

THE REBEL YELL

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Letters to the Editor should be typed and be fewer than 300 words. Each letter must include name, address and telephone number. Writers affiliated with UNLV must include class and major or faculty/staff position. Letters are subject to editing for length and clarity.

Editorial

Think before you accuse

Recent "Letters to the Editor" and phone calls to *The Rebel Yell* concerning a cartoon that appeared in the April 8 edition have made it clear that some are a bit too quick to allege racism.

The Yell has been accused of being "racist" and "culturally insensitive," primarily by angry members of Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority, Inc and Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc., who insist the meaning of the cartoon was that members of the African-American community are stupid, illiterate and are incapable of learning to speak "traditional" English.

Let's set the record straight, right here and now: This was absolutely, positively not our intent.

Yes, "Land of Nott" artist Alex Raffi's cartoon could easily be misinterpreted by anyone who sets eyes on it. However, to call Raffi, his cartoon or *The Rebel Yell* "racist" is unfair and ignorant because that is simply not the case.

First and foremost, the cartoon was not racist, nor was it intended to be insulting. Rather, its purpose was to convey *The Rebel Yell's* strong disapproval of Ebonics, a "language" we believe is not only demeaning to African-Americans, but is also a slap across the face for all who have fought to shed negative African-American stereotypes.

In the opinion section of *The Rebel Yell*, our editorial staff has consistently criticized Ebonics. This cartoon was another way of expressing our belief that "Black English" is insulting to all literate beings—particularly to African-Americans.

One student, in her "Letter to the Editor" (see next page), argued that the cartoon suggests "all African-Americans are intellectually challenged." Actually, it's not the cartoon that's suggesting this; it's the proponents of

Land of Nott

by Alex Raffi/Rebel Yell



Ebonics! They're the ones who have implied, "...that (African-Americans) are only able to understand Ebonics."

A UNLV alumnus criticized Raffi's use of a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., stating that King would "...feel violated and misrepresented to know that his name was used in a joke to demean his people..." Wait a minute! *The Rebel Yell* was not trying to be funny, nor were we trying to "demean" anyone!

The goal of *The Rebel Yell* was to put Ebonics on trial while challenging UNLV students to reevaluate their opinion of the so-called language. After all, this is an institution of higher learning! Is it not our duty, as the editorial staff of the official student newspaper, to utilize the opinion section to generate thought by challenging ideas and concepts?

A university setting is the last place where insightful public discourse should be discouraged. Therefore, *The Rebel Yell* will not apologize for publishing this cartoon. Instead, we ask that all who misunderstood it more closely examine it and its true meaning.

Heaven's Gate: Keeping up with the Joneses

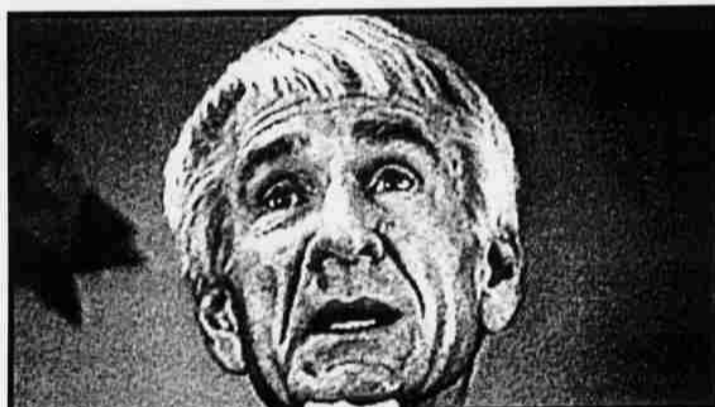
By Mark Clark
Staff Opinion Writer

Here I go again, more pondering on the prolific problems of people populating the planet. This time, however, I will attempt to contain my animalistic instincts to ferociously rend the abdominal sections of the folks involved. Although, there isn't much they could do about it. They're dead.

I am referring to the Heaven's Gate cultists who, about four weeks ago, came to the final conclusion to separate their souls from these "shells" we call bodies and to join their former companions, the aliens, on a spacecraft hurtling through space. This vessel was using the comet Hale-Bopp as a shield to prevent us lowly investigative types from actually finding it in astronomical searches.

My queries however, focus more on the media treatment of the incident rather than on the cult itself. This is America and although most people don't like it, there is still just a little bit of religious freedom left. Insert snubbed nose to the "religious right" and the "godless left" here.

In my observation of the television news, I notice a common thread among all of the reports issued or statements given concerning the cult. Everyone refers to this event as a "tragedy" or as a "disaster". Why? The people involved



A little less chlorine in the gene pool

weren't unhappy or coerced. No one else was hurt or killed by their actions. What's the tragedy? I'm having a little bit of trouble with that.

A tragedy is when schoolchildren are mowed down by dope fiends looking for revenge on the principles and teachers who reigned over them a decade earlier. A disaster is when a multiple repeat offender rapist/murderer gets out of prison on parole for "good behavior" and gets to write a novel about how his lawyer protected his rights.

So what is the big deal about the cult anyway? There are hundreds of cults around the United States and very few if any of them would be considered mainstream. They are all weird. That is why they are cults. As a result, when scenarios such as this mass suicide occur they are hardly surprising, but much more certainly they are

not tragedies.

If anything, they help put a little chlorine in the gene pool. Would you want your son or daughter growing up in a household where daddy or mommy had killed his or herself to get on a spaceship and blast off into the outer limits? Seems to me every time another one of these freakos snaps and takes his own life, that is also one less idiot running around convincing others of the veracity of his message.

So what of the cult? Thirty-nine people getting together in a rich house which they rent, create web pages to fund their activities, shave their heads, castrate themselves, and live a life of quiet solitude until a spacecraft happens by this small blue-green planet sitting in the unfashionable western spiral arm of the galaxy. Sounds like an almost desirable lifestyle (save the castration).

With no harm done, it seems to me that we should just let these slightly deluded individuals rest in peace. More people died that day in automobile accidents and drug overdoses than died in that household, and the people who were victims of these other tragedies weren't mentioned in the news. Why not? I know why. It wasn't neat enough... original enough. Instead of showing the news of how bad off we really are in this faux-democracy, let's fill the television with the story of some demented fools who believed that they were really space aliens in disguise. In fact, I have a better idea! Let's sell their movie rights (as if we owned them in the first place) to another station and make a buttload of money. And we can be sure to maintain the hype by playing stories concerning these people who we'll call "victims" not five, not ten, but twelve times a day on our news programs, even if there aren't any changes in the story! Hip hip hooray! More money for us, and nobody can sue!

The people who snuffed out the flames of their out existances were disturbed and sick, but now they are gone and so much the better. I can think of two or three individuals who may have done the world a favor by joining in their metaphysical leave of absence.

I just wish that we could leave the dead alone. Leave them alone!