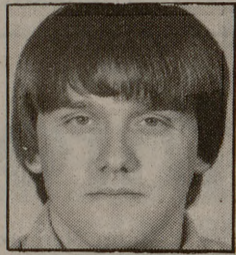


# Opinion

## What happens when everybody shoots back?

Bernhard Goetz: subway saint or sadistic shooter?



**Karl Pallmeyer**

Although a jury acquitted Goetz on charges of attempted murder Tuesday, the question has not been answered. Was Goetz protecting himself or did he gun down four innocent victims on that subway on Dec. 22, 1984?

Goetz claims that four black youths, Barry Allen, Darrell Cabey, Troy Canty and James Ramseur, surrounded him and were about to beat him up and rob him. The four men said they were just panhandling when Goetz drew his unlicensed .38 revolver and shot them. Either way, one of the men, Cabey, now suffers from paralysis and brain damage.

New York is a dangerous city. In the words of a bag lady who asked me for money one morning in New York: "The idea behind New York is that you can kill somebody and then collect their insurance money." I was there for just a few days when I saw what looked like a pick-pocket at work. Crime and violence is high in New York just as it is in any other large city. The police can't be everywhere at once, so some people decide to take the law into their own hands.

One night, while riding the subway to Brooklyn, I saw two Guardian Angels, self-appointed protectors of the people, burst through one subway car on their way to another. A few minutes later they were walking back congratulating each other and giving each other the high five. I didn't even want to know what happened. Like most people in New York, I didn't want to get involved. It's not that the people don't care and don't want to help their fellow man, it's just that they are afraid that their own lives will be in danger if they get involved.

It's nice that there are some people who want to protect others but sometimes you have to wonder. Are the people who beat up people in the name of the law committing violence in order to uphold the law or just because they like to beat up people? Do the Guardian Angels and vigilantes like Goetz use violence to maintain peace or to receive pleasure for themselves? Goetz himself admitted that while he was shooting, his intention was "to murder them, to hurt them, to make them suffer as much as possible."

A New York subway is a depressing place. The weight of the city's seven million people can be felt pressing down on everyone. After a hard day of work and trying to deal with the city, tempers are on the edge. The threat of robbery and/or physical harm doesn't set people's minds at ease. It's easy for someone to lose his cool under the intense tension and fear on the subways. When that person is carrying a weapon, especially a gun, someone is bound to get hurt.

Goetz may have had the right to protect himself, but did he have the right to hurt others? Did he have to carry a gun? Did he have to shoot all four men? Wouldn't a shot in the air have been enough to scare off his alleged attackers?

They jury has made its decision and Goetz is acquitted of 12 charges, including second-degree attempted murder, first-degree assault and reckless endangerment. The jury did convict Goetz on one charge, a third-degree weapons possession charge for owning the gun he used on the four men. On Sept. 4, Goetz will be sentenced for the weapons charge. He could serve 2 and one-third to 7 years in prison. Or he could get off without serving any time in prison.

If justice is to be upheld in this case, Goetz must serve for his crime. Maybe he was protecting himself and he shouldn't, like the jury said, be punished. But he was carrying an illegal gun and harmed others with that gun.

If Goetz is allowed to get off scot-free for the case, more and more scared people will start carrying guns. They will think that they need to protect themselves and, if they have to use a gun, they will be acquitted. If more and more scared people start carrying guns there are going to be more and more shootings. Many of those shootings won't be in self defense. Many of the shootings will be the result of someone getting mad and deciding to reach for a gun instead of common sense.

A person should have the right to protect himself and others. But when that right is abused to the point that the rest of the people must protect themselves from those who claim to be protecting themselves and others.

**Karl Pallmeyer is a journalism graduate and a columnist for The Battalion.**

## Who needs college to make mega bucks?

As I turn the corner at 40 mph—a speed I've worked up to in just two days—the lights from my truck shine on the home of my first customer.

**Mike Sullivan**  
Guest Columnist

It's 3 a.m. as I cruise past his driveway. Slap. First newspaper delivered, 349 to go.

"What the hell am I doing here," I asked myself the first night on the job.

May 9th, I became a college-educated man. My grade point is respectable and I was involved in extracurricular activities while in school. I majored in journalism, but I never expected to be delivering newspapers—a job that requires none of the above qualifications and much less. So why am I doing it?

