



Nebraska Report

There is no Peace without Justice

JULY/AUGUST 2006

VOLUME 34, NUMBER 6

Indian Commission Honors Nebraskans for Peace

Nebraskans for Peace was recognized as the 'organization of the year' at the Second Annual Chief Standing Bear Commemoration held in the State Capitol Rotunda this past May 12.

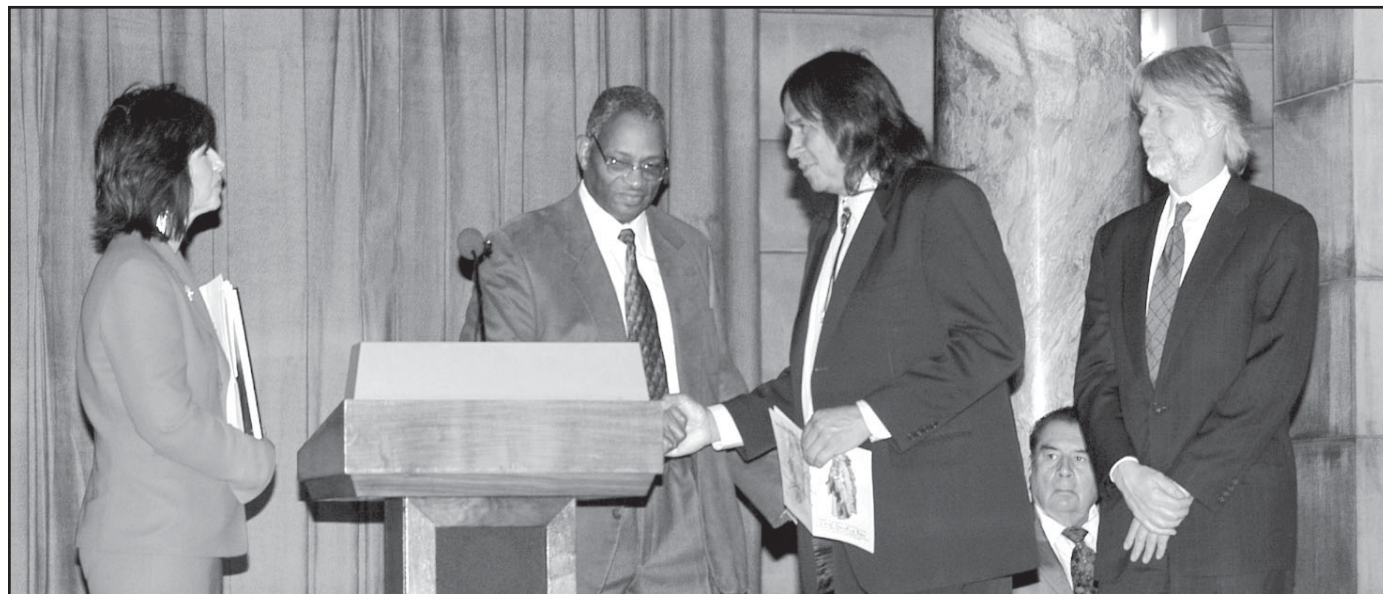
Hosted by the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs, the annual Standing Bear awards ceremony commemorates the life of the famous Ponca Chief, whose 1879 lawsuit established once and for all that "an Indian is a person within the meaning of the law."

The Commission selected Nebraskans for Peace as this year's "2006 Organizational Winner" for its "exemplary work on behalf of Human Rights issues," and specifically

for its "tireless efforts to bring awareness to the travesty at Whiteclay."

Accepting the award on behalf on the Nebraskans for Peace was Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska and national Native American spokesperson Frank LaMere.

In presenting the award, Oscar Harriott of the Nebraska State Ombudsman's Office stated that LaMere and Nebraskans for Peace "have given a voice to those who would otherwise not be heard, and a face to the nameless. We are grateful for your consistent advocacy on behalf of Nebraska's native people on the Whiteclay issue, as a well as a myriad of others."



Frank LaMere being congratulated by Oscar Harriott as Nebraskans for Peace is named the "Organizational Winner" at the 2006 Chief Standing Bear Commemoration. Looking on are Judi M. gaiashkibos, Executive Director of the Nebraska Commission on Indian Affairs, and NFP President Mark Vasina.



Indian Commission Chair Kevin Roach wrapping Frank LaMere in an Indian blanket at the awards presentation. The commendation in LaMere's hands reads, "In honor of Chief Standing Bear, the State of Nebraska expresses appreciation and honor to Nebraskans for Peace for dedication and perseverance in promoting equality before the law, on this twelfth day of May in the year of Two Thousand and Six."

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U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 310
Lincoln, NE

Nebraska Report

The *Nebraska Report* is published nine times annually by Nebraskans for Peace. Opinions stated do not necessarily reflect the views of the directors or staff of Nebraskans for Peace.

Newspaper Committee: Tim Rinne, Editor; Mark Vasina, Christy Hargesheimer, Peter Salter, Marsha Fangmeyer, Paul Olson

Typesetting and Layout: Michelle Ashley

Printing: Fremont Tribune *Circulation:* 6,500

Letters, articles, photographs and graphics are welcomed. Deadline is the first of the month for publication in the following month's issue. Submit to: *Nebraska Report*, c/o Nebraskans for Peace, 941 'O' Street, Suite 1026, Lincoln, NE 68508.

Nebraskans for Peace

Nebraskans for Peace is a statewide grassroots advocacy organization working nonviolently for peace with justice through community-building, education and political action.

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Reading Shelf

50 Simple Things You Can Do to Fight the Right, EarthWorks Action Network
EarthWorks Press, 2006, 192 pp. \$9.95
Reviewed by Curtis Bryant

From the group that authored *50 Simple Things You Can Do to Save the Earth* comes a timely and much-needed clarion call for action to save American democracy from the Radical Right—and an impressive menu of ways to take America back.

More lengthy and robust than *Save the Earth, Fight the Right* drives home the point that, during the past 30 years, the Radical Right has carefully and deliberately organized, planned, and acted not only to gain power but to annihilate opposition (us). To aid in building a progressive movement that can effectively challenge the Radical Right, EarthWorks synthesized a vast array of material about the myriad fronts on which the Radical Right attack the values and institutions that progressive Americans have fought for since the first era of corporate dominance a century ago and how to challenge these attacks.

The book offers something for every progressive American. The "Simple Things" range in complexity from placing bumper stickers on cars to starting radio and television stations—and everything in between. Most activities can be done by individuals, families and/or small groups. Sections also list helpful organizations, books and websites for more information.

This book gives me hope. As a college student, I was taught that, because the world is a series of interlocking systems, a change at one point causes changes throughout the systems. After reading *50 Simple Things You Can Do to Fight the Right*, I see these potential

Fight the Right drives home the point that, during the past 30 years, the Radical Right has carefully and deliberately organized, planned, and acted not only to gain power but to annihilate opposition (us).

change points more clearly than ever. To my surprise, however, instead of feeling overwhelmed by all the options, because EarthWorks presents the options as intertwined, I feel hopeful, energized and free to choose from the menu.

A choice that I am considering is the three "Simple Things" that involve reviving progressive religious traditions. While reading these, I realized how the religious wing of the Radical Right had hindered my spiritual development. As a child in the 1970s and '80s, I heard about "Jesus Freaks" and "Fundies." I remember watching "The 700 Club" when I was 14 or 15 and enjoying Pat Robertson's tirades about religion and politics (something I never heard discussed in church) despite often disagreeing with him. In the 1990s, many of my college peers feared words like *Christian*, *Jesus*, and

Bible because they associated them with Robertson, James Dobson of "Focus on the Family" and Jerry Falwell. I felt uncomfortable claiming these words as mine because I did not want to be associated with their religion. Though I attended Quaker meeting every week, I spent years doubting whether I was a Christian.

But while reading these "Simple Things," I realized that I had been a target of a determined, well-organized, and well-funded campaign to claim these words for the Radical Right. They intentionally and unfairly use the word



Christian as if it were a denominational term ("We're Christians; they're Catholics"). I want to help take these words back because I too am a Christian, and Christianity, as I understand it, properly stands for Peace & Justice.

However, religion is only one possible arena for action. As the book's introduction states, "It doesn't matter which—or how many—Simple Things you pick. What matters is that you do *something*. Fifty-nine million Americans voted Democratic in the 2004 presidential election; if even a small percentage of them get active now, they can generate enough energy to change the direction of our country" (p. vi).

