

Subway shootings no answer to crime

A new kind of graffiti lines the subway walls in New York City: "Support Goetz," "Stand behind the man who stood up to crime," "Don't let them jail Goetz." This is the way many people in New York (and around the country) feel about Bernhard Goetz, the 37-year-old white man who took "justice" into his own hands last month. On Dec. 22, Goetz shot four black teenagers in a New York City subway (two of them in the back) with an unlicensed .38-cal. handgun when the teenagers approached him asking for money.

There is no question about the motive of these youths. All had previous criminal records, and all of the witnesses present claimed that the youths were acting in a rowdy fashion typical of young street thugs. Anyone who has ever been mugged or has lived in New York City knows the fear that grips innocent people when they are approached by such thugs. But Goetz's response went too far. He was not threatened by a weapon when he shot the youths. He did not pull out his gun and warn them that he would shoot if they didn't back off. He did not shoot one and then warn the others. He shot them all, and when two tried to flee, he shot them in the back. Goetz admitted afterwards that if he had had more ammunition, he would have killed each of them.

Almost overnight, Goetz was transformed into a kind of national hero by sympathetic individuals and newspapers who called his action a tribute to self-defense in a crime-ridden society. But the Goetz incident raises more questions than it answers. For example, those who praised Goetz's action failed to mention the racial element involved and what impact it might have in the new wave of citizen justice that is being promoted. Less than two weeks after the Goetz incident, another kind of graffiti appeared in New York City: "Goetz Rules Niggers" is one example that can be found at the 14th Street subway station. In praising Goetz, many individuals have overlooked the racial overtones of the message they are promoting.

Another problem with those who called the subway shootings "justice" is that they never bothered to ask what the other 20 passengers in the subway were doing when the four youths began to harass Goetz. Supporters of Goetz seem to think that the only answer to big-city crime (in the absence of the police) is to shoot first and ask questions later. Rather than praising a man for concealing an illegal handgun and shooting four punks who pressured him for five dollars, those who are frustrated with subway crime should have criticized the 20 fellow passengers who stood by and did nothing to help Goetz. That New Yorkers would watch someone get mugged rather than try to help them out is a crime in itself. It would be far more productive to advocate that everyone pack an illegal handgun and shot the first sucker that messes with them, which is what Goetz did.

Finally, the issues of big-city crime, inadequate police protection, and the existence of massive ghettos in every major U.S. city must not get lost in the Goetz controversy. While crime is not restricted to cities alone, high unemployment in cities, coupled with ghetto living conditions, has contributed to a growing number of street crimes. Bringing down crime in the big cities will not be easy. But carrying handguns and promoting Goetz-style actions is like putting a band-aid on a wound that needs surgery. Until the U.S. government recognizes its responsibility to help rebuild our decaying cities and better staff their law enforcement agencies, street crime will continue to flourish in the fertile environment of unemployment and poverty. In a very real sense, Goetz and the four teenagers he shot were all victims.



'WE WAS LISTENIN' TO AMERICA SING, WHEN SUDDENLY BERTIE FROZE UP.'

letters

Our bodies

This letter is written to all male anti-abortionists. First of all, according to Kenneth Groom, "If men could get pregnant, abortion would be a sacrament." You men go about preaching to us about "women killing their babies." Well, men, for your information it takes a man for a woman to get pregnant. Therefore, you are just as responsible and guilty for abortions as women.

You men seem to misunderstand the reasons for resorting to an abortion. Abortion is not used as a means of birth control, but usually as a last resort. How would you men feel if you got pregnant and your partner left you (for that reason), and there you were, very unprepared and unable to handle a child at the time? What would you do? And what if someone raped you and got you pregnant? What would you do then? And what if your life was threatened by carrying a child? It seems to me all you males think about is what you think is right, and you do not even consider what women have to say about it. After all, it is our bodies you are talking about.

How would you men feel if a law was passed preventing you from having total control over your body? How can you men even talk about abortion, when you cannot even get pregnant, never mind have an abortion?! And how would you like it if the government passed a law forcing you to do something against your will and true intentions? Do you know how scary

it is knowing there is a possibility that you may not be able to control your own body or life? Think about it.

Tammy Auvil
Psychology
Pro-choice

Fairness?

It was good to read in the Register-Guard and in Bud Withers' column regarding the increase in salary for Coach Rich Brooks and his assistants, plus his five year contract! He is most deserving of this, and so also is Don Monson, coach of basketball.

At the same time, however, shouldn't all of the coaches' salaries be made public? Do you know that Bill Dellinger, head coach of the Oregon track team for the past 12 years, is on a one year contract and that his annual salary is \$31,000?

During his coaching career at Oregon, his teams have won five NCAA Championships, four in Cross-Country and one in Track and Field, plus several Pac-10 cross-country titles. They are consistently among the top ten in the country! The Oregon track program under Dellinger has produced nearly 50 All-American performances, and a number of world-class athletes have developed under his direction.

This has been the most successful athletic program at the University for years. It has enhanced the reputation of the University throughout the country, and has brought prestige and revenue to the community and to the state. In all fairness, it seems that Coach Dellinger deserves better!

Ed Sullivan
Eugene

Peaceful

This letter is in response to the comment made by Chris Gonzalez (ODE, Jan. 22), where she states that "...right-to-lifers" are contradicting themselves because they are using violent tactics to put across a pro-life theme."

The vast majority of 'right-to-lifers,' including myself, are not bomb-carrying activists whose only way of getting their message across is through violence. Most of us are peaceful, intelligent people who feel that human life begins

at conception, and is to be cherished.

I abhor the violence being committed by the people that Ms. Gonzalez refers to. I, and many others, choose to protest the aborting of children in other ways: thru letters, prayers, and marches. Although our methods do not receive the media attention they deserve, they reflect our perseverance, and our determination to end what has been for 12 long years an American tragedy.

Susan Wilson
Pre-journalism

Horror

I would like to address my comments to the actions of one anarchist hypocrite who has brought me to a state of outrage.

While walking through the EMU recently, I saw a large group of people congregating. A brief glance revealed that it was a group of students and others exchanging views and opinions. An impromptu, open debate. As I began to think to myself how exciting it is to live in a culture where such an exchange can take place, I saw to my horror that one of those people, while exercising the right to free speech as guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, was walking on a ripped, soiled United States flag.

I still cannot believe the gall of that woman, abusing and degrading the symbol of the very laws and rights that were protecting her at that very moment from censorship, physical abuse from those of opposing views, and punishment for speaking out against the government. I shudder to think of what would happen to anyone speaking and acting in that manner in hundreds of other nations in the world today where the flag is not flown.

I'm not saying that America is perfect. I freely admit that demonstration and constructive reform of the government is, and has always been, a vital part of the United States. I simply ask that before you spit on the flag, you simply stop to consider what shape we'd be in if that flag, and what it represents, weren't here to protect and represent each of us as free and uncensored citizens.

Sara Anne Schmidt
A patriotic liberal

Tuesday, January 29, 1985

oregon daily emerald

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published Monday through Friday except during exam week and vacations by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, 97403.

The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices on the third floor of the Erb Memorial Union and is a member of the Associated Press.

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