Because I'll clear \$450 this week. And that ain't bad for roughly 20 hours of work.

I'm filling in for a carrier who's on vacation, but the man in charge wants me to come to work for him full time. He's guaranteed me \$30,000 my first year with a promise to promote me within two years to a job paying \$50,000. He's not just blowing smoke, either. This guy is making about \$11,000 a month as a distributor.

What would you do? I have other plans, but I must admit the offer is tempting. Here's a job requiring almost nothing of the employee other than common sense, responsibility and a reliable vehicle. And it pays better than 95 percent of the jobs any of us members of the college-educated elite will have on graduation day.

If throwing newspapers doesn't do much for you—even at that price—maybe you'd be interested in something a little closer to home. How about a maintenance job at Texas A&M.

I have it from a reliable source that those people who walk around picking up trash and painting campus parking lots start out at as much as \$11.00 an hour, or roughly \$22,000 a year. Don't forget about benefits. You might even be able to sneak into football games wearing that uniform.

How much pride—false pride at any rate—do you have? If you have a college degree and you're interested in making blue-collar money, I guess that's what it boils down to.

While delivering papers in an apartment complex the other morning around 6 a.m., some of the people were beginning to leave for work. I even hand-delivered a few papers to nicely dressed young people. Most weren't too friendly and some were even rude.

To them, I was just a newspaper delivery man, ranking right above garbage men on the social scale. They probably thought me a real scum sucker.

But they didn't know me. They didn't know I was probably making more money than them. And certainly they

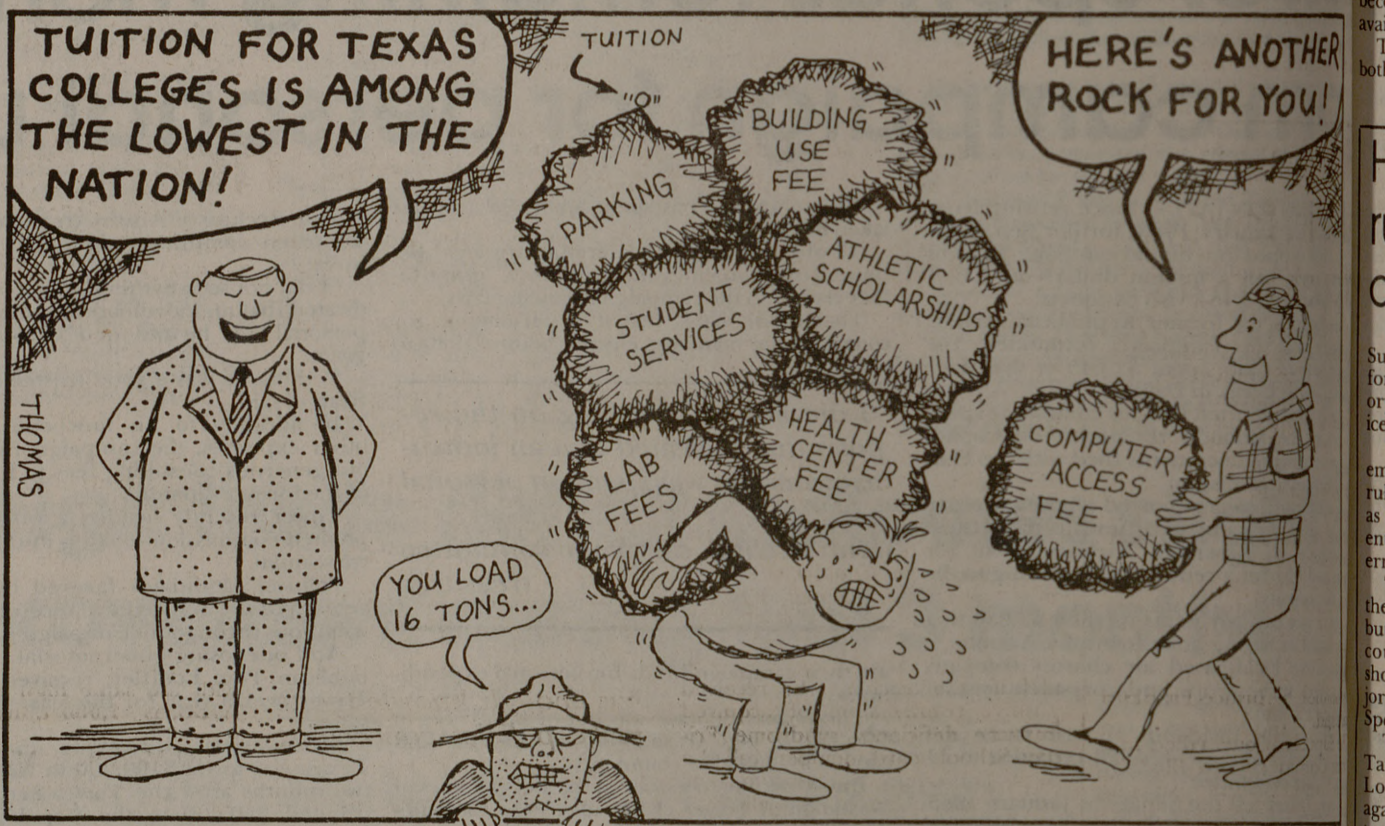
wouldn't have dreamed that I have a degree from the best University in Texas. I almost felt like telling them. There's that false pride coming through.

