

# Was Goetz incident really citizen justice?

Maybe it was a reflection of President Ronald Reagan's "get tough" foreign policy manifesting itself at home. Maybe it was a reflection of public anger over the inability of the strongest nation on earth to bring big-city crime under control. Whatever it was, the shooting of four youths in a New York City subway on December 22 turned Bernhard Goetz into a national hero. He became a "modern vigilante," praised by the public for "standing up to crime" and for having the courage to deal out justice when justice was due.

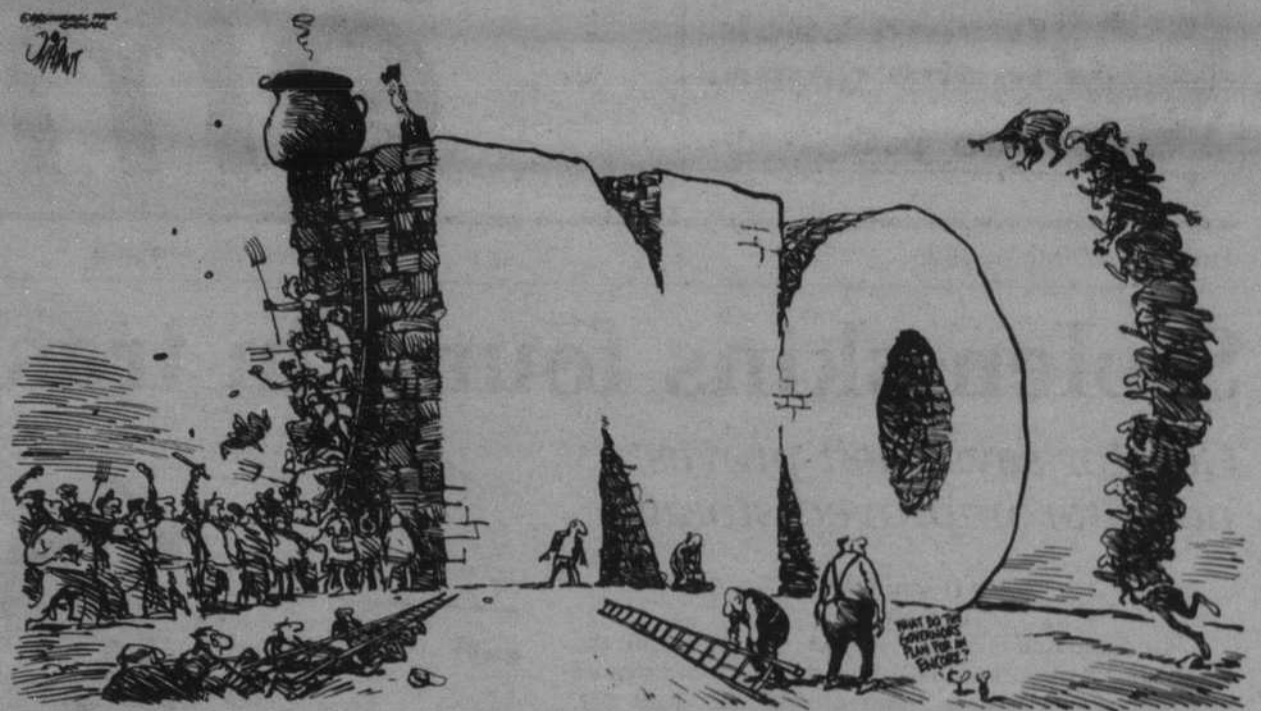
But as the facts unfold, the story of Goetz is taking on a new twist. Gone is the image of an innocent victim of street crime who, in the name of self-defense, shot four street punks who had asked him for five dollars. According to Goetz's police testimony, the youths displayed no weapons and made no overtly threatening gestures. It was "body language" that provoked him to shoot. Goetz claims that after shooting all four teenagers, he checked the condition of each one carefully, and upon noticing that one of them didn't have any blood on him, Goetz put the gun directly to his ribs and shot again. "I wanted to kill those guys," he said. The police report stated that "the shooting frenzy stopped only because he ran out of bullets."

The issue here is not whether the four youths had previous criminal records or were acting in a suspicious fashion. The issue is whether or not someone like Goetz, in the name of "justice," has the right, as the New York Times put it, to become "judge, jury, and executioner."

The only crime with which Goetz was charged was carrying an illegal handgun. If one of the teenagers, Darrell Cabey, dies (he remains in a coma) then it could mean that Goetz may literally get away with murder. Because of this, District Attorney Robert Morgenthau is considering asking a new grand jury to decide whether to indict Goetz on charges of attempted murder. It is unclear why Goetz chose to sit next to the four youths rather than on the other end of the subway where 20 other passengers were sitting. Furthermore, if Goetz acted in self-defense, why then, according to his own testimony, did he plan out how to best shoot his victims even before he pulled the trigger. Finally, what kind of self-defense is it when after already shooting them, Goetz walked up to one of the teenagers, who was slumped in a subway seat, and said, "You don't look so bad, here's another," and then shot him at point blank range?

