

Eenie, meenie, miny, moe ...

THIS YEAR MARKS THE 100-YEAR ANNIVERSARY of renowned children's author Astrid Lindgren's birth. Famous for creating Pippi Longstocking, her stories of the spirited redhead's adventures have grown in popularity since their original publication in 1945, and are now an international children's classic. Nowadays, however, not everything about Lindgren's Pippi is being considered appropriate for bedtime reading.

In Norway, the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) has recently altered some of the book's original wording during their children's hour to create a more "racially appropriate" reading. In other words, Pippi's marine-exploring captain of a father will no longer be known as *negerkongen* (that is, "nigger-king"), and instead will carry the politically correct title of *sydhavskongen*, or "South Sea King."

But not everyone is happy with the decision to censor this classic tale. Norwegian newspapers have cited language professors who maintain that children are unharmed by hearing the word "nigger" on the radio, and that it's unnecessary to alter older texts to appease current socially accepted standards. And I agree.

I don't believe now-racist terms should be censored out of novels that, at the time of their respective publications, only reflected the cultural norms. If parents or broadcasters are uncomfortable with the content of a story and feel that it's not appropriate for young readers or listeners, then they have the responsibility to choose not to use them. However, once the readers you're trying to shelter have reached a certain age, the practice of censorship becomes a cop-out for having to explain a story's historical context.

A recent discussion over the altering of Lindgren's words quickly evolved to the long-standing debate over how far publishers and school administrators should go to ensure that young readers are exposed to socially acceptable language. Unfortunately, there are still people out there who think politically acceptable language trumps "racist" olden day classics anyway.

I'm not suggesting that I'm against preventing racial slurs from being indoctrinated into children's minds, nor would I lament having to scream in horror, "Nana, No! You can't say that!" when my 90-year-old grandma exclaims with a smile that she "used to love eating Nigger Babies"—now tactfully renamed Licorice Babies—when she was a little girl.

My problem with literary censorship exists when it extends beyond the elementary-school level and begins to affect high school and junior high curriculums.

Every year, school administrators weigh in on what is and is not appropriate—and depending on who's deciding, certain classic English novels will inevitably make the black list. But, as far as I'm concerned, debates as to whether John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* or Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* are too racist are ridiculous.

Moreover, anyone who suggests that by reading the word "nigger" in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* underage readers will somehow think the term is "acceptable" is just as ridiculous as the fanatics who have banned JK Rowling's *Harry Potter* series from their children's schools for fear that their nine-year-olds would turn to witchcraft and devil worship.

Trying to maintain literary cleanliness narrows the ability of young readers to understand culture within a timeframe, and creates a false bubble of innocence and purity as well. Racism still exists, and it's important that people learn to read things in the context of the times. I agree young children are impressionable and that they should be sheltered to a point, but teenagers are not elementary-school children—so tell the politically correct sticklers to lay off the classics.

NATALIE CLIMENHAGA
Senior News Editor

Out of frickin' nowhere

New Hanson Bros disc!?!
Now they're married, one with kids
I thought they were gay

AMANDA ASH
Poet-in-training



SCOTT C BOURGEOIS

LETTERS

Anti-Coke rebels have a noble cause

As a member of Students Against Killer Coke who presented to Students' Council last week, I wish to respond to Ross Prusakowski's article "Crying foul won't stop Coca-Cola from playing hardball" (16 January) by explaining the relevance of such presentations.

This is a human rights issue and we focused on well-documented cases in Sudan, Colombia and India. There are charges from the US Department of the Treasury for doing business with Sudan during an embargo being enforced because of genocidal practices.

In India, Coca-Cola uses millions of litres of water each day in bottling plants when many of these regions are already experiencing drought. In the area around the Kerala bottling plant 20 000 people are threatened with being displaced. In Colombia, Coca-Cola refuses to condemn the killing of nine SINALTRAINAL union leaders at its bottling plants.

Second, the presentation pointed to the Students' Union's own Ethical Business Partners policy as a reason not to renew the agreement. This policy states very clearly that business contracts will not be signed with companies that do not respect basic levels of human rights and environmental protection.