The main fault that I find with the book is in its title. First, the book offers many more than 50 "Simple Things" because each section suggests several activities. Second, the book itself categorizes only the first 16 as simple. The other categories are "It takes an effort" and "For the committed." I also would categorize a few "Simple Things" differently than the authors. Finally, the book has some minor proof-reading errors. But these are quibbles.

At least as important as the "Simple Things" is the book's emphasis on strategic thinking and building a movement. That is how the Radical Right gained power and how we can do the same.

Curtis Bryant is a Quaker and graduate student of the UNO School of Social Work.

Whiteclay Blockade

by Mark Vasina, NFP President

On the evening of June 28, 2006, an Oglala Lakota man purchased a case of beer in Whiteclay, loaded it into his car, and transported it illegally back to his home on the Pine Ridge Reservation, where the sale and possession of alcoholic beverages is prohibited. He no doubt had done this many times before. But this time was different. Sometime later that night he quarreled with his wife and, according to Oglala Sioux Tribal Police, attacked and killed her with a hammer in the presence of their young child.

That same day was to have been the first day of the Whiteclay blockade. Organized at the direction of Oglala Lakota elders, the blockade was planned as a traffic stop at the Nebraska border at Whiteclay where beer would be confiscated as it is transported onto the reservation. Spotters in Whiteclay would identify those vehicles carrying beer purchased in Whiteclay, and radio ahead to the blockade. Only those vehicles so identified would be stopped.

At a news conference at Billy Mills Hall in Pine Ridge, organizers announced the blockade would continue until a lawsuit charging everyone involved in Whiteclay alcohol sales of committing genocide against the Oglala Lakota is filed. They arrived at the blockade mid-afternoon to find more than 20 law enforcement officers, representing Oglala Sioux Tribal Police, the Nebraska State Patrol, and the Sheriff's Departments from Shannon County (SD) and Sheridan County (NE).

Blockade organizer and Oglala Lakota activist Duane Martin, Sr. immediately approached tribal police chief James Twiss, who told Martin he would permit the blockade to begin but close it down if any behavior at the site presented a threat to public safety. He urged further discussions to assure the blockade's safe operation and the lawfulness of planned blockade activities. After Twiss agreed to meet further the next day, Martin called off the blockade.

Talk of blockades at Whiteclay—whether to the north (to prevent beer purchased in Whiteclay from entering the Pine Ridge) or to the south (to prevent beer trucks from entering Whiteclay)—has circulated for many years. Blockade talk escalated at Oglala Lakota Treaty Council meetings last winter, where elders lamented the ineffectiveness of tribal efforts to address the alcohol crisis on the Pine Ridge when liquor stores within two miles of the

reservation's population center sell over \$4,000,000 in beer each year.

The elders authorized a blockade to the north of Whiteclay, to begin in January 2006. Other tribal matters intervened, however, and the blockade appeared to be indefinitely postponed. Then, within a two-week period, three events occurred which again placed the blockade on priority status.

First, on February 28, the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission considered charges against State Line Liquor in Whiteclay for selling to an intoxicated per-

Confronted with institutional opposition in Nebraska to addressing the Whiteclay problem, Chief Oliver Red Cloud signed a proclamation authorizing the blockade.

son. The investigating State Patrol officer's testimony was supported by his cruiser videotape of an intoxicated couple leaving the store with a can of beer and the manager's taped admission that he had sold them beer. The manager then testified he had neglected to tell the investigating officer at the time that the admitted sale had occurred hours earlier when the purchaser was allegedly sober. The commissioners voted 2-to-1 to dismiss the charges.

Next, on March 6, in a packed courtroom in Rushville, residents of Nebraska and the Pine Ridge asked the Sheridan County Board to reject automatic renewal of the Whiteclay liquor licenses. Agreement by the Board would have triggered license hearings by the Liquor Control Commission. Instead, the Board tabled their decision, and on March 13 unanimously ruled in favor of automatic renewal.

Finally, on March 10, the Nebraska Supreme Court upheld a lower court ruling that the Liquor Control Commission must reverse its 2004 decision to deny a license to the Arrowhead Inn in Whiteclay. Within a few days the Arrowhead Inn was again selling beer to residents of the Pine Ridge.

Confronted with this stark evidence of entrenched institutional opposition in Nebraska to addressing the Whiteclay problem, tribal elders renewed their talk of a blockade. At the Treaty Conference of the Seven Teton Sioux Nations in Pierre in May, Chief

Oliver Red Cloud signed a proclamation authorizing the blockade and directed the Strong Heart Civil Rights Movement of the Teton Oglala Cante Tenza, led by Duane Martin, Sr., to set up and operate a blockade to the north of Whiteclay.

The Teton Oglala Cante Tenza is one of a dozen warrior societies on the Pine Ridge, rooted in Lakota tradition predating the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, which established the modern reservation governments with elected tribal councils. According to acting Oglala Sioux Tribal President Alex White Plume and others, warrior societies exercise legitimate enforcement powers on the Pine Ridge by authority of the elders, expressed through Treaty Council, the traditional tribal governing body. Tribal police, on the other hand, operate under the jurisdiction of Tribal Council.

I was privileged to attend a meeting between Twiss and White Plume in mid-June. White Plume, a strong supporter of the blockade, told Twiss that Tribal Council had passed a resolution supporting the blockade. Twiss, unsure of blockade plans, reluctantly agreed to provide police support if specifically directed to do so by Tribal Council. Unfortunately, Tribal Council failed to meet the following week. So it was without a resolution directing tribal police to support the blockade—and with great unease about the day's events yet to unfold—that Twiss met the blockaders on June 28.

I also attended the meeting between Twiss and Martin, held as promised the following day. Twiss expressed concerns about the blockade and promised to seek a legal opinion from department counsel. Martin affirmed his intention to operate a legal blockade and agreed to assist in getting a ruling on the legitimate enforcement role of Cante Tenza under traditional tribal law. They discussed the possibility of a test case involving the blockade in tribal court, as well as other options tribal police could take to address the illegalities in Whiteclay.

The Whiteclay blockade is a tangible expression of the will of the Oglala Lakota to deal with Nebraska's intractable negligence regarding the sale of alcohol in Whiteclay. As such, the blockade and the work taking place to assure its safety and legality deserve the support of all Nebraskans concerned with the welfare of our Lakota neighbors, and the support of everyone everywhere concerned about justice for indigenous peoples.

Nebraskans for Peace Statement on the Whiteclay Blockade

The Board of Nebraskans for Peace unanimously voted to support the Whiteclay alcohol blockade organized by the Oglala Lakota at the Pine Ridge Reservation border near Whiteclay. The blockade is the result of a genuine grassroots movement on the Pine Ridge, and represents a coming together of both the traditional (Treaty Council) and the federally established (Tribal Council) institutions of the Oglala Lakota.

NFP has made a strong and long-term commitment to ending the illegal alcohol sales in Whiteclay and working with the leaders of the Pine Ridge on this and other matters of social justice. Nevertheless, to date our combined efforts have produced no concrete results. In fact, recent actions by the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission, the Sheridan County Board of Commissioners, and the Nebraska Supreme Court have demonstrated continued official disregard of the cause of justice in Whiteclay and have resulted in widespread alarm and frustration on the Pine Ridge. This blockade, in our view, is a significant positive step toward resolution.

We recognize that this effort by the people of the Pine Ridge to enforce their constitutional ban on alcohol and determine their own destiny will not take place without challenge. Nevertheless, this blockade is first and foremost an action originated and carried out by the Oglala Lakota under the authority of their traditional and tribal institutions. In accordance with NFP's long-held commitment to nonviolent action, NFP members may serve as spotters in Whiteclay to identify vehicles transporting recently purchased alcohol onto the Pine Ridge, but will not participate in the stopping or searching of vehicles, the confiscation of contraband alcohol, or any other enforcement actions at the blockade site.

The Whiteclay blockade is admittedly a disconcerting action because it does indeed create confrontation. However, since the goal of this action is to uphold just law and promote justice, NFP supports the blockade, just as we continue to support other efforts to address the problems posed by Whiteclay, such as securing Nebraska funding for alcohol treatment on the Pine Ridge. Should the conduct of the blockade at any point become inappropriate, NFP will reevaluate its participation.

StratCom & the World Peace Forum

Nebraskans for Peace State Coordinator Tim Rinne was one of over 4,500 delegates from a hundred different countries to attend the World Peace Forum in Vancouver, British Columbia June 24-28. A guest of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space, he had a prized opportunity to meet with disarmament activists from all across the world. In fact, being from StratCom's backyard made him something of a novelty at this international gathering. People were amazed—and heartened—to learn that not everybody in Nebraska sanctions the new 'offensive' role StratCom has now taken on in the "War on Terror."