So why don't I accept the generous offer and go to work full time for the newspaper? It's not that I'm looking forward to office politics, incompetent superiors and fellow employees who like coffee better than work.

No, I need a challenge, as, I hope, all college-educated people do. After a few nights throwing papers, the job isn't much of a challenge. So, I've decided to continue to pursue a more mentally demanding line of work, a career in which all of my qualifications, experience and talent will be constantly called upon and tested.

And if my chosen profession doesn't provide any of that, I'm sure I'll find it challenging to live on the salary.

**Mike Sullivan is a journalism graduate, guest columnist for The Battalion and one great guy.**



## Public should be exempt from AIDS testing

Howard Phillips, chairman of the Conservative Caucus, is an important figure on the political right. He recently appeared on television to express a conservative position on AIDS and, in passing, his views on homosexuality. He favors the widest possible testing of almost everyone under any circumstances, including "prospective apartment renters."



**Richard Cohen**

Phillips apparently thinks you can get AIDS from a lease. As a minor (one apartment) landlord myself, I am appalled. I don't know how to repair a toilet, much less administer an AIDS test. In my experience, just checking bank references is chore enough. Asking every prospective tenant to submit to an AIDS test (monthly? annually?) is enough to dampen my entrepreneurial spirit. I will not even mention the ever-increasing cost of fuel.

I start with Phillips for a reason. His suggestion is typical of the demagoguery coming from some segments of the American conservative movement on the issue of AIDS and homosexuality. Others have made similar suggestions and, of course, Jerry Falwell, who precedes his attempts at character assassination with a "Sonnet From The Portuguese" ("How do I love thee? Let me count the ways?"), continues to employ ugly anti-gay language in his fund-raising appeals.

Next to Jim Bakker, Falwell loves homosexuals the most. In contrast, we have the language of President Reagan. In his recent speech calling for limited AIDS testing (of immigrants, federal prisoners, patients in VA hospitals, persons applying for marriage licenses and those attending sexual-disease clinics), the president sounded a cautionary note: "This is a battle against disease, not against our fellow Americans."

Reagan is no bigot when it comes to homosexuals. As California governor, when some homosexuals were discovered on his staff, Reagan handled what could have been a nasty scandal with sensitivity. But he has failed to deal with the ugly homophobia infecting much of the American conservative movement. Along with Vice President Bush, he has kissed the ring of mudslingers such as Falwell and refused to slap down the likes of Phillips.

