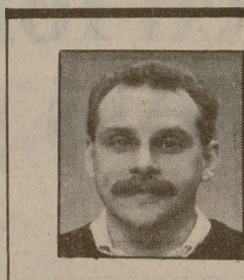


African-Americans trying to reclaim their heritage

Two weeks ago I attended the Southwestern Black Student Leadership Conference (SBSLC) here at Texas A&M. I went in order to broaden my horizons and to better understand the issues that concern black Americans. Along the way, I found the answer to a question that had been nagging at me for a while: Why the sudden increase in the use of the term "African-American" to refer to blacks?

I'm old enough to remember when the correct term was "Negro" (as opposed to "colored"). Then came "black," which lasted a long time. Recently, however, the term "African-American" has become increasingly popular, and is well on its way to becoming the new "politically correct" phrase.

My first response to this usage was not positive — the term conjured up images of naturalized U.S. citizens from Nigeria. I also thought it ridiculous for a group of people to constantly change the way they identify themselves. It



Jeff Farmer
Columnist

their language, culture and history forcibly taken from them. His thesis was that this alienation of blacks from their culture is still responsible for many of the problems of blacks in America.

It is difficult to convey the power and impact of Akbar's words on the printed page, but I would like to quote a few of them:

"It is because our history has been kept from us that we have been of no psychological use to ourselves.

"When we regain our history, we regain our minds; when we regain our minds, we regain our power.

"Your psychology is not functional until you understand your history."

According to Akbar, the civilizations of Africa flourished first; it was here that universities began, and monotheism was invented. The Africans lived in a world where "everything contained a spark of God." Sometime during the talk, it dawned on me why blacks are calling themselves African-Americans: They are simply reclaiming their African heritage. All of the people who have come to America have brought something with them and found something here. America grew out of this unique combination of the old and the new. The institutionalized forms of this past evil are for the most part gone; what remains is very subtle: attitudes.

Attitudes of guilt, blame and prejudice will not change through confrontation and legislation; there must be healing. Akbar's admonition to the students at the banquet was: "You are the people who will bring peace and healing to America."

February is Black History Month. There will be many opportunities for all of us to participate in the healing process. Check out Akbar's speech (it will soon be available from the Multicultural Services Center in the MSC) and watch it; go to a seminar; read James Baldwin or Martin Luther King Jr. Black and white Americans can't afford to continue in misunderstanding and conflict. Let's each do our part to end it.

Jeff Farmer is a graduate student in mathematics.



appeared to be a recurring process: (1) Bigots refer to a group in a derogatory fashion; (2) The group relabels themselves with a self-chosen term, (3) Social pressure to use the new term increases, until finally the bigots start using it and the cycle begins again. So, I went to the conference scratching my head over this new term.

At SBSLC, I attended workshops on politics and racism, a panel discussion among some black engineers and a play. It was at the closing banquet, attended by 690 students, that my question was answered.

The speaker was Dr. Na'im Akbar of Florida State University. He spoke on the history of blacks in America and its importance. He described how the people brought to America as slaves had

Gun laws won't restrict freedom

Many rapid-fire gun enthusiasts argue that gun laws would restrict our personal freedoms, although the guns they vehemently protect restrict some people from the freedom to live.

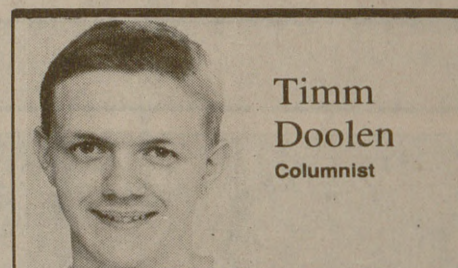
Many gun lobbyists fail to sufficiently answer a question central to the controversy over semi-automatic gun control: What purpose do semi-automatic weapons fulfill in a civilized society such as the United States?

To hunt?
Let's give the poor deer a chance. How many bullets does a hunter need to take down a deer? Five? Ten? 30? Surely the bullets that come out of a regular rifle would be enough to do the job for a hunter with good aim.

