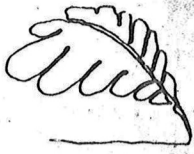


editorial

to the editor



Dear editor,

Your portrayal of the so-called black man in Thursday's "Ralph" was not funny at all. First, we don't all come from the ghetto; second, we all do not "fake out" every thing in sight; third, we do not all play football.

When will blacks stop looking like dumb animals in your cartoons? Last time it was the sultan route ("Ralph," Daily Nebraskan, Spring 1975), now it's the black animal that plays football.

The drawing is offensive to me as a black person. The caption is no better.

Get yourself together on your little jokes.

Theresa Gauff

Not laughing

Dear editor,

What is the Daily Nebraskan coming to when it has to resort to this type of stereotyped cartoon? It was uncalled-for and in bad taste.

If this is the type of "humor" the Daily Nebraskan sees fit to publish, it should call it quits and fold up. There is no excuse for it and as a black student I'm not laughing.

Tony Williams
ASUN Senator

Taste overdone

Dear editor,

It is my opinion that the Thursday "Ralph" was humiliating and degrading. All black people do not have big noses and exceptionally thick lips. This character was overdone and in bad taste.

Nilda Gaines
Kappa Alpha Psi Sweetheart

Cartoonist insensitivity

Dear editor,

As a member of a minority group, I find the "Ralph" cartoon offensive. But I also feel it shows the ignorance and insensitivity on the part of the author and cartoonist.

It reflects on the general attitudes (which I was already aware of) of the majority population at this university. In the future, I would advise you to omit such obvious forms of racism.

Donna Jones

Unabridged racism

Dear editor,

The Sept. 11 "Ralph" cartoon was an insult and a prime example of unabridged racism.

If it was intended to be humorous I can assure you it was not. If it was intended to be by any stretch of the imagination enlightening, again you failed. If you cannot handle racial commentary or humor without being derogatory, I suggest you leave it alone.

Deborah L. Logan

Not high caliber

Dear editor,

I am extremely incensed and offended to see that your paper would stoop to such a low level in attempting to humorously portray a minority person.

Such stereotyped, immature and blatantly prejudicial material cannot be tolerated by minority students on this campus.

As a graduate student from another state, I was informed of the high caliber of this university and its activities, including its journalistic efforts, and that the university and the newspaper represented only the highest quality of student life on this campus.

This was not at all apparent in the running of this cartoon. As a minority student who is dedicated to instilling a

Stereotypes

Dear editor,

I think the whole issue of last Thursday's "Ralph" is pathetic. Someone asked why all the fuss over a cartoon. As a black student, I get tired of seeing us stereotyped. I think we have every right to oppose these kinds of stereotypes.

For some people, "Ralph" is the only way in which they see blacks or any other minority group portrayed. I have never seen anything funny in ridiculing people.

America is in the process of celebrating its 200th anniversary and we are still struggling to be understood. I hope Ron Wheeler has learned something from this whole distressing issue.

Jacque Brown

Dear editor,

As a person, I personally find "Ralph's" "people" cartoons in poor taste. The stereotypes portrayed for all groups in the cartoons only serve to reinforce and perpetuate ignorance and discriminatory attitudes.

Most probably this was not the intent of the author; however, an awareness of the sensitivity of certain issues is essential if barriers between people are to be broken down.

"Ralph's" "people" cartoons are a type of passive prejudice which encourages active prejudice and discrimination. It is easy to slrug off a "harmless joke" when you do not have to contend with its implications on a personal level.

One man's/woman's "laugh" may be another's burden.

Shela Shanks

Service questioned

Dear editor,

The immediate controversy over another of Ron Wheeler's racial slurs has blown over, and it's a sad comment on the role of journalism in our society—and, more particularly, at UNL—that our most lively discussions of yesterday's paper concern the comics.

It is equally sad that student examination and criticism of the Daily Nebraskan can only come on those (increasingly frequent) occasions when the Nebraskan positively disgraces us by association.

The real, and larger, issue behind the Ralph controversy is that of the role and responsibilities of the Daily Nebraskan itself. Our "student newspaper" is a publicly-supported institution (\$32,000 of our fees this year) charged with serving the UNL campus by publicizing university, faculty and student affairs.