StratCom's new missions figured in big last month at the inaugural World Peace Forum. Hundreds of delegates—from Japan to Canada, Germany to Brazil—turned out for the Forum's sessions on missile defense and space weapons to learn the latest about the missions that, in the wake of 9/11, have now been assigned to StratCom.

Although missile defense and space weaponry are generally identified with Ronald Reagan's "Star Wars" pipe dream, the concept has been regularly reincarnated over a 40-year-long history, morphing from the Safeguard ABM program of the 1960s into the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) of the Reagan years, to the Clinton Administration's National Missile Defense (NMD), to the current Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) and Theater Missile Defense (TMD) programs.

Despite the 'defensive'-sounding label however, missile defense is, and always has been, an integral feature of an offensive, first-strike strategy, intended to foil an enemy's ability to strike back.

Despite the 'defensive'-sounding labels however, missile defense is—and always has been—an integral feature of an offensive, first-strike strategy, intended to foil an enemy's ability to strike back. And while the putative enemies at which the program has been directed have also morphed over the years (from the Soviet Union and its allies to

'rogue states' like Saddam Hussein's Iraq, Iran and North Korea), the goal of ensuring the U.S.'s military and economic prominence around the globe has remained constant.

The sheer technological sweep of the Star Wars program is the stuff of science fiction. President Reagan envisioned a system in which an incoming ICBM would be destroyed by a counter missile—"hitting a bullet with a bullet" as the catchphrase went.



Artwork by Justin Kemerling

Alternative schemes included giant orbiting space platforms, from which nuclear-powered lasers could be fired to zap enemy warheads out of the sky. But as the technology for the military use of space has evolved, so have the space-fighting strategies, and no longer is "missile defense" so narrowly construed as 'defending against missiles.'

The 'new,' even more menacing StratCom now supports a range of duties well beyond its traditional task of nuclear deterrence. Missions such as Space and Global Strike; Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance; Information Operations; Computer Network Warfare; Missile Defense; and Combating Weapons of Mass

Destruction have all been added in just the past four years. And "space," as Bruce Gagnon of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space explains it, "has become the glue that now holds these StratCom missions together."

The 'New' even more menacing StratCom now controls Nuclear Deterrence; Space and Global Strike; Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance; Information Operations; Computer Network Warfare; Missile Defense; and Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction. And "space," as Bruce Gagnon of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space explains it, "has become the glue that now holds these StratCom missions together."

Whoever controls space, StratCom's war planners like to note, controls the Earth. And in the information age particularly, knowledge is power and can be just as crucial as cutting edge weaponry to achieving that control. Although most of the Star Wars weapons are years from being ready for deployment (and judging from the latest missile defense test flops, it's questionable if they'll ever be), existing space satellite technology is already supplying the U.S. that vital knowledge edge.

For instance, 70 percent of the munitions delivered on Iraq during the "Shock and Awe" aerial assault were guided to their targets by satellites. The U.S.'s vast satellite network not only provides the 'eye in the sky' to identify potential targets, it actually enables our forces to direct weapons to those targets. So while space has still not been "weaponized" with battles being waged in the heavens, the U.S. has already "militarized" space by using satellite technology to gain the upper hand in earth-based conflicts.

It didn't take long, though, for the war planners to figure out that what the U.S. has, others could also get—unless, that is, they're prevented from doing so. Thus, to protect its monopoly on satellite reconnaissance, surveillance and targeting capacity, the Pentagon and aerospace contractors have accordingly been actively pursuing research into ventures like anti-satellite (ASAT) technology. The schemes on the drawing board for this ASAT strategy run the gamut from low-tech tactics like throwing junk from one of our satellites to blind or disable a competitor's, to firing a ground-

based laser (the "Starfire" program being developed at Kirtland AFB in New Mexico) to literally knock a rival orbiter from the sky.

Extreme as this all sounds, it clearly demonstrates the U.S. is not going to allow anything to stand in the way of preserving its

information supremacy in space—least of all international law. As one Star Wars enthusiast put it, "With respect to space dominance, we like it, we've got it, and we're going to keep it." It's no fluke that the 50th Space Wing based at SpaceCom in Colo-



One More Reason To Reduce Our Oil Usage

by Lisa Renstrom

"Consensus is building on our need to reduce our addiction to oil," Sierra Club National President and Nebraska native Lisa Renstrom stated this past May. "High energy prices, the negative domestic economic impact of sending hundreds of billions of our dollars overseas, oil's contribution to climate change and the obvious national security risks are awakening Americans awareness to the problem. There is one reason, however, that no one seems to be speaking about: Peace."

Lessening our dependence on oil, Renstrom argues, will help to bring our troops home sooner rather than later and lessens the probability of future resource wars. As a follow-up to her comments in the May/June 2006 Nebraska Report on developing Nebraska's renewable energy potential, we are publishing the op-ed she distributed to the national media in advance of the Fourth of July holiday under the title of "Tie a Green Ribbon for Independence Day."

Independence Day is a time to celebrate our past, our values and the accomplishments of our nation. We honor both the American spirit and our history of overcoming seemingly insurmountable challenges generation after generation through ingenuity, fortitude and sheer force of will. This Fourth of July, however, my mind is focused on the future and how we can tap the potential of these good old-fashioned American values to implement smart energy solutions. Because I believe on the anniversary of America's birth, this is the most patriotic action we can take, and that if we love our country and the men and women who defend it, reducing our nation's dangerous dependence on oil must be among our highest priorities.

The Department of Defense recently invited me, along with 47 other "civilian opinion leaders" to visit

Pentagon's Central Command headquarters in Florida and our bases in the Persian Gulf. It was an eye opening experience, and not only because I was shuttled around on a black hawk helicopter, shot M16s and met generals and troops from every division who lead with intelligence and integrity. What became very clear to me was just how much our nation's security is wrapped up in our energy policy.

Oil money is destabilizing the Middle East, threatening America's security at home and abroad. Our oil dependence affects our military priorities in other ways as well, starting with our need to guard strategic oil supplies and oil lines.

I had the honor of speaking with Gen. John Abizaid, who oversees our nation's military operation for the 25-country region that includes Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. I acknowledged that our armed forces are providing the leadership to protect the oil supply but also asked who would provide the leadership to promote energy solutions that would reduce our demand for oil - something that would help ease this tremendous burden now placed upon the shoulders of our men and women in uniform. He agreed that America needs to reduce its demand for oil, but that it was not in his, nor the military's, duty to do so.

Gen. Abizaid is right, reducing our dependence on oil is not the military's job. It is our job. It is every American consumer, parent, teacher, business owner and voter's job, and our patriotic duty.

Toward that end, the Sierra Club is developing a national energy policy that will identify the suite of



Lisa Renstrom

options—short-term, transitional and long-term—aimed at developing the next generation of clean and efficient energy technologies. We are inviting our friends and neighbors to weigh-in, to share their concerns and ideas, to travel with us this summer toward a common sense, practical independent energy plan for our country's future.

But there is no need to wait. This Independence Day is the perfect chance to stop wasting the energy that in one form or another puts our troops in harms way. If public transportation is an option, use it. Flex your power as a consumer to buy energy efficient

appliances, light bulbs and other products. Get an energy audit of your home to find out how you can save electricity and money, or even plug into wind or solar power. If you can afford it, consider swapping your current car, truck or SUV for a fuel-efficient hybrid.

Finally, write your elected officials. Tell them to make our local, state and federal government part of the smart energy solution, by investing in renewable technologies and by boosting programs that make our homes, cars and businesses more efficient.

So let's celebrate this Fourth of July by being part of the solution. It's time to tie a 'green ribbon' around the oak tree to remind us of our heroes in uniform and our own role in making a smart energy future, a reality.

Sierra Club is the nation's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. Readers may write to Lisa Renstrom at Sierra Club, 85 Second Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94105; website: www.sierraclub.org.

rado Springs, Colorado has as its motto, "Masters of Space."

Space mastery is key to the U.S.'s long-term global ambitions. The actions of Vice President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld couldn't be more explicit about their goal of securing the world's energy resources and establishing U.S. hegemony worldwide. And sadly, a majority of the American people would appear to share that outlook. A recent poll by Purdue University Professor Jeremy Straughn on Americans' identity found that 79 percent of the U.S. public believes the United States should do everything possible to remain the world's strongest military power. That finding goes a long way toward explaining why we as a public so readily fall into line every time the White House rattles the saber over a toothless threat like Iraq, Iran or North Korea. On a deep personal level, we obviously like being the world's only superpower, and are predisposed to go along with anything that can make a claim for keeping us on top.