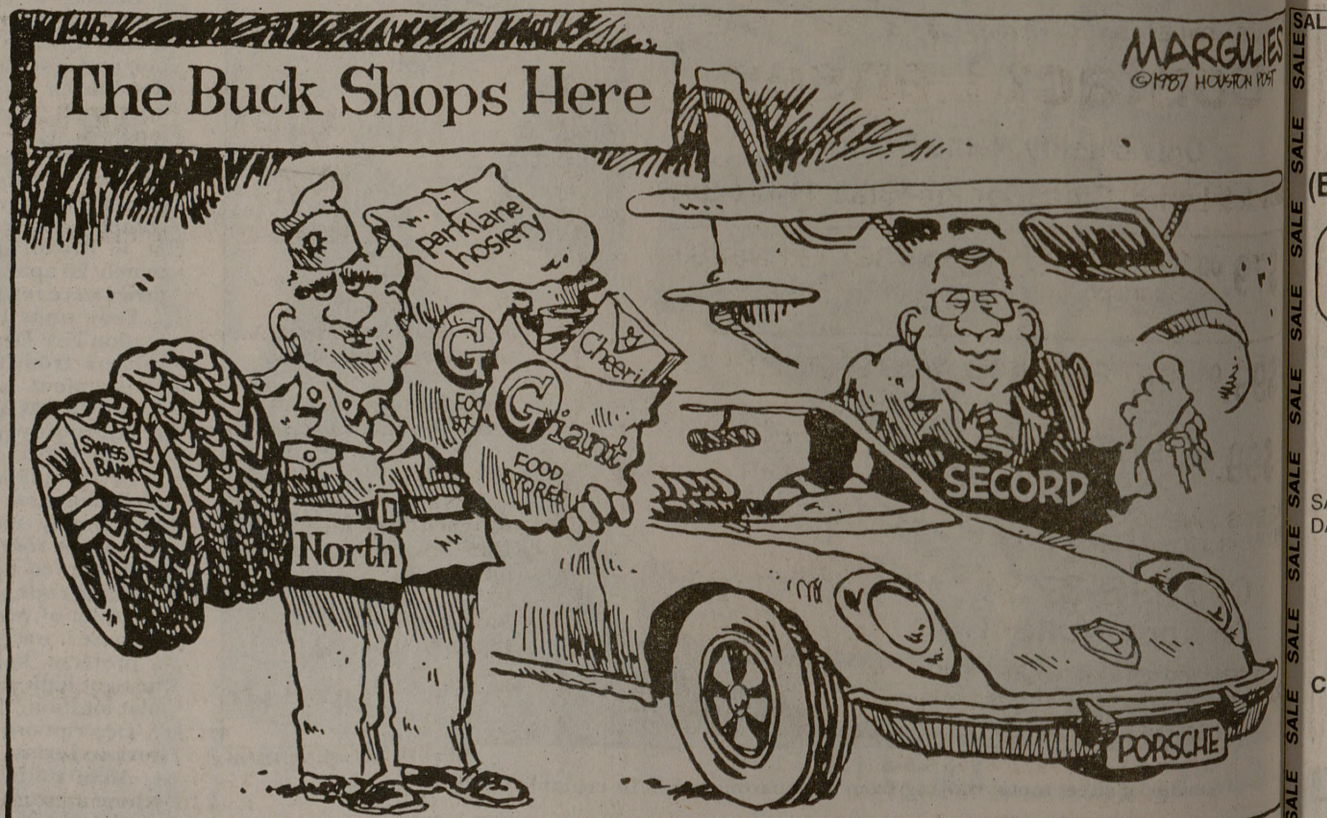
Now the nation is paying a price.

AIDS, which is a disease after all, has become a political issue. Where the nation should be united, it is divided. The administration has little credibility with homosexuals. For good reasons (its rhetoric, its associations and some appalling administrative decisions), it is not trusted by the gay community. Even some scientists suspect the White House is more interested in battling homosexuals than the disease that's killing them. Maybe limited mandatory testing is the way to go. Coming from another administration, such a proposal—hardly Draconian, after all—might be met with some minor protest, discussion and, ultimately, compromise. But in the gay community, the Reagan administration is known by the company it keeps and the decisions it has made. Until the Supreme Court ruled otherwise, the Reagan Justice Department said AIDS victims could be legally fired without the fear of contagion was "reasonable or not." And, just recently, the White House refused to reserve a seat for a homosexual on

the president's AIDS commission—move akin to denying Jews a place at the Holocaust commission. (About 95 percent of all AIDS victims are gay.) In the Eisenhower era, the phrase "moral suasion" had a certain currency. It referred to the president's power to set a certain moral tone, to lead by character. Dwight D. Eisenhower faulted for failing to do precisely that when it came to school desegregation and history has assigned him some demerits as a result.

The judgement of history is not on President Reagan. But surely it will have to take into account a president whose own words, when it comes to AIDS and homosexuals, were about reproach, but who was silent about reprehensible language of his supporters. When it comes to AIDS, the ultimate test may well be for moral principles. It should be administered to politicians, not apartment renters. If it were, the Reagan administration would flunk.

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