

Citizens Must Make Up for U.S.'s Slack in Chechnya

As much as I hate to admit it, I've grown to understand why there are wars. I also understand that if you willfully put your life on the line, you might die or you might be wounded.

But what I don't understand (and don't believe that I ever will) is why innocent civilians must be punished for the viewpoints of others.

The Chechens have been fighting since 1992 for their freedom from Russia. This is very understandable. The people of the Caucasus are not of Slavic descent, they do not share a language with the Slavs and they are Muslims as opposed to the Christian Russians.

In every aspect, they are their own people, and they deserve the right to rule themselves as they please. Chechens prove to be determined people and will not rest until they have acquired their independence.

However, their determination and Russia's unwillingness to give up is hurting the Chechen civilians who are caught in the middle.

The Chechens are guerrilla fighters and

regroup in the mountains after their battles and in this way, easily outfight the Russian soldiers.

However, not all Chechens are soldiers. The elderly and children cannot fight. And some young men choose not to.

I don't think that this is blameworthy, but apparently the Russian soldiers do. "Russia appears to have declared any Chechen male to be a suspected rebel subject to arbitrary arrest and brutal treatment," said Peter Bouckaert, a researcher for the Human Rights Watch group in the region.

One might ask: So they declare them to be a suspected rebel, what could that really mean? You'd be surprised.

These men are sent into filtration camps - in other words, into concentration camps where they are harshly abused and wounded.

"In the concentration camp of Chernokozovo, 1,700 people have been shot or maimed, among them 60 children," according

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and iron rods.

"People are being tortured to death by ramming up to 200 empty submachine gun cartridges into their bodies," Kavkaz-Center reports. "The public raping of corpses of prisoners is a common practice."

"The guards also cut off the hands and feet of their victims in special torture-chambers. The victims usually die of loss of blood," Kavkaz-Center continues.

"About 60 children ranging from 10 to 13 years in age have been beaten to death."

These reports are mind-blowing. In a society as modern as ours, there is nobody willing to help out the Chechen civilians.

It seems the world has become a place where one is concerned only if self-interest is at hand. For example, let's examine President Bill

Clinton's actions. In the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe conference that took place in Istanbul, Turkey, last summer, Clinton denounced then-Russian President Boris Yeltsin for the way that Chechen civilians were being mistreated.

Since then, the United States has not made a move to try to better the conditions of the civilians.

Sure, there are many organizations which try to aid the victims, but as a country, the United States is not helping the wounded civilians.

Was Clinton genuinely concerned about the 60 kids who have been beaten to death in the concentration camp of Chernokozovo or was he trying to look good internationally?

These kids ranged from 10 to 13 years old. Do you remember yourself at 10?

Yup, we were all watching "Beverly Hills 90210" and wondering why we couldn't live in Beverly Hills, Calif.

Had you ever thought about being locked up in cells in a concentration camp and hoping that you were not the next one to be called out

to be beaten to death? Probably not.

No one should have to live with the fear of being beaten to death at the age of 10. As a superpower in today's world, the United States is bound to certain responsibilities. Helping out those in need is one of them.

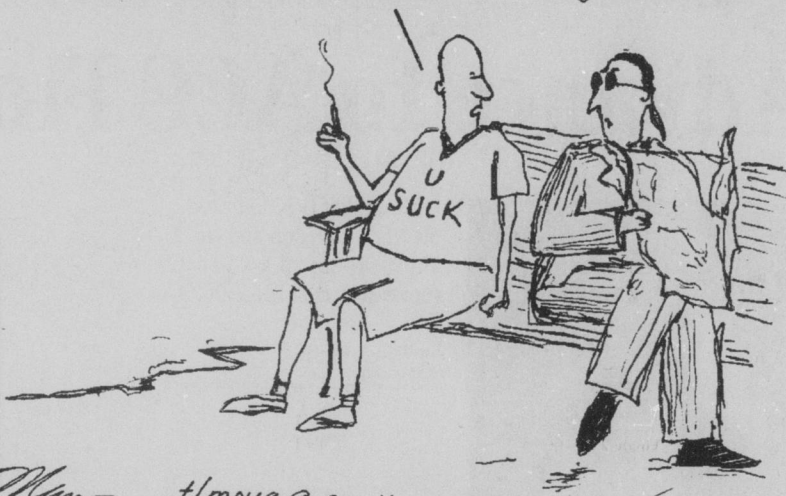
Whoever said history repeats itself wasn't lying. Remember about 50 years ago, when the Jews were persecuted for their beliefs? I don't think that two such instances could resemble each other so much, but they do.