It has, in fact, become the property of a self-considered elite, which has drifted into the practice of sacrificing the advance news coverage that many student organizations are crying for in order to print reams of more glamorous opinion—glamorous, yes, but also, as a rule, childish, cynical and contemptuous of the student population which the Nebraskan is mandated to serve.

I'm proud to be a member of the first student fee-supported group, Union Program Council, to vote its dissatisfaction with the comic strip "Ralph." We support our black activities chairperson, Earl Everett, in his search for a permanent solution to racism in the Daily Nebraskan. I hope, however, that all student organizations will go further in examining the deficiency of real service in student publications and in calling for a reorganization and redirection of the Daily Nebraskan.

Dean Kirby

sense of truth and honesty about members of my and other minority groups, I must in good conscience demand a complete apology from both the editor and the cartoonist.

The cartoonist, who is incapable of being objective and honest in his drawings, should be removed and the editor should be more discreet and sensitive in her editing.

Such nonsense cannot be tolerated. Minority students have too long been the object of many types of derogatory slurs whereby whites have gained erroneous impressions of minority students.

This type of ridiculous activity must stop immediately. Action must be taken now to insure that this type of foolishness never happens again. Newspapers are supposed to print the truth.

I will be looking to see that something happens soon and I hope members of the Daily Nebraskan will be more sensible and realistic in their portrayal of minority students.

Dolores A. Simpson

No comic

Dear editor,

Humor, like beauty, is in the eyes of the beholder and is,

An Open Letter from the Editor

To be an editor in any field is to be a decision maker. In journalism, many of an editor's decisions must be made very quickly, under pressure of deadline.

Thursday's "Ralph," which I knew to be potentially offensive and inflammatory, ran anyway because I had to make one of those quick decisions. It was the wrong decision.

Along with "Ralph's" creator, Ron Wheeler, I apologize for the cartoon and the lack of sensitivity its contents displayed.

The apology is extended, not only to black students and to the football team, but to every person who has read or will read the cartoon, because stereotypes—however lightheartedly they

as Webster says, "the quality that makes something funny, or the ability to perceive, appreciate or express what is funny through speech, writing or action."

I realize one of our greatest freedoms is that of expression, and as a cartoonist Ron Wheeler is free to express his ideas, but you are only allowed to express those things that "the people" will laugh at—that which a majority of people will agree is humor. This makes you a "comic," and gives your art the ability to make people laugh and better enjoy life.

Under that definition Wheeler is not a comic nor, I doubt, a responsible human being. Neither blacks, women (liberated or otherwise), foreign students, freshman nor football players laugh at your WASP sense of humor.

Somewhere in the sixties we laid aside ethnic jokes: we stopped laughing at racism, sexism and other forms of limited thought. In the sixties it was finally realized that laughing at one another is not the same as laughing with one another.

Your comic strip is behind the times and it makes one wonder whether the purpose of the Daily Nebraskan is to produce news or ignorance.

J. Harrington

Two cheers for "Ralph"

Dear editor,

After reading the editorial page in Friday's Daily Nebraskan, we feel compelled to write and voice our complaints.

As anyone who read the Friday edition can confirm, quite a few letters were received voicing outrage for the stereotyping of minority groups. Our question is how many of these people were upset by the stereotyped "Farm Boy" portrayed in the previous comic?

If any objection was raised at all, it sure didn't receive a full-page spread and formal apology from the editor. We know of quite a few farm boys who got quite a chuckle out of the comic.

Ron Wheeler, in our opinion, pokes fun not only at blacks, but at whites, the Campus Police, the football team, the entire university system and Big Red Rooters.

We can understand a few people being upset over what they read into the comic, but then hardly a day goes by that someone couldn't find something in "Ralph" to be upset about if they wanted to. What was worst was the editor's inability to back up both her "quick decision" and her staff.

Ron Wheeler has an excellent comic strip which brings out the stereotypes each of us possess but are afraid to admit, so that we can laugh at ourselves and with others. We would hate to see Ron's comic be further censored just because some people are too close-minded to laugh at themselves. Two cheers for "Ralph" and get an editor that will stand up for freedom of the press.

