' nominations, many gay groups have agreed to boycott the Grammys in a strange way - by showing up at it and protesting. Will it do any good to bring more attention? Probably not.

Besides, many artists have shied away from making a stance here because it pits two liberal issues against each other - the lack of censorship vs. fair treatment of gays - and many artists have simply not taken a side.

It is, largely, what we're doing. This type of nomination is unprecedented. Eminem is entitled to his free speech, just as the highly political band "Rage Against the Machine" was allowed to support communist, at times violent, causes against what they viewed as fascism.

Marshall Mathers cannot be silenced. And while his popularity may be a sign of something, it can't be stopped through censorship.

Maybe some charitable organization will get Eminem what he seems to need - therapy. Of course, he says his music does that.

Editorial Board

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Opposition to bill poorly founded

Scheduled today is a hearing on LB19, a bill proposed by everyone's favorite state senator, Ernie Chambers.



Seth Felton

The bill, if passed, would make it illegal for employers to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation.

The trenches for this battle were dug quickly, and that staunch defender of ultraorthodoxy, General Guyla Mills, fired these first shots: "People in the state of Nebraska are not in favor of this ... (gays) don't need economic protection ... Fundamentally, employers have the right to choose the parameters of the character of the people they employ." (Daily Nebraskan, Feb. 15)

Mills' arguments are both insidious and at the same time stupidly obvious. Of course Nebraskans aren't for this - last November they voted for Initiative 416, the purported "Defense of Marriage Amendment," 70 percent to 30 percent.

Obviously, extending the rights of full citizenship to the homosexual community is not high on the list.

But it's that last statement that burns in my brain like a drop of liquid nitrogen. It burns because I disagree so wholeheartedly with her logic but also because her statement reveals the core of why these debates over such contentious issues as homosexuality, abortion and evolution, for example, will continue to be debated so vehemently with neither side giving way.

These debates will continue to be so vicious because they are not debates of fact, where one side tries to convince the other through a more adept use of logic, argument and rhetoric.

These are debates of ideology, of belief, of doctrine, and the prize of victory is the supremacy of one ideology over another in American politics and American minds.

This is a battle for souls, for converts. At the same time, like trench warfare, the stalemate is practically eternal. Neither side can gain ground because the arguments of one side are uttered in what may as well be a foreign language to the other side.

For example, Guyla Mills' comment that employers have the right to choose the overall character and talents of their employees is perfectly true. Employers are justified in picking and choosing the best candidate for the job.

But implicit in her statement is the concept that homosexuality is a facet of character, or more to the point, it is a flaw of character, and employers have the right to discriminate against this "vice" just as they would a lack of competence.

The other side sees this as monstrously absurd. Since they perceive homosexuality as a biological characteristic, they see no morality or immorality inherent in homosexual behavior.

It is amoral, just like race or hair color. There's nothing immoral about blondes, and there's nothing immoral about homosexuality.

Thus, discrimination against a group of people based solely on sexual orientation is comparable to discrimination on the basis of race or gender, since in all of these cases the individual does not choose the respective characteristics.

Those against gay rights do not see it that way. They see it as special consideration for people with a particular habit or a penchant for stealing office supplies.

The two sides of the debate approach the issue with radically different sets of assumptions and mindsets. One could even go so far as to say that the two sides are battling for the supremacy of their respective deities - one side argues for gay rights because their god, science, says homosexuality is natural, biological and harmless. The other side argues against gay rights because their god says homosexuality is an abomination, an affront to normalcy.

I could write a whole separate column on this tangent, explaining why basing public policy on the prescriptions and proscriptions of a Levite tribal society that existed three millennia ago is a bit, well, dumb, but that's for next week.

For now, consider this: The issue of discrimination in the workplace does affect you, whether you're gay or not. Before the civil rights movement, if you were white, there was no chance of you being fired because someone made the mistake that you were black.

But in this arena, the decision is purely subjective. Under the current laws, an employer does have the right to fire you, without justification, based only on his or her assumption or perception of your sexuality.

In other words, if your boss even thinks you're gay, you can be fired. I'm not sure why Guyla Mills thinks this isn't unjust or discriminatory.

Even if you're not too keen on gay rights, you'd have to agree that no one, gay or straight, deserves to be fired on the basis of a hunch.

Eternal life for dummies

"For books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them."
- Milton



Mark Baldridge

Hold it kids! Don't be too eager to rush into your graves!

I'm still working on that eternal life thing, and maybe you won't have to repeal any of the laws of thermodynamics, no matter who discovered them, to pull it off.

Recent advances in the whosits and whatsits of science (if I pretend to know any more on the subject, I'll get angry letters from the mucky-mucks in life sciences) prompted Time magazine to do a cover story on cloning.

That's right, the technology that brought you innumerable little copies of Hitler will soon be available in your own home.

No more will the phrase "Why can't you be more like your older sister?" torture America's children.

Instead, little Mipsy and Mopsy, identical twins born two and a

half year apart, will silently turn their strange eyes in unison toward you, scheming how to get away with murder.

But that's not the eternal life part. That's just the Late Late Movie part. The eternal life part is even weirder ...

For that, you have to go all the way back - and in the eternal life biz you can't go much further back than ancient Egypt.

They were living forever in those days, or planning to, and we may be the ones to make their dreams come true.

I'm talking your basic royal mummy, complete with hieroglyphs (the hieroglyphs are important, I'm coming to that).

Those ancient Egyptians could really cook:

First they sucked out the internal organs and socked them away in mayonnaise jars.

The brain they threw out. Then they soaked the carcass in honey and wrapped it up; the pyramids were built too keep out ants.

Thus, a lot of old Egyptian genes have been preserved to this day.

Sure, the genome may have deteriorated over the millennia. We'll just fill in the blanks with leftover dinosaur DNA from amber-trapped mosquitoes and, Voila!

Of course, cloning is only the first figure in the eternal life equation. Next comes Mind Transference™.

Without Mind Transference™, you don't get King Tut from King Tut genes -

just some kid who likes soccer and falafel - Tut without the overweening preening.

Until now, MT has been a costly and complex procedure - loopy, mad scientist wires running from Gilligan's head to the head of a chicken.

Very "old paradigm."

But I've got a postmodern solution. I stole it from the Pharaohs.

It's those hieroglyphs again. The high priests of Osiris had it all figured out.

It's not enough to preserve the information in the genes, you have to preserve the information in the mind; all those flat people, owls and eyeballs on the wall, spell out the who of your what.

So you wake up with the technicians of Thoth around you, sit up on your zinc tabletop and read all about it - your life and accomplishments and what you can expect of your hereafter.

In fact, come to think of it, who needs cloning? Mind Transference™ can do the job without putting the brakes on natural selection.

So, yeah, forget all that stuff I said about cloning. I don't know where I was going with that.

All you really have to do is narrow your consciousness down to whatever makes it unique (which I suppose is really rather little) and upload it into a



Jerry Morgan/DN