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The Daily Tar Heel

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Livin' It Up

A rental licensing program provides benefits for both renters and neighbors. The Chapel Hill Town Council should lend its approval.

The world would be ideal if we could all get along. Fortunately, the local Rental Licensing Task Force is attempting to make that possible - at least with student housing.

On March 26, the Rental Licensing Task Force presented the Chapel Hill town manager with recommendations to implement a proposed licensing program for landlords and renters. It is an effort to make both parties more accountable.

The task force is attempting to relieve the flurry of complaints that residents have lodged through the years in near-campus neighborhoods about problems with noise, garbage and parking around student rentals.

A city-run database will be created, providing renters with information from the applications of the landlord. It lists the address of rental properties, the number of tenants living there, the amount of parking available and contact information of the landlord. Noise ordinance information, garbage management, parking regulations and expected tenant conduct also will be included in the application.

That information will give students a heads up of the rules of a rental before they enter into a contract. And it will give neighbors recourse when they have to deal with bad renters. They can contact landlords

about negligent tenants so that they can deal with problems instead of police.

Some on the Town Council have concerns, including the cost and improper use of the database.

But costs of the license would be nominal for landlords. And the system is simple to set up, so that cost will be limited for the town as well.

It also will not be possible to misuse the site because it will only allow documented violation reports to be posted for open viewing, not simply a bulletin board for renters' venting.

This complaint-driven program does not call for a new town employee. The building inspector would investigate only after complaints were lodged, then contact tenants or property owners to mitigate any problems. So the program will not be burdensome on the town.

For the 15,000 to 16,000 students not housed on campus, the thought is that this will add to steadiness and help maintain community life in area neighborhoods.

The University and the town will improve because of this ingenious, yet simple plan. It would be in the best interests of all involved to implement this rental licensing program as soon as possible.

Troubling Trends

President George W. Bush has made another environmental misstep in abandoning the Kyoto accord instead of trying to make it work.

In recent weeks, President George W. Bush has continued on a disturbing trend.

After breaking campaign promises on cutting arsenic levels in drinking water and carbon dioxide emissions by power plants, the new president has announced that the United States will back out of the Kyoto accord.

It is a decision that wrongly sacrifices the environment for economic concerns.

The Kyoto accord is an international agreement that aims to fight global warming and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. President Clinton had signed the treaty, but the Senate has yet to ratify it.

The United States already lacks credibility within the international community when it comes to environmental issues, particularly with regards to air pollution.

In a March 6 memo to Bush, Environmental Protection Agency head Christine Todd Whitman wrote "Mr. President, this is a credibility issue for the U.S. in the international community. It is also an issue that is resonating here at home. We need to appear engaged."

However, with his decision to reject the treaty, Bush's stance on global warming and the environment hardly appears engaged.

Though the United States only contains 4 percent of the world's population, it releases about 25 percent of the world's greenhouse gases.

The international community has called on the United States to take responsibility for

its pollution - and the Kyoto accord is a step in the right direction.

But now, if President Bush retains his current position and essentially abandons a treaty that has taken more than three years to craft, the United States might irreversibly harm the success of future international agreements on the environment.

Rather than abandon the Kyoto accord, President Bush should actively seek to amend the treaty to make it more palatable to the United States' economy.

Progress in that area had already been made by the Clinton administration. Emissions trading among countries is one such proposal that would ease the financial burdens of the treaty.

By ignoring the problem rather than accepting responsibility and working towards a solution, President Bush is making his commitment to big business at the expense of the environment all too clear.

If the Kyoto accord is truly flawed, the Bush administration should strive to make it better rather than give up and put the entire issue on the back burner.

Because greenhouse gases have such a detrimental - some would argue a potentially catastrophic - effect on the environment, the Bush administration should hasten to work with the international community and solve this problem.

Future generations should not be forced to live in an unsafe environment because of sluggish action by the current generation.



Gun Control Costs Innocent Lives

As the baseball bats shattered the front door, she locked herself in the bedroom. But soon the thugs attacked the bedroom door. It started to crack. Finally, three shots from her 9mm sent the predators fleeing.

The "million" moms marching would have you believe this Oregon woman's Independence Day story is a rare event.

They're right. Studies show that anywhere from 70 percent to 97 percent of the time a gun is used to prevent or terminate a criminal attack, no shots are fired.

So when an illegally armed teenager robbed Mike Nisi's family-run jewelry store, Mike's wife had only to aim her handgun to get the criminal to scream and flee.