President Bush's two surviving "Axis of Evil" nations, however, are little more than



StratCom Commander
General James "Hoss" Cartwright

"Intent is always the hardest thing to understand—you have to have at least one paranoid person around, and that is StratCom—so you have to make sure you are accounting for the risks..."

Arms Control Today, June 2006

pretexts to justify a program on the scale of Star Wars (which the aerospace industry boasts will be "the largest industrial project in the history of planet Earth"). At most, the Iran and North Korea 'threats' are serving to keep the federal dollars pouring into the Military-Industrial Complex, while the Pentagon and its corporate partners try out their latest hardware and practice their war scripts in 'real time' combat settings. But the real target of all this space war planning—the actual nation at which all this activity is presently pointed—is somewhat more formidable. And it holds, coincidentally, a major share of our foreign debt.

China, with its blistering economic growth, is on the verge of rising to 'great power' status and challenging the U.S.'s influence in Asia. Of even more immediate interest to the oil men in the White House, though, is the fact that China is also in direct competition with the United States for control of the world's petroleum supplies. According to Michael Klare, five-college

Space mastery is key to the U.S.'s long-term global ambitions. The actions of Vice President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld couldn't be more explicit about their goal of securing the world's energy resources and establishing U.S. hegemony worldwide.

Professor of Peace and World Security Studies, China is now the world's "number two" consumer of oil, just behind the U.S. By the year 2020, Klare states, "Chinese oil con-

conclusion on page 8

Can Everyone Be Made to See the Light?

by John R. Hibbing
UNL Department of Political Science

People are reluctant to believe that something as personal and cerebral as political orientations could have a basis in genetics. Part of this skepticism springs from scientific illiteracy. Far too many people have the idea that the effect of genes is static and automatic. People think genes make eyes blue or brown and then do nothing for the next 90 years. Actually, genes turn on and off throughout our lifetimes, making the proteins that, for example, form, transport and receive neurotransmitters.

Variations in genes lead some people to crave the rush of gambling, roller coasters and hang gliding even as others find these experiences discomfiting. And it appears they lead some people to gravitate toward the political left and some toward the political right.

A little over a year ago, John Alford, Carolyn Funk and I published an article entitled "Are Political Orientations Genetically Transmitted?" (full text access available at <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu>). Utilizing standard twin methodology from behavioral genetics, we confirmed and extended previous findings indicating that political beliefs are partly heritable and partly environmental. Whether one is liberal or conservative is certainly not determined at birth, and there is no "gene for" liberalism or conservatism, but the findings indicate genes are far from irrelevant to politics. This research could be incorrect since all methodologies have their limitations. But the technique in question has proven useful and accurate in numerous other areas, and it is worth speculating on the possible nature of the connection between genes and politics, as well as the implications of such a relationship.

Genes are unlikely to affect directly time- and context-specific issues such as attitudes toward nuclear power or property taxes, but genes could work on orientations toward broader issues of group life and societal structure. For millennia, homo sapiens have lived in social units. Not all social units face the same pressures, however, and it is likely that different approaches to organizing group life evolved. Groups located in hostile environments over the generations could have developed a preference for group unity,

for leaders exuding clarity of purpose, and for a relatively belligerent attitude toward out-groups. They may also prefer traditional behavioral codes, swift and certain punishment of in-group malefactors, and an uncharitable view of human nature and its malleability. We refer to those with this worldview as *absolutists*. Other people, perhaps possessing genes selected for in unthreatening environments, see less need for unquestioned leaders, for group unity, and for negativity toward out-groups. They oppose inflexible moral codes and harsh sentences, opting instead for rehabilitation, con-

number of potential implications for those on the left. Let me speculate on just two. The first is that the advice of George Lakoff, whose influential book *Don't Think of an Elephant* has been making the rounds in Democratic circles, is probably misguided. Lakoff uses family relationships as a metaphor for politics, associating the right with strict parenthood and the left with a more nurturing, permissive style of parenthood. The notion he advances is that if the left became more skilled at employing the language of authoritative parenting, its message would be embraced and elections would

that all people are the same and, therefore, of assuming that the same kinds of arguments and evidence that they themselves find persuasive will appeal to others. But just because liberals believe knowledge is acquired through careful sifting of relevant facts, followed by open-minded reflection and lively discussion, does not mean everyone believes this. A significant segment of the human population believes that facts are tricky inconveniences and that core values trump empirical evidence. Liberals believe information and superior arguments will win, so they badly misdiagnose the situation

when they lose. Many on the left believe that all they need to be successful is to recruit a strategist as clever as Karl Rove, to convince people to quit watching *Fox News*, or to encourage their candidates to repackage their positions in the language of firm parenthood.

In actuality, the left would be ahead to recognize that people are fun-

damentally different, politically and otherwise. The belief that absolutists are just misinformed contextualists is mistaken, and those on the left should know better, since they are generally better at appreciating and tolerating human differences, such as those in sexual orientation, learning styles, skin color and religious beliefs. Why then is it so hard for them to appreciate similar differences in worldview? Absolutists will never stop thinking there is something 'wrong' with Massachusetts, but contextualists could get a leg up on their antagonists by recognizing there is nothing 'wrong' with Kansas. When someone's political orientation is different from ours, it does not mean that orientation is wrong, just as when someone's sexual orientation differs from ours, it does not mean that orientation is wrong.

Believing the resurgence of the political right is entirely attributable to cagey messaging techniques, and believing that all voters subscribe to the same rules of evidence, are both serious mistakes. Appreciating that people differ genetically, not just in height and hair color but also in personal and political temperament, will encourage treating opponents with respect, and will make it possible to distinguish that which can be changed from that which cannot. Genes are probabilistic and not deterministic. So for those committed to altering the status quo, much remains in play—just not everything.



Just because liberals believe knowledge is acquired through careful sifting of relevant facts, followed by open-minded reflection and lively discussion, does not mean everyone believes this. A significant segment of the human population believes that facts are tricky inconveniences and that core values trump empirical evidence.

— UNL Professor John Hibbing

text-dependent punishment, and a belief that the human condition can be improved. We call such people *contextualists*.

These broad worldviews likely then shape the preferences of people in numerous areas. Absolutists tend toward fundamentalism in religion, realism in art, phonics rules in teaching reading, conservatism in politics, revealed truth in learning, and strong authority figures in child-rearing. Contextualists, on the other hand, prefer secular humanism in religion, free-form impressionism in art, whole language in reading instruction, liberalism in politics, human scientific discovery in learning, and a nurturing approach to child-rearing.

Our suspicion is that many people in modern societies are neither pure absolutists nor pure contextualists. To the extent they have a governing worldview, it is mixed or genetically indeterminate. These are the people whose positions are open for activists to influence. But a minority of people, for reasons that are in part genetic, are either committed absolutists or committed contextualists. It is unlikely any events or arguments could lead them to change their worldview. Not surprisingly, these same people gravitate toward politics and exacerbate societal political disagreements.

This research on the connection between genes and politics obviously has a

be won, since the language of strict parenthood is believed to be more appealing to more people.

In contrast, our findings suggest that style of parenting is merely one part of a genetically influenced worldview encompassing religion, politics, acquisition of knowledge and leisure pursuits. Accordingly, absolutists will be attracted to the tough-love language of a stern father figure, while contextualists will recoil from that same language. Thus, the notion that the salvation of the left rests with linguistic gimmicks simply does not ring true, since absolutists will find the authoritarian language appealing (but still probably vote Republican) and contextualists will find it off-putting (and display diminished enthusiasm for those voicing it). Preference for a particular style of parenting is a symptom not a cause of the problem.

The second implication is that the left is indeed more likely to win if it understands that people's politics are in part genetic. Though our findings have been roundly criticized by both the left and the right, the criticism from the left has been more intense. Contextualists like to stress the malleability of the human condition, so a role for genetics is particularly bothersome to them. But a successful electoral strategy cannot be based on an inaccurate vision of human nature, even if it is a comforting one.

Many on the left are fond of pretending

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NFP & ACLU Ask the Government

“Are You Spying on Nebraskans?”

by Amy Miller,
ACLU Nebraska
Legal Director

Timed to coincide with the nation's Fourth of July celebration, ACLU Nebraska filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request with the U.S. government to find out if Nebraskans have been the target of illegal domestic spying.