Third, our intention in Council was not to suggest a concrete business plan. We suggested that the Students' Union is clever enough to find alternatives to companies that are linked to human rights abuse and environmental negligence. This corporate pocket change accounts for less than one per cent of the Students' Union's annual budget and it is not unrealistic to suggest that alternatives can be found.

Finally, saying that the Students' Union dropping the contract would have no effect ignores a history of student social movements. Students

have a tremendous amount of power and it is our responsibility to learn about and act on these issues.

Even though the Stop Killer Coke movement is still very young, the termination of exclusive agreements on over 30 campuses has put tremendous pressure on Coca-Cola to clean up their act. While it is true that one person boycotting a product, or one school terminating a contract, will likely not result in a marked improvement in corporate conduct, collective action over a period of time, can, and historically has, seen results.

STEPH SHANTZ
Arts IV

Racism still not a thing of the past

On 6 December, in a Psychology class, a student declared, "I hate the French," and another said as a response, "I hate Quebecers." I was shocked to hear a fellow student from my research lab at the University of Alberta say these words. One can disagree with the opinions or beliefs of a certain entity or individual, however, to preach hatred against an ethnic or racial group is simply racism.

Hatred against a group is slowly cultivated over time and can result in some serious consequences. Its extremes manifestations are Apartheid, slavery, genocide and the Second World War. All these horrific events began with someone hating another simply because they are different.

Time and ignorance contribute to the perception that the other is different and inferior and thus deserving of hatred and discrimination. These thoughts are inevitably reflected through actions of aggression of all sorts, including verbal aggression.

This process does not happen quickly, but history teaches us that hateful speech is often followed by explicit acts of discrimination. If

French-speaking groups were the target of hatred this time, we must keep in mind that many other ethnic or racial groups might be targeted next time.

Permitting hateful speech against one ethnic group opens the floodgates to more general hatred and xenophobia. Some might say, "Well it is not a big deal, they were joking!" Perhaps, but to underestimate the power of their words is to underestimate the meaning behind them and as a society we must refuse to ignore hateful speech.

As psychology students who will interact with people from different religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, we must be especially conscious of our own prejudices. Are we prejudiced against women, handicapped individuals, religious groups, visible minorities, linguistic minorities or youth? If so, are we conscious of where these biases originate from and how they influence our interactions with others? Do we try to redress these biases? Perhaps it is time we all considered these questions.

To declare to any ethnic or racial group in Canada "I hate you" is a scandal. This unfortunate event in the walls of our University reminds us that the battle against racism and discrimination is not over.

JOHANNE JONATHAS
Arts III

Letters to the editor should be dropped off at room 3-04 of the Students' Union Building, or e-mailed to letters@gateway.ualberta.ca.

The Gateway reserves the right to edit letters for length and clarity, and to refuse publication of any letter it deems racist, sexist, libellous or otherwise hateful in nature. The Gateway also reserves the right to publish letters online.

Letters to the editor should theoretically be no longer than 350 words, and should include the author's name, program, year of study and student identification number to be considered for publication—and no fucking emoticons.

LETTERS FROM THE ARCHIVES

Complain the right way

There have recently been several complaints concerning student discipline that have been brought to my attention through University Administration. [They] were raised by persons who have no connection with the Union and who were acting on information that could only have been supplied by students. This is not the way that student complaints should be handled.

If you have a complaint concerning any phase of student conduct, you, as a member of the Students' Union, have a right to voice it. But a year ago the Board of Governors decided that in the initial instance the Students' Union would be responsible themselves for handling questions of discipline.

Therefore, if you have a substantial complaint as to student behaviour, please inform me through the Union office, either in person or by mail. I shall attempt to deal with it personally if possible or refer it to the Discipline Committee. I realize that the main reason that these matters were passed on to overtown persons is to retain anonymity by the complainant. I shall attempt to respect this fact.

Fortunately, these instances are relatively few in number, but they do cause poor public relations. The overtown people are not aware of the relative situation existing on the campus and therefore obtain a distorted view. The Administration has given us authority to handle these matters, therefore they do not desire to be concerned with them. I believe we are certainly mature enough to keep our own house in order.

E PETER LOUGHEED
Students' Union President
15 February 1952