Acquittal of shooter disgraces everyone

The Sunday acquittal of Rodney Peairs, the homeowner who shot and killed a 16-year-old Japanese student outside of his home in Louisiana, is a disgrace to the trial jury, the state of Louisiana and the U.S. justice system.

Yoshihiro Hattori was an exchange student in Baton Rouge, La., looking for a Halloween party when he mistakenly approached the Peairs' residence. Dressed in a John Travolta costume, he and his friend knocked on the front door. Peairs' wife answered, panicked when she saw the strangers, slammed the door and told her husband to get his gun.

Hattori and his friend wandered to the Peairs' carport, confused. Peairs stood waiting and told Hattori to "freeze." The student, who apparently didn't understand English well, kept walking. Peairs shot him.

There are several questions that were never adequately answered at the trial. The defense continually portrayed Peairs as a man trying to defend his family. As the defense lawyer said, Hattori violated a "social compact" by approaching the Peairs' house. But since when does knocking on the door of a neighborhood home give a person the right to shoot without asking questions? Strangers approach homes every day. They're called salesmen. And Peairs should have expected visitors. It was Halloween night, after all, a fact that clearly didn't escape him because he had decorations on his house.

The jury based much of its decision on the "shoot the burglar" law in Louisiana, which gives citizens the right to use deadly force to protect themselves from intruders. Louisiana should abolish this law immediately. If deadly force is ever used, it should only be in the case of extreme self-defense, such as when a person is physically threatened with a weapon. Hattori had nothing more than a Travolta costume and some jewelry.

The fact that the jury actually used the law to acquit Peairs is even more ludicrous. There is no justification for shooting an individual who trespasses without making his intentions known. Peairs' wife didn't ask Hattori what he wanted. Even though scared, she could have easily shouted through the door. She did not.

Many in the jury said they felt sympathetic for Peairs and that they understood the need to protect one's family. But does that matter? He is guilty of poor judgment and irrational thought and should face the consequences of his actions. This may be the most unbelievable success of the "I-made-a-mistake" defense ever recorded.

The entire episode smacks of racism and ignorance. Were the victim a white man, Peairs probably would have been convicted. For that matter, Peairs' wife probably wouldn't have panicked and told her husband to retrieve the gun. As one Japanese paper said, the "shoot the burglar" law is a "manifestation of the discrimination that exists in the community where burglary charges are made predominantly against blacks."

Hattori, being Japanese, did not look like the typical Louisiana boy-next-door. And in a society that routinely assumes non-whites are troublemakers solely because of their skin color, Hattori paid an ugly price.

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LETTERS

So don't go

I don't like going into the science buildings. I don't like taking classes there. It hurts bad enough that other departments have been sacrificed to the soft architecture, cushy seats and climate-controlled interiors of these new machines. But I can deal with that.

I can even cope with pop-eyed pre-meds scrambling for that one grade. But I can't stand pompous TAs (you know who you are) who deal with students as if they have inferior mental capacity.

That "don't-you-wish-you-were-me" attitude is hard to take, and I have never seen so much of it in my life. Tell me, is arrogance intrinsic to science? Or are all of you people just puffed up about how much money your department can spend on microscopes, spectrometers, remodeled chemistry labs and pork barrels like Willamette Hall? The rest of this school is bleeding. How about a little humility? It won't kill you. Or science.

Bret Yager
Pre-Journalism

Go figure

(*Emerald* Sports Editor) Dave Charbonneau is the man.

Josh Berg
Undeclared
Paul Fulwiler
Accounting

See Curtis

This letter goes out to all students at the University. Today is Blues Without the Booze. Wow, sounds interesting. This is a day for all to party and have a good time, that is if you can have a good time without drinking. The purpose of this day is to show you that you can.

We, as students, are constantly stereotyped and put down by the community for being drunken misfits. Well, we know that this is not true. Blues Without the Booze will give us an opportunity to show them otherwise.

The Curtis Salgado trio will be playing. Hopefully the whole campus will come out in support of this event and for responsible consumption.

Chris Kantrowitz
Pre-Business

Givon not racist

Recently *The Student Insurgent* ran an article questioning whether various professors on campus are racists. The article suggests that students should ask the professors. If the paper wanted information, a better option would be to ask their students. We cannot speak for professors in other departments, but we can comment on the *Insurgent*'s inclusion of Tom Givon in its racist lineup.

The idea that Givon is a racist is ludicrous. Givon is a professor in one of the most ethnically diverse departments on this campus, linguistics. He has studied languages all over the world, living and working with the native speakers. He has been the tribal linguist for Ute language project for some years. In dealing with him as both students and graduate teaching fellows, we have observed no evidence of racism in either his public or private behavior.

Givon is a strong-minded individual. We cannot believe that he would be unwilling to enter into any real debate. However, the tactic taken by the *Insurgent* is not to debate, but to defame by innuendo. Having lost a round in promoting their political views, their option was to attack their opponents' motives and characters. Let us promote true diversity on this campus, even to the encouragement of the expression of the views of people who do not agree with ours. However, at an institution of higher education, the proper subject of debate is the ideas that are espoused by people, not the personalities.

Finally, as students, we would not appreciate people disturbing our classes to discuss subjects that are not germane. Use time outside of class. If you attempt to rob us of our education to push your political agenda, it only hurts your cause.

Bill Staley
Graduate, Linguistics
and 22 Co-Signers

Ditto

At a meeting of the University Assembly, a new, young faculty member stated publicly that faculty would be held "politically accountable" for their votes on the motion to establish two course requirements for the University's multicultural curriculum. At the next assembly meeting, faculty who appeared to oppose the motion were jeered and ridiculed by an apparent claque in the rear of the room.

Since then, a special edition of *The Student Insurgent* on a full-page spread listed five faculty members who opposed the motion or only questioned the procedure. As a result, by innuendo they were accused of being racist and further had listed not only their office locations and phone numbers, but also the times and locations of their classes.

The only conceivable interpretation of including this latter information seems to be an invitation to disrupt these classes. Is this how we are to be held "politically accountable"?

Clearly, this is an outrageous assault on the University's fine tradition of academic freedom. I urge faculty to attend the next assembly meeting June 2 and help assure that free discussion of ideas at the University survives.

Aaron Novick
Professor Emeritus
Institute of Molecular Biology