NBC News reported last December 13 that between July 2004 and May 2005 the Pentagon's "Counter Intelligence Field Activity" (CIFA) had spied on Quakers in Colorado, Catholic Peace Ministries in Iowa and other peaceful groups whose activities posed no threat and should not have been kept on file. Since we have people working for Peace & Justice in Nebraska who are criticizing the current administration, there's a growing fear that Pentagon, the FBI and the National Security Administration (NSA), which is directly under StratCom's wing, has been illegally spying in our state, too. The Freedom of Information Act request is a tool that will let us know if our tax dollars are being spent to spy on retired police officers, school teachers and other local activists.

The request was made on behalf of four non-profit groups (Nebraskans for Peace, SOS—Speak Out at StratCom, Nebraskans for Justice, and ACLU Nebraska) and eight Nebraskans who are active in those groups: Tim Rinne, Joshua Cramer, Malcom Miles, Mark Weddleton, Tariq Al-Amin, Mary Dickinson, Nan Graf and Lela Shanks. Pictures and short biographies of the Nebraskan activists, along with a copy of the FOIA request itself are all on the ACLU website: www.aclunebraska.org.

Readers of this newspaper know why we fear Nebraskans for Peace is a target of this warrantless surveillance: as standard practice, NFP challenges government actions in many fields, including its calls for an end to the Bush/Cheney Administration's armed aggression in the Middle East. NFP members have been prominent in protests during visits by President Bush and Vice President Cheney to the state. Local anti-war rallies oftentimes feature NFP members holding the NFP banner. Similar activities in other states have brought those groups under scrutiny by the government, and it is likely Nebraskans for Peace's peaceful First Amendment activities are similarly considered a threat to this administration.

The other requestors are similarly 'dangerous' for asking hard questions about government actions. Nebraskans for Justice was organized to work for racial justice. They have been active in the effort to prove the innocence of two former Black Panthers who are serving life sentences for murder of an Omaha police officer—Ed Poindexter and

Mondo we Langa. During the Nixon Administration, many activist groups such as Vietnam War protestors and the Black Panthers were targeted for investigation and infiltration by the FBI's COINTELPRO program (Counter Intelligence Program). Records released to the Nebraskans for Justice indicate the two men convicted in Omaha were in fact under surveillance prior to their conviction. Given what we know about the methods used by the FBI at that time, these revelations suggest the two men may have been framed to remove the political threat they posed. Since Nebraskans for Justice spends time educating the public about the FBI's activities in the past, they now have to fear the current administration has resurrected domestic surveillance against them as a dissenting group.

Another of the non-profit groups, SOS—Speak Out at StratCom, is a loose coalition of activists who, beginning in 2003, have gathered on the anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima to protest the continued proliferation of nuclear weapons. Independent activists such as Joshua Cramer and Malcom Miles helped organize the speakers and musical performances several years ago, and both men joined the FOIA request. Josh expressed his frustration over learning that the StratCom event has probably attracted FBI surveillance: "As a young student attending public schools in Hastings, Nebraska, I learned to love my country. I also learned about my right to free speech. As a young adult, I am left wondering why my speech might be monitored by the same government that provided me with an education."

Finally, we made a request for ACLU Nebraska as well. ACLU has been critical of the Patriot Act, the detention of boys and men at Guantanamo without legal counsel, the questioning of Middle Eastern and Muslim people since 9/11, and generally has been outspoken in asking for a return to the balance between national security interests and civil rights protections. If the federal government is targeting critics of the current administration, ACLU Nebraska may be in the group considered traitorous as well.

Who are the 'dangerous' individual suspects who may be targets of government surveillance here in Nebraska? Here's a short description of the eight local activists we've made a request about:

• Tariq Al-Amin: Tariq is retired from the Omaha Police Department after 25 years of service and is currently President of Nebraskans for Justice.

• Joshua Cramer: Josh coordinates volunteers for a non-profit group. He helped organize the first "SOS—Speak Out at StratCom" event held in Omaha.

• Mary Dickinson: Mary is a public high school teacher in Lincoln and currently Vice-President of Nebraskans for Justice.

• Nan Graf: Nan was a Nebraska Wesleyan University English professor before she retired. A member of NFP, she has helped Nebraskans for Justice with research and articles on racial justice issues.

• Malcom Miles: Malcom is a network specialist for a behavioral health provider in Lincoln. He was active in both SOS—Speak Out at StratCom and the Lincoln Bill of Rights Defense Coalition.

We want the FBI and the police to protect us from terrorists, but every dollar or minute spent spying on innocent Nebraskans is time and money that could have been spent looking for criminals.

• Tim Rinne: As the State Coordinator of Nebraskans for Peace for the past 13 years, Tim needs no introduction here.

• Lela Shanks: Lela is a lifelong Civil Rights activist and grandmother who now lives in Lincoln. Recently she has been an outspoken critic of the Patriot Act and the war in Iraq.

• Mark Weddleton: Mark is a Head Start teacher in Lincoln. He has been active in anti-war protests and the Lincoln Bill of Rights Defense Coalition.

Do these people sound like dangerous threats to our community, or do they sound like concerned citizens who are acting on their consciences to improve the world around them? We want the FBI and the police to protect us from terrorists, but every dollar or minute spent spying on innocent Nebraskans is time and money that could

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Public Opinion Shifting on the Death Penalty

by Eric Aspengren, Executive Director
Nebraskans Against the Death Penalty

July 2 was the 30th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in the case of *Gregg v. Georgia*, in which the Court ruled that Georgia had sufficiently fixed its death penalty laws. The death penalty, after a four-year hiatus, was again legal in the United States, and there now been 1031 executions in the U.S. since that decision, starting with Gary Gilmore's in January 1977.

Despite the passing of this grim anniversary, though, there is much reason for us to feel optimistic.

The number of executions and death sentences have seen a dramatic drop in recent years. In the 1990s, the United States averaged 300 death sentences per year. In 2005, the total number of death sentences nationwide was 125, a drop of 55 percent. In 2005, we also saw a dramatic drop in the number of executions in the U.S. to 60—down 38 percent from the peak year of 1999 when there were 98. As of this writing, there have been 20 executions so far this year. At this pace we will see another drop to 48 executions. (All figures from the Death Penalty Information Center.)

To quote the Death Penalty Information Center's 2005 year end report:

"Instead of the death penalty, juries, legislators, prosecutors, and victim family members increasingly expressed their preference for life-without-parole sentences, which carry much less uncertainty than death sentences. According to a study by the *New York Times*, the number of prisoners serving life sentences has doubled in the past decade."

Public opinion in general is turning against the death penalty. According to the latest Gallup Poll on the subject from May 2006, when given a choice between the death penalty and life without parole, 47 percent of the respondents chose the death penalty. This is the lowest percentage in twenty years. Sixty-five percent of the respondents said they support the death penalty, down from a high of 80 percent in 1994.

But the Gallup Poll provides further evidence that a change in public opinion is underway.

According to the poll, 34 percent of Americans do not believe that the death penalty deters crime. One of the promises made by proponents of the death penalty is that it's a deterrent to the commission of murder. There is no evidence to show that this is the case, but there is some evidence to the contrary, and Americans are beginning to believe that evidence.

In addition, 63 percent of the respondents believe that an innocent person has been executed in the United States within the past five years.

For years the conventional wisdom was that there was no way an innocent person could be convicted of murder and sentenced to the death penalty. And there certainly was no way an innocent person could have been executed. But with 123 people now having been exonerated and released from death row, people are beginning to question that conventional wisdom. The recent, very high profile cases showing that innocent men have likely been executed have also begun to have an effect.

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Death Penalty Statistics*	2005	2004	1999
Death Sentences	125**	125	276
Death Row population (as of Oct. 1) ..	3,383	3,471	3,625
Executions	60	59	98
Clemencies granted	3	4	5
Public Support for Death Penalty#	64%	64%	71%
Percentage of executions by region:			
South	72%	85%	75%
Midwest	23%	12%	12%
West	3%	3%	12%
Northeast	2%	0%	1%

*As of Dec. 15, 2005 with no more executions scheduled for this year.
**Corrected Projection (3/28/06)
#Gallup Poll (from the Death Penalty Information Center's Year-End Report 2005)

StratCom & the World Peace Forum, conclusion

sumption is projected to reach 12 million barrels per day," while the U.S. will need to import "as much as 16 million barrels per day" by the same date.

Although China is a member of the Nuclear Club, it's existing nuclear arsenal numbers no more than 20 missiles (compared to our 5,735 operational warheads, with another 4,225 held in reserve), and its military budget of somewhere between \$31-38 billion a year is less than one tenth that of the U.S. None of this, however, has prevented the neo-con hawks linked to the White

lies (such as Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, Australia, even India) to "surround" China, isolate it, and thereby "manage" its entrance onto the global stage. The Pentagon is actively at work conducting war games, that utilize Theater Missile Defense, against the "Red" team in anticipation of a coming showdown in Asia. And the aerospace industry

The real target of all this space war planning—the actual nation at which all this activity is presently pointed—is China, which holds a major share of our foreign debt, and is in direct competition with the United States for control of the world's petroleum supplies.