What did we do during Hitler's persecution against the Jews? Nearly nothing. It seems we're doing nothing again, but we don't have to make the same mistake.

You can help. To find out about how to help the wounded civilians, you can visit www.mercycorps.org. Or you can write to your senator urging him to take a more active stance on the happenings in Chechnya.

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Yeah well, I shot somebody once too, but it didn't count cause I was only six and in the first grade...



UNC Mission Statement Demands Global Protest

Let's get this out of the way for good: Carolina students protesting against sweatshops and members of Student Congress tackling issues like the death penalty and sanctions against Iraq are carrying out the University's mission statement.

To quote: "The University exists to improve the quality of human life through service. ... (It) must provide high-quality instruction ... within a community engaged in original inquiry and creative expression, while committed to intellectual freedom, to personal integrity and justice, and to those values that foster enlightened leadership for the state and the nation to enhance the quality of life of all people in the state and to address regional, national and international needs" (emphasis added).

Just because there is a 10-foot-high wall and an angelic halo surrounding this campus doesn't mean you can ignore the events of the outside world. History is being made; why miss it?

For instance: There is good news for criminals coming from New York. Seems that if you are accused of murder, all you need tell the jury (tearfully, of course) is, "I thought he had a gun," and you're off scot-free.

There are only two conditions: You must be a cop, and your victim must be black.

This second is the essential factor in making a case for self-defense. If you are a racist and believe all black men are dangerous, you may fear for your life when confronting a black man. And if you fear for your life, with or without good reason, you cannot be convicted of murder.

Spanish-speakers beware - David Duke might take a shot at you and call it self-defense.

Speaking of racism, the discussion about the flying of the Confederate flag over South Carolina's capitol has exposed a powerful myth about honor and war. Supporters of the flag cite their ancestors' honorable sacrifice. But this implies that killing and dying in war is always worthy of praise, no matter how ignoble the cause. Nonsense; that elevates Hitler's SS to the same status as the American revolutionaries.

No doubt good men died in battle for the South, but they died to preserve slavery. Don't take my word for it; ask Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens, who said in 1861: "The Confederacy's cornerstone rests upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery ... is his natural ... condition."

Even when the flag comes down, South Carolina will remain in many ways an anachronism. Greenville's Bob Jones University has posted on its Web site the claim that God wants us to remain divided by race and religion. And while the school has finally agreed to allow blacks to date whites, they still can't hold hands.

George W. Bush recently mailed New York's Cardinal O'Connor an apology for possible anti-Catholic implications in Bush's visit to B.J.U. But why did he send it to O'Connor? Aren't there any bishops in South Carolina? Yes, but the S.C. primary is over, and New York's is yet to come. Am



DANIEL BREZENOFF POINT OF VIEW

I'm the only one troubled by this shameless political ploy?

Maybe. Most Americans are too busy complaining about gas prices to care about the picayuneries of a presidential campaign. No one seems worried about oil spills, air pollution or the increasing certainty that our grandkids will rape Alaska's wilderness to get their hands on petroleum. But charge a third of what

they pay in Europe for unleaded and suddenly yuppies act like yuppies. Spare me.

Listening to news, I am daily dumbstruck. Reality is bent into an absurd tragicomedy worthy of Kafka, Vonnegut and Orwell. The Diallo verdict roused the ire of a few thousand leftists; nothing will change. Bush's disingenuousness and John McCain's anti-Asian slurs are apparently preferable to Clinton's lechery, so onward they march.