The U.S. Census Bureau conducts the National Crime and Violence Survey and reports that scenes like these, which they call "defensive gun uses" (DGUs), happen more than 80,000 times a year in the United States. The gun-nuts claim 2 million DGUs a year based on survey data from scientific literature.

Either way, law-abiding Americans use a gun in self-defense hundreds of times a day.

School shootings are so rare you remember the names: Columbine, Edinboro. Yet politicians exploit such scenes to construct gun policy, always "for the children."

Slogans tease, "If guns are outlawed, only outlaws will have children who shoot their brother." CDC reports that 121 American children under 15 died in accidental shootings in 1998. But 2,791 were killed by cars, 1,346 in fires and 1,003 drowned. Bathtub locks could save more children than trigger locks.

To prevent drowning, wise parents teach children to swim. To prevent accidental shootings, what should a parent do?

Last year President Clinton lobbied for trigger locks after a six-year-old Michigan boy shot a classmate. This after his dad went back to jail and his mom trashed the apartment, getting them evicted. Sleeping on a couch in his uncle's crackhouse, he found the stolen gun. Mandatory trigger locks were the missing element in this child's life?

Trigger locks and other so-called "sensible" gun restrictions are a shell game, a distraction from real issues of violence politics can't or won't solve. Gangs wage drive-by shootings over prohibition profits. A gay teenager com-



RUSS HELMS
HEALING OUR WORLD

mits suicide after months of verbal abuse in government schools. An abusive husband shoots his wife in the heat of the nightly beating. Blame the guns? Treating symptoms, new gun laws fail, an excuse for more laws. The result? Ever increasing violence and more than 20,000 American gun laws.

Here at Carolina, such laws seem popular. How easy to abandon a right we never exercise, since we have a private police force to keep our campus safe. "Name That Caliber" isn't as popular a Saturday night recreation for us as it is in parts of Durham. If we wanted to be armed, most of us could afford the additional costs of most "sensible" gun restrictions without resorting to the black market.

Yet many innocents, trapped in our inner-city war zones, depend on their Second Amendment right to self-defense for daily survival. They don't share our luxuries, and "sensible" gun laws disarm these poor and needy first. Their rights are not ours to surrender.

Several-hour waiting periods can save a life by allowing angry folk to calm, but "sensible" several-day waits leave victims vulnerable.

Rayna Ross, a 22-year-old Marine, awoke to find her ex in her Virginia apartment, this time armed with a bayonet. She'd survived a previous attack and gotten a restraining order and a gun. The gun worked, the predator died. What if he'd hunted on day six of the seven-day waiting period? Even a trained Marine like Ross needed a firearm to overcome the predator's size advantage.

Gun-control nuts note that in England, guns are rare and the murder rate lower. Gun-nuts note Switzerland, where guns are more common and the murder rate lower. Australia offers a controlled experiment. In 1999, the previously enacted "sensible" law requiring

gun registration was used - as always - to confiscate the guns. Within a year, murders were up 3.2 percent, assaults up 8.6 percent and armed robberies up 44 percent. Australian gun control increased violent crime by removing a primary deterrent.

The Australian crime wave confirms the largest study done in the United States, Dr. John Lott's controversial (both the science and conclusions) "More Guns, Less Crime." He found that violent criminals prefer unarmed victims. If some law-abiding citizens arm themselves, criminals move where citizens are unarmed or substitute less violent crimes. Even pacifists (like me) benefit - criminals don't know who is armed and who's not (oops). Care to risk your life on a guess again today?

In the 1960's, the Orlando, Fla. police trained 2,500 women to use guns to counter a rape epidemic. The next year, rape fell 88 percent and burglary by 25 percent.

Australians should feel lucky. Governments are more dead by than criminals when abusing monopoly of force. Libertarians Jefferson, Washington and Madison protected gun rights here, knowing what authoritarians like Stalin, Hitler and Mao could do to a disarmed people. More than 50 million victims of last century's genocides: whisper warnings of their gun control experiences from mass graves.

Today in the United States, the idea of citizens taking up the family weapons against the greatest military power in the history of the world seems a little silly. The thought was just as silly to the first few rebels in the mountains of Afghanistan and the jungles of Vietnam. And it seemed pretty silly to most in 1776, when Colonial gun-nuts Washington and Jefferson risked hanging to ensure your freedom.

The libertarians who put together our Constitution understood the awesome power of deterrence. The Second Amendment is just the final check on a heavily checked-and-balanced government, and we should be thankful that this need remains so remote.