(the "Big Five" of Boeing, Northrup Grumman, Lockheed Martin, General Dynamics, Raytheon, in particular) is lining up to cash in on this bonanza—which, as we noted above, promises to be the biggest and most costly industrial project in world history.

But even if Bush, Cheney and Rumsfeld do manage to sucker the American public into falling for this latest saber rattle, how are we ever going to pay for such a thing?

The aerospace contractors and their cheerleaders, who will be gathering like vultures at the Strategic Space 2006 conference in Omaha October 10-12, have already got an answer for that.

Our entitlement programs.

Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and what is left of the Welfare program are slated to be de-funded, with the money diverted to pay for this new arms race in space.

Like the StratCom war planners say, whoever controls space, control the Earth. And that, it would seem, even includes the purse strings of the federal budget.

Thanks to Bruce Gagnon of the *Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space* and Loring Wirbel of *Citizens for Peace in Space* for their expertise in the preparation of this article.



House from sounding the alarm about the military menace China poses to our national security. And the Military-Industrial Complex is rising to the challenge and then some.

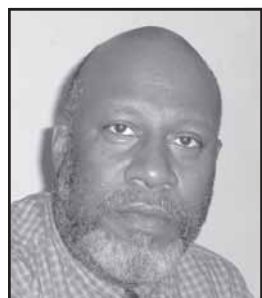
Politically, militarily and economically, every resource is already being marshaled to counter this 'looming threat.' Current State Department strategy calls for enlisting the assistance of a number of 'dependable' al-

A Divided

Community

African Americans in Conflict over Quality Education in Omaha

by A' Jamal Byndon



The conflict that has erupted in the African-American community over the reorganization plan for Omaha's Public Schools (LB 1024) illustrates how divided African

Americans are about our educational system. And not just here in Nebraska. Everybody from the national NAACP to race and diversity experts like the Rev. Al Sharpton and Rev. Jesse Jackson have weighed in on this issue. But the gap in thinking will not be closed, nor is a resolution likely to found, by relying on the rhetoric we're getting in the media. There are crucial matters that the Omaha African-American community itself needs to discuss and decide—issues of stated policy vs. actual practice; the dream of what we seek vs. the unvarnished reality that is.

What is needed at this point is a 'community summit' of proponents from both sides—the system's friends as well as critics—so that the dissension we're now witnessing does not lead to a destructive schism. As a parent whose four children are products of the Omaha School District, I myself am far from neutral about this subject. The issues enumerated below, though, I believe get to the heart of this conflict over the purpose and direction of our public education system. And they accordingly frame the debate that needs to take place among Omaha's African-American citizens.

1. The focus on 'diversity' and 'integration' in the Omaha school district debate diverts us from the primary mission, which is a quality education for our children.

As any low-income family or poor individual can tell you, diversity (however desirable and valuable it may be) does not put food on the table or money in the bank account. State Senator Ernie Chambers had it right when he stated that quality education is more important than integration. During the busing case 34 years ago, the integration that resulted from busing was only a

means toward quality education. It is essential in this "community summit" that needs to occur that we keep our 'eyes on the prize' of effectively educating our children, and not get distracted by fine-sounding catchphrases.

2. It is offensive that the white leadership of the Omaha School District should be touting 'diversity' when there are no people of color making significant decisions within that apartheid educational system.

State Senator Ernie Chambers had it right when he stated that quality education is more important than integration. During the busing case 34 years ago, the integration that resulted from busing was only a means toward quality education.

Omaha School District Superintendent John Mackiel and his apologists speak to the importance of diversity and integration, yet they themselves do not have a record of accomplishment in dismantling the system of white privilege that got them, and maintains them in, their jobs. Although more than half of the Omaha School District is comprised of students of color, the decision-making authority in the system continues to rest in the hands of a few white administrators. The National Education Association (NEA) was publicly chided by well-intentioned do-gooders for using the term 'apartheid' to describe our public education system. But how else can you describe the segregated and hierarchical system operating inside our schools and administrations?

3. To place the educational emphasis on 'diversity' is a dubious proposition in any event, since—unlike the relationship between quality education and improved economic status—it is nearly impossible to measure incremental changes or quantify improvement in racial attitudes.

Instead of fixating on 'diversity' and 'integration,' our focus in the Omaha school

district debate should be on equality of educational opportunity. There are all-white schools in the Omaha metro area which are perfectly legal, because the segregation is based not on race, but income status. White parents can afford to send their children to these schools and African-American parents can't. If ever there was a case for forced busing, economic class, rather than race, is it. In our capitalist system here in America, there is a direct correspondence between economic status and the quality and level of

educational training. With respect to issues of diversity, however, we simply have no equivalent means to quantitatively measure the outcome. Social racism operates in an often secretive fashion, with subterranean motivations and unspoken codes. It's an implicit agreement between one set of parties to discriminate against other parties in society. Basing an educational agenda on combating such phantoms is unlikely to produce the results we want. Our time would be much better spent demanding a quality education for our kids.

4. Why are we so invested in maintaining the current educational structure when it is clearly failing to provide African-American students a quality education?

The gross inequities in educational opportunities between OPS and the outlying suburban white school districts place students of color at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to preparing them for their future. Poorly equipped by the educational system, they are almost assured of low-paying employment in dead-end jobs—assum-

ing, that is, that they don't end in jail. According to *The Sentencing Project* and Harrison (2006) "In the 25-29 age group, an estimated 11.9 percent of black men were in prison or jails, compared with 3.9 percent of Hispanic males and 1.7 percent of white males." In Nebraska, African Americans are 6 percent of the population but roughly 25 percent of the inmates. Is it any wonder that the only real news about African Americans you read in the Eurocentric media is about killings, gang violence and the sordid affairs of artists and sports figures? Poverty and lack of opportunity is so inextricably linked to the African-American experience, it is virtually impossible to distinguish or separate race from class in Omaha. The African anti-colonialist theorist Frantz Fanon captured this connection between color and class perfectly when he wrote, "You are rich because you are white and you are white because you are rich." In failing to demand a more equitable economic division of the education tax base, we are sentencing our youth to a future without promise.

5. It is also patently obvious that the Omaha Public Schools leadership has no real idea how to resolve the educational problems facing African American students.

Case in point: each year the Omaha Public Schools (OPS) administration argues that in order to improve the quality of education they need more money, more money and more money. One year, poverty was the impediment to students' achievement. The second year it was large classroom size, or the high ratio of students to teachers. The third year it was poor parent involvement in the schools. The fourth year it was lack of community support from agencies and organizations for public education. The fifth year it was poor teacher salaries. The sixth year it was outdated facilities and school buildings in disrepair. The seventh year it was all-day kindergarten. The latest fad is that each student now needs a laptop computer in order to 'learn.' Each new gimmick is satisfied to a point, and meanwhile, the gaps between student groups continue. Still today, a lower-class white student has a bet-

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BEWARE OF ROMANS RIDING LAWNMOWERS

by Tom Winter
UNL Associate Professor of Classics

“What did the Romans use for lawnmowers?”

The question showed up on Classics-L, the Classics discussion list. For a moment’s fun, picture Julius Caesar riding a John Deere or pushing a Toro or running a Lawn Boy on a mix of olive oil and naphtha.

Can’t see it? Okay, try this. It’s easier with no infernal combustion engine. The Roman lawnmower was in tiers. Top tier had a donkey harnessed to a wooden turntable. The tier below that one had the gearbox (yes, they had gears). The tier below that had the mower blade, and then of course, the wheels.

It needed seven Romans to operate the Roman lawnmower, viz: one muleteer to keep the donkey going; two in front pulling; two more in back pushing and steering and balancing (since it had just one donkey-power, it cut a narrow swath and so it was top-heavy); one more Roman to bag the clippings; and a seventh Roman to feed the clippings to the donkey.

Seriously though, friends, the lead off question shows how instinctively we extrapolate from our own island of culture and project our views and attitudes onto the world around us. If either of the two

images I’ve offered as possible answers sound the least bit plausible, you’re drunk and seeing pink elephants. But if you’re even seeing Romans as needing a lawnmower, you’re wearing culturally insular lenses and assuming ‘they’re just like us,’ with every part of our culture having its counterpart in every other culture.