A 6-year-old boy is our newest celebrity sociopath, and what does the Justice Department do? It recommends that the punishment for Internet mischief of the kind that shut down Yahoo! and E-Bay last month be increased from five to 15 years in prison, longer than sentences for many violent crimes but shorter than the mandatory minimum for selling LSD. Makes sense, right?

I guess this is all part of America's infamous "moral decline." Everyone agrees this is a real phenomenon; few agree on causes or solutions.

In fact, Americans have never been very moral, as a basic understanding of history proves.

First the colonists massacred several thousand Indians. (Small pox killed millions more.) Then entrepreneurs enslaved about a dozen generations of Africans and built a powerful economy on their backs. An area that comprises nearly half the continental United States was stolen from Mexico in 1848; 50 years later, a military campaign to "civilize" the "savage" Filipinos (President McKinley's words) left a quarter-million of them dead.

The invasion of the Philippines foreshadowed the war in Vietnam, which introduced chemical warfare as a means of "winning hearts and minds." (That's LBJ.) In the intervening 60 years, lynchings and apartheid characterized the "gallant South," and wife-beating became the most common reason for a woman to visit the hospital. (It still is.) When were the "good old days?"

If you ask me, we're more moral than we once were, but also more confused, more impulsive, and more dependent on multinational corporations than ever - which means we can count less on our neighbors and ourselves.

Which brings us back to student activists. If you see leftists doing things you don't like, engage them in debate. But don't dismiss activism outright; it's an important part of education and service. And if you came here to meet girls and play Nintendo, go right ahead, but don't knock those of us with nobler aspirations.

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If You Think You're an Idiot ...

OK, so I don't have a fiery political topic to vent about, nor do I have the stomach to discuss one more campus administration issue. But let's talk about something that we all can use a little bit more of: respect.

The following are just a few of the experiences that have led me to conclude that there are still people in this world with basic decency issues.

I was standing outside of Parker Residence Hall last Monday night when a car drove up. In the car were two individuals, a guy and a girl. They got out of the car and headed inside.

While the girl was making the incredibly long journey from their parking space right in front of the door, she proceeded to toss her styrofoam cup and plastic spoon on the ground as if it were her right to do so.

The guy looked at her and asked why she had done that.

"Cuz I didn't feel like carrin' it, that's why." Her response was truly as ignorant as her action.

Of course her companion just laughed and they both proceeded to walk the last 5 feet to the front door of the hall.

Lesson for the day: Littering is bad. I'm sorry if this girl missed that day of elementary school, but it must take a truly dense person to avoid this little tidbit of information until the ripe age of 20 or so.

Honestly, there should be laws forbidding people who don't know what trash cans are for, or what packaging materials like styrofoam do to the environment, from using them.

I propose that these people should be made to eat and drink from plastic bowls that hang around their necks at all times. That way we don't even have to change the way



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that the little litterbugs think, they can just simply continue to be completely detached from the rest of the world.

If they are ever unsure of where their trash goes, no one has to even make the suggestion of a trash can to them; they can just wear the stigma of their ignorance. This would make me very happy.

Furthermore, these people should be required to wear T-shirts every second of their lives that plainly state, "I am an idiot." Everyone would know exactly why they are wearing this shirt and can thusly throw rotten food at them.

This practice of throwing rotten food will serve a dual purpose. One, the offenders of the Earth will receive their just dues, and two, the rotten food that might end up on the ground will simply be returning to the earth.

Seriously, if you cannot show respect for the environment in which you live, you are a sad individual.

My next story is much more troubling. I was on the way to class one morning when a recently controversial and popular member of the student body was walking through the Pit. As this person passed a little table, set up for what purpose I am not sure, one of the

insignificant little groupies at the table decided to cough.

Actually doubled over in her chair to make her point, this girl just coughed as loudly as she could until the butt of her antagonism passed by. I wish she would have choked herself.

It was almost humorous to me that this meager little follower, who has probably done nothing of individual significance in her life, entertained the thought that her little display would have an effect.