But we must always stay vigilant, for if the politicians can disable the Second Amendment, they can threaten the First.

Russ Helms, a Ph.D. candidate in biostatistics from Chapel Hill, defends his home with two large dogs. E-mail: rhlms@bios.unc.edu.

READERS' FORUM

Matt Dees' Op-ed Piece 'A Sermonizing Whine,' Full of Paternalistic Ideas

TO THE EDITOR:

I am deeply disappointed by Matt Dees, the editor of The Daily Tar Heel, for the paternalistic view he chose to take in the midst of the David Horowitz controversy, so disappointed, I, in fact, feel betrayed.

As a 1996 alumnus of UNC, I keep abreast of what is going on around the Triangle by regularly perusing local newspapers through the Internet, including the DTH. When I learned of the uproar the Horowitz ad caused at Duke, I knew that UNC would not be able to avoid this dispute.

On April 2, when the DTH gave extensive coverage to the issue, I thought the first three columns I read (those of Moore and Taylor, Chancellor Moeser and even Horowitz) were expressions of respect for the intelligence of the campus community. The authors put forth their opinions and allowed us all to think, or think more

deeply, about free speech, the nature of intellectual discourse and respect for self and others.

Dees' column, on the other hand, is a sermonizing whine from the DTH bully pulpit full of paternalistic phrases: "giving them the opportunity," "privilege given" and "good faith effort we made to be sensitive to the black community's concerns." Interspersed are insults that call the beliefs and interests of those who did not want the DTH to publish the ad "ridiculous" and "inconsequential." As Dees informs us that the DTH edit board is "considerably liberal" I could not help but think, "How mighty white of you!"

Dees need be concerned that oppressed communities will more than likely find the tone, intent, and content of his writings to be offensive. As we should have all learned throughout this debate, free speech, including speech that we consider "ridiculous," is a right in America, not a "privilege" that can be "given." To use such terms when addressing the opinions and concerns of people of color and women is to place oneself in assumed position of power over oth-

ers, "granting" these others the "gift" to express their views at the white male whim. It might not be racism, but that certainly is paternalism.

Dees resents being called a racist. As a woman of color I resent being treated as a subordinate in a community of equals.

Michelle L. Johnson
Class of 1996

Horowitz's Point of View Was a 'Slap' to UNC's Entire Black Community

TO THE EDITOR:

In his Monday April 2 Point of View in The Daily Tar Heel, David Horowitz writes, "... blacks now living in America are the freest and most prosperous black people on earth. The average descendant of African slaves in America earns between 20 and 50 times as much as the average black person in Africa, whose ancestors were not kidnapped and enslaved."

Wow, I never realized descendants of

slaves should actually be grateful for the opportunity the slave traders afforded them. Perhaps someone should go out to the protesters in the Pit and ask them to sign a giant thank-you card?

Seriously, though, the reparations issue is a complicated one, but this comment belongs nowhere in the debate.

And to the DTH - did you guys really have to slap the campus' African-American community in the face for a publicity stunt? You didn't even make Horowitz pay for his racism. You guys gave him the column for free.

Allison Pickett
Junior
History and Peace, War and Defense

Abortion Protesters Should Pay Heed to Other Social Ills Also

TO THE EDITOR:

I find it distasteful that those people who purport to hold all human life to be sacro-

sanct are often the same people who hold the most conservative political and ethical views.

How does the "right-to-life" who finds great moral indignity in abortion, not tap into that same indignity when it comes to dealing with such issues as poverty, hunger, the death penalty and other global human rights violations? That people who tout themselves as "pro-life" are willing to campaign, protest, rally, cry and even kill for a social issue whose ethical poles are far from clear, only make it more maddening that that same vitriol is never directed toward raising our awareness of the unmistakable crimes that human beings perpetrate against other living human beings each day.

The fact that activist groups like the GAP have chosen instead to champion a firmly entrenched, rhetorically static and politically delineated issue not only makes their outcry seem all the more disingenuous, it undermines their credibility by emphasizing an indefensible moral myopia.

David Rinker
Office Assistant
Department of Pharmacology



The Daily Tar Heel welcomes reader comments and criticism. Letters to the editor should be no longer than 300 words and must be typed, double-spaced, dated and signed by no more than two people. Students should include their year, major and phone number. Faculty and staff should include their title, department and phone number. The DTH reserves the right to edit letters for space, clarity and vulgarity. Publication is not guaranteed. Bring letters to the DTH office at Suite 104, Carolina Union or e-mail forum: editdesk@unc.edu.