We are not saying that the four youths were innocent. Not by any means. But rather, did Goetz have the right to shoot them? This question must be answered in a trial. Unless it is, a dangerous precedent will be set. One that affirms the right of any individual to judge a situation and then deal out "justice" according to their understanding of it.

Goetz has used his celebrity status since the shooting to push for looser gun control laws and to criticize the criminal justice system. But Goetz's own case shows why the availability of handguns must be tightly controlled. Easier access to legally obtaining handguns does not mean more justice, and as far as Goetz is concerned, it may prove just the opposite. It's easy to criticize the criminal justice system for not controlling big-city crime, and to advocate looser gun control laws as some kind of an answer to the problem. But it would be far more constructive to take it a step further and question some of Reagan's recent budget cuts. According to Alair Townsend, New York City's Budget Director, Reagan's proposed financial cuts will cost New York City 4,800 police officers. Increased street crime will be the price the public has to pay. We all must realize that far from any kind of answer, the Goetz incident is merely a symptom of a much larger problem.



## letters

### Help available

Good for the Emerald for addressing the issue of sexual harassment. It's a damaging societal problem, and students need to know that it will not be tolerated on campus. Students also need to know that grievances can be (and have been) resolved informally, confidentially, to the satisfaction of the grievant, and without retaliation.

Formal grievance procedures are available to everyone as well, but this raises a question about Tuesday's article.

One of the students interviewed spoke of having filed a formal grievance with both a department head and the Office of Affirmative Action.

If this were the case, there would be a written record not only in the departmental office and the OAA but also in the Office of the Provost. Yet neither the current nor the former department head has any record or recollection of the incident described, nor does the Provost, nor do I.

It may be that the particulars of that incident were altered to protect the student. But there are other, and better, ways to protect people. Nor did it help to give misinformation about an evening meeting on sexual harassment.

Bean Comrada  
Affirmative Action

### Get some help

Never before have I been moved to write a letter to the editor until I read Vince Adams' "Nice

Work?" in the ODE Feb. 22.

Adams must be greatly troubled in mind and spirit to spew forth that abominable garbage about "women crap"... "opening doors"... "Playboy"... "WRRS." What a shallow fellow he is indeed!

What in the world did sending roses and all of that nonsense have to do with a straightforward (although obviously more direct and outspoken than some people could handle) presentation meant to make everyone stop and think about the problem and maybe become more aware and better educated on this unpleasant but very real matter.

Adams should stop hiding behind his sweaty feet, lick them off himself, and contemplate his diseased attitudes and bewildering ramblings. Then he should look deep within, find out what caused his careless display of stupidity and ignorance, and get some help.

Adams, why don't you, ya know, quit knocking someone else's efforts at alerting our community to an oft-avoided topic? Are you threatened by women who take charge and make a stand on something they believe should be brought to the public's attention?

To sum it up, all I can determine is that you're one of the many that feel "If I ignore the problem, criticize those who bring the subject up, or act like it isn't there, maybe it will go away and maybe, just maybe, it doesn't really exist." "Nice work" exposing your ugly, insecure inner self to the world.

M. Kathryn Scofield  
Eugene

### Obnoxious

Vince Adams (ODE, Feb. 22) made a few statements that I find just too obnoxious to let go by without replying. First off I am sure that more women would rather be treated with respect than receive a single rose every day of her life, and by your use of the term "chick" in reference to Laura Romano it proves that you have very little respect for them.

As for your feeling about the display case on pornography, I can understand your uncomfortableness since you sound like one of the men that were hang-

ing around the case. I believe that if a child (no matter whether it is a boy or girl) happened to see the case and asked me why there were pictures of naked women bound and gagged in the display case and why there were so many men gawking at them I would have told him/her that in our society there are people that buy the product they sell which encourages them to produce more of their product thus more women are exploited.

Your comment about the Women's Resource and Referral system is a good example of exactly why they exist. W.R.R.S. provides a service to women in our community who need help in one way or another, one I am sure is how to deal with obnoxious men such as yourself.

Jim Shoemaker  
Business/Psychology

### Ludicrous

For fear of being promptly tarred and feathered, I dare not chuckle too loudly at the word which follows "Oregon" in referring to our fighting flocks. However, that ever-so-cute web-footed mascot is hardly synonymous with guts and glory. Could any zoologist in his right mind possibly applaud the pitting of broad-billed birds against vicious cougars, wildcats and bears?

Nonetheless, by now that five-letter word is as much a part of the University spirit as its green and yellow colors, so it looks like it's here to stay. But isn't one ground bird enough?

The name of a university student union, like its mascot, is an important reflection of what the school stands for. The acronym "EMU," when said rapidly as one word, becomes "emu" (pronounced e' myoo). Big deal? You'd better believe it! An emu is nothing more than a flightless three-toed Australian bird. What else could possibly be done to impede our school from ever "getting off the ground?"

Next thing you know, the name of our most-cherished building will mysteriously transform from "Deady" into "Dodo" Hall. Maybe then we'll finally wake up to this demeaning trend of ludicrous labeling.

Charles Korns  
Freshman

## oregon daily emerald

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