Even if this particular little girl didn't have the effect that she had wanted, she irritated me. That is why I say that these people get T-shirts, too. If you cannot display common courtesy to another person, why are you in college? I mean, there are basics to learn before you should even consider higher education.

In addition to T-shirts and food bowl collars, workshops should also be implemented. These workshops would specialize in teaching disrespectful people the error of their ways.

I suggest that there be a 12-step program, of which the first step will be to become comfortable in admitting that the offender is and "idiot."

I will be the first to admit that my suggestions are probably never going to become much more than that.

However, if specific action will not be taken in the future, then let us not forget our age, and act like we understand what it is to be a part of a civilized society.

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Sterilization No Punishment at All for La. Mother of 8 Kids

In a time of rising crime and ailing family values, the administration of justice has been hampered by increased attention to criminals' rights.

Common sense and due punishment have fled the legal system in the face of misguided attempts to overly protect those convicted of crimes. But a new trend of "creative sentencing" has been popping up all over the country.

And it holds the promise of revolutionizing the criminal justice system as we know it.

Judges are using more discretionary power to levy common sense punishments to non-capital crimes.

Take Louisiana District Judge Carl Sharp for instance. He recently gave Kathy Looney, 29, of Monroe, La., a choice. After being convicted of three counts of cruelty to juveniles for abusing three of her eight children by beating them with an extension cord, she faces the possibility of 10 years in jail.

Or she could choose voluntary sterilization and avoid serving time.

"I don't want to have to lock you up to keep you from having any more children, so some kind of medical procedure is needed to make sure you don't," Sharp said.

On the surface, the judge's ruling seems somewhat draconian. After all, what judge has the jurisdiction to force this woman to give up her right to bear children? The beauty of his ruling lies in the choice Looney has. Within the options presented by the sentence, she can choose to serve her jail time and get back to popping out kids like a Pez dispenser once released.

But by enticing her with a "get out of jail free" card under the sterilization stipulation, the judge made a very favorable ruling, both to her and to

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taxpayers. After all, how much would it cost to keep this woman in jail for 10 years?

Undoubtedly, she would get out after only a fraction of her sentence was served, but the costs that fall on the state's shoulders would be far higher than a simple one-time sterilization procedure.

But beyond economic frugality, the sentence is a common sense approach to curbing future problems. Looney has lost custody of all eight of her children. Though their lives are already scarred by the horrendous upbringing Mom provided, they are out of her reach and can hopefully begin building a stable life off the path to social deviance.

By sterilizing this woman, she loses her chance to abuse any children she would have in the future.

For someone who missed one of her sentencing dates (for three child abuse convictions, mind you) while giving birth to her last kid, eight would not be her magic number. By all indications, her loins would be just as active after jail. So the judge provided a way to nip the problem in the bud. She can have all the unprotected sex she wants without the risk of those pesky children.

Obviously, this ruling does not solve the underlying psychological problems that brought about the abuse in the first place. But the court's role is not to coddle, it's to make an attempt to provide some sense of retribution and justice to the victims of crimes, a group far too often overlooked.

But at a time when privileges such as cable television and access to pornography are demanded in prisons as rights, "hard time" is not what it used to be. If anything, the big house

has become a vacation. Once behind bars, Looney has access to gym equipment, library facilities and regular free meals. This is fit punishment? Though she's traded in her freedom, her life in Club Med with barred windows is far from deplorable.

All the amenities she doesn't have at home - and all at taxpayers' expense.

The defense attorney plans to ask the judge to rethink the sentence. If Sharp refuses to budge and the ruling stands, he will appeal. A true travesty of justice would be an appeals court overturning Sharp's ruling.

Judges who actually give a damn about their community and try intriguing routes to justice should not be discouraged from looking towards alternative means of punishment.

The burgeoning prisons cannot absorb the ever-increasing number of non-hardened criminals who receive "by the book" sentences in a drive-

through lane at the local courthouse. Judges are the front line in the war on crime, and their wisdom should be respected. If a ruling is common sense, don't second-guess it.

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