Russ Moreland

Joe Friedman

David Vanier

Steve Mckarsky

Jim Jensen

Allen Meyer

Rich Healy

Jerry Zaster

Trish Friedman

Ross Stoffer

Corinne Moreland

Ralph reactions

Dear editor,

Your over-reacting readership as expressed in "to the editor" concerning "Marvelous Fabulous" was ridiculous and further convinced me that too many blacks interpret any mention of this kind as racial slur.

In truth, I found Wheeler's caricature quite realistic, in that so many outstanding football players happen to be black.

In cartooning, physical characteristics are often exaggerated and there should be no special waiver to one Afroid character simply because that character represents a large number of Afro-Americans who cannot laugh at themselves.

Minority groups would do well to ease racial and ethnic relations by foregoing their extreme sensitivity and hyper-paranoia about such matters. Believe it or not, not all whites espouse bigotry upon every mentioning of a minority person.

It's time now for blacks to stop being so up-tight about their self-isolating "black awareness" and to move toward a positive goal of becoming a part of the majority. As long as they uphold their own persecution, there will be more to follow, for it is that very element they request.

One more thing: the "Open Letter" from the editor in the Sept. 12 issue of the Daily Nebraskan is as flagrant an illustration of cowardice, fear and self-contempt as I've ever seen.

Rebecca Brite, in your overanxious desire to back up from the vociferous minority faction, be sure not to step on the toes of us, the majority, who shall always enjoy keen humor.

Jim Fisher

P.S. How about a special plea for forgiveness from extra thick-lipped campus Negroes who walk around in sur glasses and white T shirts?

United Nigeria

Dear editor,

The main thrust of my opinion on Nigeria (Daily Nebraskan, Sept. 5) was an appeal for a strong and united Nigeria, free of tribalism, corruption and nepotism. The posture was not meant to open up old wounds or to inflict new ones.

When I used the word Biafra, I meant it to embody both the Ibos and other minorities that fought in Biafra. There was never any intention to exclude them. But the thrust of the coup was directed primarily against the Ibos.

From the day of the third coup to August 8, 1975, several newspapers and magazines commented on Nigeria and her oil supply to the United States. Some of these media placed her as the number one, some as number three and others as the number two supplier in the world. I drew my conclusion from the Oil and Gas Journal and other more reliable sources of information on this matter than magazines and newspapers.

Freedom defended

Dear editor,

Ron Wheeler should be ashamed of himself, I very strongly object to his obviously narrow-minded, prejudiced and bigoted view of Big Red supporters.

First of all, not all fans are overweight, nor do they all wear little red suits and funny hats. As a Big Red supporter, I am very much offended by this racist attitude.

Does this sound ridiculous? It is no more ridiculous than the many examples of irate, immature and reactionary letters that the Daily Nebraskan received as a result of Ron Wheeler's innocuous cartoon about football.

I agree that it wasn't very funny, but not for the reasons given by the letter writers. It was not funny because it was ill-conceived and poorly executed. However, in spite of some of Ron's failings as a cartoonist, I feel compelled to defend his freedom of expression.

Ron was not attempting to depict all black people with

this cartoon, but he must agree that some black players do come from the ghetto and some do have lips and big noses. I have a big nose and yet didn't find myself the least upset.

Perhaps the most ridiculous thing of all was the mealy-mouthed way Rebecca Brite, in her acquiescing, hand-wringing letter, made lame excuses for Ron's work. The most important thing an editor can do is stand behind her staff's freedom to express a view, even if that view is not popular.

Ron Wheeler's editorial impact is now so seriously compromised that he almost has no other choice than to resign. I think that would be a tragic mistake.

Maybe in the future Ms. Brite will have the nerve to resist the pressure from special interest groups and stand behind her staff. I am not able to use my name because you can imagine what might happen to me for defending a cartoon that inspired so much hate.

"Freedom of Speech"

You-all missed

Dear editor,

Your all portrayal of the so-called country boy in Wednesday's "Ralph" didn't start up my laughmill a-tall.

First off, we haven't had a corn wagon on the place in years. We changed to trucks the year Willie Bob fell off the tractor and got squashed flatter than a not cake.