Luckily, the predominantly white, middle-class hunters don't have to hear the gunfire in the poor black neighborhoods of Washington. The predominantly white, middle-class legislators ignore the gunfire in their back yards because the National Rifle Association's political gunfire keeps their attention. They threaten legislators with the haunting possibility of losing the next election.

The Second Amendment?
Gun lobbyists claim the Second Amendment as their umbrella defense against criticism. They claim that the Constitution protects their right to own any type of weapon. Despite whether the Second Amendment applies to state militias or gun-toting individuals, few will deny that certain limits can be imposed upon the amendment. The First Amendment guarantees the right to free speech, but free speech is limited in a multitude of ways.

To protect ourselves?
From whom? Persons carrying fully-automatic weapons? A shotgun



Timm Doolen
Columnist

will give you as much protection in your home as a semi-automatic. A rapid spray of shot will disable (but maybe not kill) an intruder as efficiently as a spray of rapid-fire bullets.

Thinking in terms of defense, unless the United States is in imminent danger of being invaded by forces strong enough to overwhelm our Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force and National Guard, I think we're pretty safe in our own homes (with the door locked).

Allowing semi-automatic weapons may be an attempt to ensure the "security of a free state" as the Second Amendment purports. I am secure in knowing part of my taxes ensure that the Armed Forces are protecting the nation, not a bunch of assault rifle enthusiasts.

The motto?

The motto of most gun supporters is "Guns don't kill people; people kill people." Maybe so, but guns make it a hell of a lot easier for those people who do want to kill other people. It is like saying "intercontinental ballistic missiles don't kill people; people kill people." In other words, the point of the motto is irrelevant to the argument. No sensible person would like to give the general public access to nuclear weapons, but the same "sensible" person might allow someone the right to own guns that

could kill off people a few dozen at a time.

The question is not the cause of the killing, but the accessibility of effective killing machines to the general population.

Few would doubt that if everyone in this country owned a semi-automatic weapon, more intentional shootings would occur. And few would doubt that if no assault rifles existed in America, fewer shootings (especially mass homicides) would take place.

It won't solve the problem?

Of course restricting certain guns will not solve the crime problem. Neither do drug laws or murder laws, but we find some use in trying to deter those vices. We should also deter the vice of wanting to riddle a playground full of children with bullets. It's tough to do without a semi-automatic weapon.

And assault weapons do not do much to solve the problems of policemen. Policemen want more restrictions on rapid-fire guns. It's a shame they don't have as much money as the NRA lobby to try and influence the legislatures of this nation.

Happiness is a warm gun?

Well, maybe. But obviously there's no real, justifiable need for semi-automatic weapons in America.

Why are they called assault rifles? Because they are meant for attacks on troops, not deer. They also are useful for escalating disputes between drug pushers, but not quite as useful for protecting people in their own home.

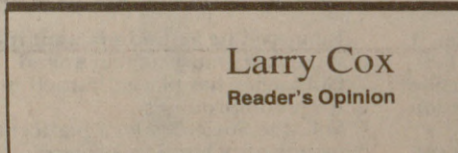
Because semi-automatic weapons are not needed in this country, and because they make killing so much easier, they should be banned — today.

Timm Doolen is a junior computer science major.

Semi-automatics must be kept legal

"A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed."

Second Amendment
U.S. Constitution



Larry Cox
Reader's Opinion

Earlier today, over 65 million law-abiding American gun owners awoke with no intention of opening fire in a schoolyard. They aren't gang members, terrorists or sociopaths. Most left for work or for school without knowing that their right to purchase and own the firearm of their choice would be debated in Washington later today, and that many might be unwitting criminals when they return home this evening.

This afternoon another attempt to ban many semi-automatic firearms will be instigated by U.S. Sen. Joseph Biden in the guise of S. 1970 and S. 1972. It is much easier for gun prohibitionists in the Congress to propose a new law than push for enforcement of existing ones. Under the guise of these anti-drug, anti-crime bills, they will attempt to do just that.