You see, there is a danger in seeing the world—and the world’s history—through a narrow cultural lens. And the danger is everywhere, from your own yard to the White House. Just as it is our tendency to look at yard upkeep through the cultural lens of 21st century American consumer society, the Bush White House is looking at the world through an apocalyptic fundamentalist Christian lens. For the moment though, let’s just worry about lawn care as relates to ancient Rome.

Actually, the Romans didn’t even use livestock to trim their lawns. They didn’t have lawns! Do you *need* a lawn? Roman homes were side-by-side. Roman homes enclosed an impluvium (rain-catcher) in the main hall, and perhaps enclosed a garden area in back. No lawn at all. And no urban sprawl. No urban run-off. More like run-in. (See *The Gardens of Pompeii*, by good old Nebraskan Wilhelmina Jashemski.) Getting rid of the lawn would entail a complete change of architecture and would lead to more privacy, more neighborhoods, and more rural farmland. Not a bad idea, really.

Hmm. Must pitch this to a developer.

All right, come the Christian Millennium, we can have Roman urban architecture again, but till then, we’re stuck with the lawn. Even so, do you have to keep it dandelion free? My father-in-law of blessed memory, Charles Fink, made dandelion wine. It was some of the best ever. Jack Keller, a man of known taste and resourcefulness, says, “I’ve never made a bad dandelion wine, but I know people who have.” Charles Fink wasn’t one of them! And you won’t be either. For recipes, see <http://winemaking.jackkeller.net/dandelio.asp> (One instruction not there is essential: Don’t spread chemicals on your ingredients!)

Or do you have to keep your lawn clover-free? Clover puts nitrogen back in the soil. It fertilizes. It is NOT a weed. Kill the clover, and you may end up thinking you must fertilize. (And the run-off from your fed-up lawn will promote algae blooms). Spread corn gluten meal instead. See James McCommons’ article in *Audubon*, <http://magazine.audubon.org/audubonathome/audubonathome0605.html>. And there is an entire bibliography of studies of urban run-off. (Google “urban runoff.”) In short, the simplest, do-it-right-now antidote to the chemical lawn is to set your lawnmower to its very highest setting. This shadows and discourages the weeds that need full sun, and you water less and end up never need-

ing fertilizer again.

And that brings us to the lawnmower. Do you have to trim your grass with a gas mower? Roger Westerholm, writing in *New Scientist* (Vol. 35 [2001], p 2166) says one hour’s mowing produces as much polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) as driving 93 miles (150 km) in an average car, including “relatively large amounts” of carcinogens.

Could Professor Westerholm give you a recipe to make mower exhaust? Apparently, you’d need to stir 100 micrograms of benzoapyrenes (a carcinogen in cigarette smoke), half a kilogram plus of carbon monoxide, and several grams each of methane, hydrocarbons, nitrogen oxides and smoke particulates.

Make it easy for yourself. Why break a sweat shoving a gas mower around when you could just sit back and smoke some cigarettes? Now there’s another question. What did the Romans use for cigarettes?

But if you really want to recycle, ask me what the Romans used for toilet paper. (A sponge.)

To underscore the point though, friends, gross errors and tragic mistakes are made by projecting the assumptions of one’s own island of culture onto the rest of the world.

For me, ever since the student’s question, it’s seeing Roman lawnmowers.

Beware.

A Divided Community, conclusion

ter chance of doing well in school than does a middle-class African American student, and no one in the white OPS leadership can authoritatively explain why.

6. A ‘plantation’ mentality has taken root in the Omaha School District, with the white leadership historically refusing to cede control of our schools to the African-American community.

Who better than the people who live and raise families in the neighborhood to decide what’s best for their children? But that has never been the perspective of the white OPS leadership, which prefers to see us as inherently inferior or incapable of educating our own. Despite the administration’s constant evocations of ‘diversity’ and ‘integration,’ African-American involvement in school district affairs is pretty much limited to orchestrated luncheons and public rela-

tions ‘front’ groups. The “African-American Achievement Committee” is a case in point. This mouthpiece for the superintendent spent over \$75,000 of taxpayer money the last two years to put a black face on OPS’s ‘one school one district’ proposal. In an apartheid or segregated system, the power elite attempts to hijack a social movement by co-opting the leaders of the oppressed. But true social justice requires that the affected population have a place at the table. Senator Chambers’ groundbreaking amendments to LB 1024, the very ones which have spawned all the uproar, would actually give North Omaha not just the authority to manage its own schools, but an equal share of the funding pie. Isn’t this what we’ve been wanting? To determine our destiny?

7. The ‘plantation’ must be dismantled if our children are to get the quality education they deserve.

From the white plantation masters at the top to those in the African-American community who have lent their support to the current system in exchange for personal gain, the plantation model must be jettisoned. But this is not just a wishful thinking. With LB 1024, for the first time in OPS history, this bastion of white supremacy can be reorganized from the ground up. African Americans themselves will have a chance to create a learning environment for their children that can put them educationally on the same level as a white child in the suburbs. There will, of course, be opposition—from administrators, from School Board members, and from those from within our own ranks unwilling to give up the status quo. But the status quo is not serving our children. And anyone fool enough to believe it is, is doing them irreparable harm and needs to go back to school.

NFP & ACLU conclusion

have been spent looking for criminals. The FBI should only be investigating people where there is evidence of a crime, not merely evidence of political activity. Once the government responds to our requests, we will know whether the Bush/Cheney Administration is wasting precious resources by following around grandmothers, retired police officers and school teachers.

Requests made under the Freedom of Information Act can take several months to a year for response. ACLU Nebraska will share the results with the media and public when they are received, with the permission of the people involved.

You can make your own FOIA request to find out whether the government has a file on you—visit the ACLU Nebraska website at www.aclu-nebraska.org, choose “Publications” from the menu, and then download the FOIA Primer to learn more.

Death Penalty, conclusion

Along with these changes in public opinion about the death penalty and its efficacy, the courts have again begun to take a look at the methods of execution.

In recent months, several states have challenged lethal injection on various grounds. Twelve stays of execution have been granted in some of those challenges, with the legal questions generally stemming from the chemical combinations used in this method of execution. Three chemicals in particular—sodium pentathol (and anesthetic), pancuronium bromide (a paralytic) and potassium chloride (stops the heart)—comprise the most commonly used form of lethal injection. Of these injections, it has been the administration of the anesthetic that has attracted most of the concern.

It turns out that, in most states, those assigned to actually carry out the executions are not trained to use the chemicals the way a professionally trained anesthesiologists would be. Some research has shown that, due to an improperly administered anesthetic, the condemned have experienced excruciating pain when the final drug is injected. Inadequately anesthetized but paralyzed from the second injection, the condemned person is unable to express this pain caused by the third drug that actually stops the heart.

Further problems arise when anesthesiologists are asked to take part in the execution. Many believe that being involved in an execution is a violation of their professional oaths. To quote the *Los Angeles Times* from July 2, 2006:

“Dr. Orin Guidry, president of the 40,000-member American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA), issued a public statement strongly urging members to ‘steer clear’ of any participation in executions by lethal injection. In a four-page ‘Message from the President,’ Guidry noted that anesthesiologists have been ‘reluctantly thrust into the middle’ of the legal controversy over lethal injections. In recent months, the procedures being used around the United States have been challenged because they may result in unnecessary and excruciating pain in violation of the ban on cruel and unusual punishment.

Guidry’s announcement came after U.S. District Judge Fernando Gaitan Jr. ordered a halt to executions in Missouri until the state makes major changes in its lethal injection procedures. In that ruling, Gaitan said that a board-certified anesthesiologist needs to certify that an inmate has achieved sufficient anesthetic depth so as to not feel undue pain when the remaining drugs from the lethal injection

cocktail are injected. Gaitan’s order stated that an anesthesiologist would be ‘responsible for the mixing of all drugs which are used in the lethal injection process’ and would either administer the drugs himself or ‘directly observe those individuals who do so.’

In response to Gaitan’s ruling, Guidry reminded members that the ASA has adopted the American Medical Association’s position that doctors should not participate in executions. Guidry wrote, ‘Clearly, an anesthesiologist complying with the Missouri ruling—and despite the court’s position on ethical obligations—would be violating the AMA position which ASA has adopted. It is my belief that the court cannot modify physicians’ ethical principles to meet its needs.’”

The current appeals concerning lethal injection could take years to wind themselves through the courts.