Secondly, Ah personally never hit a crow at more than 35 yards, and Ah never use a mushmelon: a small green punkin has a much better shape to it and don't bruise the meat as badly.

If this sort of thing don't come to a hell of a high speed halt Ah'm goin' to have my brother Tom-Bob whup you all.

"John-Boy Walton"

Junior, Organic Fertilizer Management

Cartoon praise

Dear editor,

I couldn't believe the negative, even hostile, response to last Thursday's "Ralph" cartoon. I wonder where we're headed when people can't differentiate between satire and ridicule.

The cartoonist as far as I can tell satirizes everything and everyone equally on campus—and very well, I might add. The cartoon is about the only lighthearted reading in the paper (along with a few Cynics Corners).

It provides comic relief amidst all the bickering over pay scales, fire codes, budgets, football positions and other extremely boring information.

Now that the cartoonist has been gagged by a cornered, frightened and pressured editor, what little enjoyment the paper afforded will surely vanish.

Lewis Cattau

Not offended

Dear editor,

From the response "Ralph" received Thursday it would appear that you'd printed the new KKK constitution instead of a comic.

"Ralph" is not the news, nor should it be. Why then is it taken so seriously? Ron Wheeler has chosen dozens of different characters for his portrayal of campus life. He has never, to my knowledge, continuously keyed on a specific ethnic or social group in his strip.

Finally, I find it utterly amazing that so many of my educated fellow students would be offended by a comic.

Mike Lang

Readers should laugh

Dear editor,

I think credit is due Ron Wheeler for the cartoon series he did on "people" last week in "Ralph." I would like to remind you that he did not pick on any one group; he hit them all—black, white, men and women.

As a white, female employe, I could have taken great offense at the "assets" or "fine points" described on the females applying for the secretarial job. As a former "farmer's" daughter, I could have been upset with him portraying young men coming off the farm as blundering, overweight, backward idiots. And I could also have been offended to think my father could be considered a "Big" Red(neck) football rooter.

I was not offended by any of these put-downs; I was simply amused because people, no matter who they are, are funny. Anyone who was offended by these cartoons has a real problem to deal with, and that problem is not mine nor the cartoonist's.

Let's take a cartoon for what it is; we've gone too far and we have too much to lose if we can't even laugh about people.

opinion "Majority's" sense of humor questioned

Editor's note: Art Alexander, a former ASUN senator and Abel Hall student assistant, is a senior in political science and English.

I wonder if people in this country have learned anything in the last 15 years. I speak to Jim Fisher and all those who consider themselves part of his "majority" (letter to the editor, Sept. 20).

Many people seem to think black people were "paranoid" and "hypersensitive" in their reactions to Ron Wheeler's Sept. 11 cartoon. I disagree.

While it is true that many other groups have been stereotyped in "Ralph," it must also be noted that they had every right and opportunity to respond to the jibes.

Black people responded because, unlike with the other

cartoons, there is justifiable concern over whether the Sept. 11 "Ralph" was a blanket racial stereotype or the stereotyping of a segment of the black population.

Unfortunately, the benefit of the doubt is not easily given. Two centuries of wholesale abuse, often bordering on genocide, are at least 200 good reasons not to give anyone the benefit of the doubt. It was not paranoia, but reasonable fear, that prompted the black community's response to Wheeler's cartoon.

The fact that the concerns of black people (as voiced both peacefully and violently throughout the sixties and seventies) have seemingly gone unrecognized, misunderstood or ignored by Fisher and his "majority" attests to the continued misconception that the problem is a black problem.

It is a problem with the white community and will continue to be so as long as the white community deludes itself about its black racist tendencies.

Fisher's comment about what minorities would "do well" to stop doing had the disturbing air of a threat about it. It is my belief that this country was founded by a "vociferous" minority which didn't seem to think that becoming a part of the majority was a "positive goal."

To me, Ms. Brite's apology was indicative of the courage to admit an error in judgment. I guess Fisher can't identify with that.

Perhaps I lack a "keen sense of humor," but I can laugh at myself. My question is whether Fisher is laughing with me or at me. I fear that, at best, he and his majority don't really know.