The outcry to ban semi-automatic firearms began just over a year ago when Patrick Purdy committed his heinous crime in a schoolyard in Stockton, Calif. Public outrage and media blitzes condemning "assault weapons" and "death machines" led to a hasty ban on semi-automatic firearms in California. These misdirected efforts have propelled semi-automatic firearms to the forefront of the national gun control

debate and have caused numerous facts to be overlooked or ignored.

With semi-automatic technology, a pull of the trigger fires one shell (and only one) and the spent cartridge is ejected automatically. The mechanism is so universal that the only difference between military-style semi-automatics and traditional-style hunting and shooting firearms is cosmetic. In form and function they are identical. Although many semi-automatics look like their military counterparts, they are not fully automatic weapons.

Twenty million Americans own a semi-automatic rifle, pistol or shotgun. Almost all are in jeopardy of being outlawed if "readily convertible" legislation is passed. A U.S. Court of Appeals opinion defined "readily restorable" to apply to guns requiring up to eight hours for restoration by a gunsmith in a properly equipped machine shop. If all semi-automatic firearms are "readily restorable," then precedent exists to brand them "readily convertible" to fully automatic as well.

A well-trained gunsmith can convert a BB gun to a Howitzer in eight hours, so banning all semi-automatics which can be converted to fully automatic weapons is like

banning all shotguns which can be sawed off. Both of these conversions are already federal felonies. Still, anti-gun groups such as Handgun Control, Inc. argue that one unenforced law isn't enough. They say we need more restrictive laws banning guns instead of enforcing laws on the books. The absurdity of these arguments is matched only by the danger they pose to the Second Amendment.

Onerous gun control legislation has never been effective in controlling crime. Swift, sure and guaranteed punishment is the only effective means of deterring criminals. Patrick Purdy walked into that California schoolyard just the way he had walked out of six jails — without a felony record. Six felony arrests ranging from drug possession to attempted robbery had been plea-bargained down to misdemeanors, allowing him to pass California's 15-day handgun waiting period and background check with flying colors. Six arrests. Six plea bargains. Five dead children.

Semi-automatic firearms aren't the problem. An embarrassingly inefficient judicial system is. Sen. Biden's attempt at gun control shifts the focus from crime control legislation and does the nation a great disservice. Punishing criminals, not honest citizens, is the only answer.

Larry Cox is a graduate student in Range Science and President of Aggies for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms.

Mail Call

'Don't Panic' good textbook

EDITOR:

We would just like to say a few words about Dr. William Bassichis' physics book, "Don't Panic."

Personally, we think it is a very good book.

The material is expressed in an easy to understand and organized manner.

It gets to the point and does not go into lengthy details about non-physics related material, like other books.

The physics material is accompanied by examples that reinforce difficult principles, unlike the green book (Holliday and Resnick) which left the reader "clueless."

We strongly recommend continuing the use of Dr. Bassichis' book.

It is an excellent book, and we can truly say that we understand PHYS 218, Mechanics.

Shilpa Amin '92
accompanied by six signatures

Have an opinion? Express it!

Letters to the editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit letters for style and length, but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the classification, address and telephone number of the writer. All letters may be brought to 216 Reed McDonald, or sent to Campus Mail Stop 1111.

Adventures In Cartooning

by Don Atkinson Jr.

BATTALION STAFF APPLICATION:

PLEASE LIST ANY PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE.

none

2) IN YOUR OPINION, PRES. GEORGE BUSH IS:

- A WIMP.
- A WEENIE.
- REALLY INCOHERENT.
- ALL OF THE ABOVE.

3) BATT. EDITOR SCOT WALKER IS:

- A LIBERAL, COMMIE PIG.
- A SEXUAL DYNAMO.
- A GOD.
- NOT SURE.

4) IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE BETWEEN TAKING A PULITZER PRIZE WINNING PHOTOGRAPH AND SAVING A DROWNING VICTIM, WHAT TYPE OF FILM WOULD YOU USE?

The Battalion

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