All of which brings us to the next great challenge in Nebraska concerning the death penalty. Right now, the Nebraska Supreme Court has been sitting on a decision concerning the electric chair, our sole method of execution. In Carey Dean Moore’s latest appeal, the Supreme Court was asked to rule the electric chair unconstitutional as a cruel and unusual punishment. Nebraska Attorney General Jon Bruning has recently asked to Supreme Court to issue a ruling, as it “will impact the ultimate enforcement of all pending and future capital sentences imposed under current Nebraska law.”

The impact on Nebraska, should the Supreme Court rule the electric chair unconstitutional, could be dramatic. There will likely be calls for a special session to replace the electric chair with lethal injection. If there is no special session, we will have a Unicameral next year with 20 new senators, most of whom have not likely considered this issue in depth. The Legislature’s Judiciary Committee, unfortunately, is certain to have a different makeup next year as well. The legislative bulwark that we have depended on so heavily to keep lethal injection bills bottled up in committee will likely have gone.

These next few months will be among the most important for opponents of the death penalty in Nebraska. It’s important you let your senator—or legislative candidates—know that you oppose lethal injection as a means of execution.

For more information, call Nebraskans Against the Death Penalty at 402-477-7787 or e-mail at info@nadp.net.

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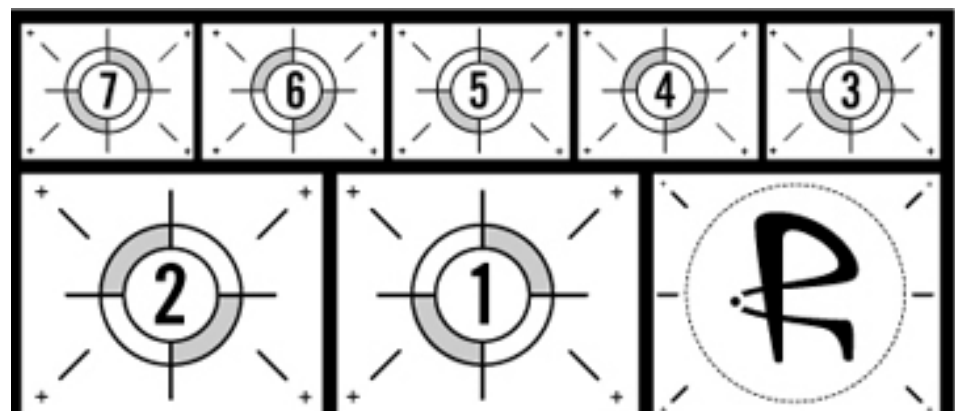
Amy Goodman, host of Democracy Now addressed a Lincoln audience at the Mary Riepma Ross Media Arts Center in April 2005.



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Your Foundation Speaks



by Loyal Park, President of the Nebraska Peace Foundation

Recently we have received notice that several members of Nebraskans for Peace have remembered the **Nebraska Peace Foundation** in their will. With this information, we now have over \$1.1 million earmarked for the Foundation's Endowment Fund.

Have you considered the Foundation in your will? Is peace work important enough to be at the top of your list?

Our vision is that someday, when the bequests are in, we will be able to support a substantial part of the peace education work in Nebraska by automatic grants from the Endowment Fund. With just the money currently pledged, we will be able to provide \$50,000 each year to keep peace education work alive in Nebraska.

This is your opportunity to keep peace work going long into the future by making that decision now! We hope to hear from you.

NFP BULLETIN BOARD

NFP State Office Hours in Lincoln, 941 'O' Street, Ste. 1026, are 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon weekdays.

- Aug. 6** Hiroshima 'Never Again' Commemoration in Lincoln featuring music, poetry readings, and a lantern float; 7-9 pm. Contact the NFP State Office for more details.
- Aug. 6-9** Des Moines Catholic Worker Community's Annual Vigil at StratCom
- Aug. 12** Perseid Meteor Shower ('Night of Shooting Stars')
- Sept. 4** Labor Day
- Oct. 10-12** 'Strategic Space 2006' feeding frenzy for the Military-Industrial Complex in Omaha
- Oct. 14** 2006 Annual Peace Conference in Grand Island, featuring Senator Ernie Chambers as the keynote speaker.

To list an event, submit in writing by the tenth of the month preceding the event to: NFP, 941 'O' Street, #1026, Lincoln, NE 68508, or email: NeReport@neb.rr.com.



Speaking Our Peace

"Our military men and women were not called to defend America, but rather to attack Iraq... not to die for America, but rather to kill for [it]."

Rev. Dr. William Sloane Coffin

A few Sundays ago, I was driving down 'A' Street to First Lutheran, my "War is not the Answer" bumper sticker prominently displayed. A young man in a large pickup pulled up, signaling for me to open my window. Since he seemed to be seeking directions, I opened. His jaw jutting and his crewcut standing up straight, he shouted, "War is the answer" and roared ahead. When we arrived at a stop sign, he flipped me off and turned the corner.

He was of military age. He was clearly *not* in Iraq. War *was* his answer, but a war fought by others. And he is a metaphor for America's leadership today.

I looked again at his gas-guzzler. What additional answers did this war provide him and how did he get the messages? Who was being asked to kill or be killed for his super-pickup and obscene gesture? War was his answer. War without sacrifice.

Later that weekend, I listened to President Bush read his Memorial Day script praising the sacrifices that our armed men and women are making for freedom. He did not say what freedoms his war supports. Freedom of speech for those forced out of his administration for disagreeing?

Valerie Plame's, and her husband's, freedom? The *habeas corpus* rights of the Guantanamo prisoners? The freedom to torture? The right to kill civilians at Haditha? The right to have one's vote voided in Florida or Ohio?

I thought of my relative's face shredded by shrapnel. I thought of those 2500 Americans killed and the 100,000 Iraqi civilians dead. For democracy? These were dead for freedom? Or for a lie—a lie to ourselves and to the Iraqis, to our Congress, to our superior officers, to the enlistees: a lie to "the few, the proud, the Marines"? We know from research that the U.S. dead men and women did not purpose their 'sacrifice' when they joined. They purposed to find jobs, adventures or money for further education. And they stiffen—dead now—for a lie.

They did not sacrifice themselves. They were sacrificed. Self-sacrifice is done consciously. We do not say of a man who has his car stolen from him, that he has 'sacrificed' it. Nor should we say like things of someone who has had his/her life stolen by a car bomb or Improvised Explosive Device (IED). Moreover, sacrifice that one has not modeled oneself cannot meaningfully be asked of others. For nonviolent people, sacrifice is putting one's body on the line for one's beliefs: risking abuse, disgrace, loss of job and—in Gandhi's and Martin Luther King's cases—death for justice. For just-war

people, sacrifice is officers willingly placing themselves in harm's way before their troops, or Lincoln suffering depression far into the night, as he tries to develop a Civil War strategy to save lives *and* the nation.

A commentator recently said that the Bush strategy could not be successful because it asks no sacrifice of the American people.

No.

It cannot be successful because it *asks no sacrifice from the very people who created the war or from their children.*

These people invented a war for someone else to fight. The Neo-Conservative elite manipulated selective information for purposes other than those they gave publicly to create a conflict to be fought by other people's children. Ours is a war manufactured and led by men who avoided the Vietnam draft, got five deferments, went to the National Guard or continued college to avoid Vietnam service. They did not serve. None of their children serves. Where are the Bush daughters in Iraq? Since Hillary believes in this war, where is her daughter? Where are the children of the cabinet? Of the Senate? Of the House? As Nebraska Senator George Norris wrote on the eve of the First World War, "To whom does war bring prosperity? Not to the soldier who for the munificent compensation of \$16 per month shoulders his musket and goes into the trench, there to shed his blood and to die if necessary... War brings prosperity...

to those who are already in possession of more wealth than can be realized or enjoyed."

The people that suffer casualties disproportionately in Iraq, according to sociologist Robert Cushing, are whites from small, mostly poor, rural areas. That's Greater Nebraska. We are sixth among the states in fatalities per capita. Some fatalities come from Omaha, Lincoln and Grand Island, but most from places like Sutton, Merrick, Ogallala, Scottsbluff, Plymouth, Falls City, Hay Springs, Valentine, Gering, La Vista, Albion, and Beatrice—poor, rural and underserved. The people not signing up, according to research and anecdote, are the children of the affluent, the taxless superrich. Better to have a national service draft without exemption than to have the present class-warring system.

And let there be no more blessing of sacrifices that our leaders have not made and are not willing to make. Let there be more and louder singing of Mrs. Mcgrath's lament for her son, here and in Washington:

*All foreign wars I do proclaim
Live on blood and a mother's pain.
I'd rather have my son,
As he used to be,
Than the King of America
And the whole Navy.*