

Reno's rap sheet

Attorney General Janet Reno has long history of disciplinary negligence, poor leadership



MARC GRETHER

Much has been made of the recently discovered Chinese espionage at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico. Included with news about the spying have been charges and counter-charges about who is to blame for the lapses in security. Along with the accusations, several lawmakers, including prominent Democrat Robert Torricelli, have called for the resignation or removal of Janet Reno from her position as Attorney General.

While Reno's actions may yet warrant her removal, there have not been any charges to this point that would call for this action.

However, her past actions seem to indicate her propensity for making matters worse. In both the Waco and Ruby Ridge catastrophes, Reno made a bad situation much worse through her actions.

Her role in the Chinese-spying scandal, up to this point, has been minimal. She has primarily been a go-between for the FBI and other Justice Department offices. In 1997, the FBI had its request for a wiretap of a foreign scientist at Los Alamos denied by the Justice Department's Office of Intelligence Policy and Review because it believed the FBI's evidence did not rise to the standard required by the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978.

In an effort to appeal this action, then assistant FBI director John Lewis brought the unresolved matter to the attention of Reno who quickly ordered the Executive Office for National Security to examine the case. They upheld the original decision to deny the FBI wiretap.

This fact was never brought to Reno's attention. She assumed that because she never heard from the FBI on the matter again, the situation had been resolved to everyone's satisfaction.

Therefore, the claims that she was in-active in trying to remove spies are untrue. The evidence shows she did everything within her power with the knowledge that was afforded her. Nothing more should be expected of anyone.

Yet the real test for Reno will be whether or not her administration will pursue convictions with enough zealotness. If her administration follows the pattern set in the Waco and Ruby Ridge fiascos, the Justice Department will likely let those responsible for this mess get off with only a slap on the wrist, if that.

Here is a quick recap of those events. In 1992, Randy Weaver and his family lived in a small cabin near Ruby Ridge, Idaho. Weaver, a rather poor man, was offered \$700 by an undercover federal agent for two "sawed off" shotguns. After several refusals, he finally consented to the illegal action and sold the guns.

Because this sale was illegal, notwithstanding the entrapment, a warrant was drawn up for his arrest. The attempt to serve the warrant can best be described as a raid and was carried out by agents of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF) and several other federal agencies.

Unfortunately for all involved, Weaver had several other guns at home, one of which he used to fatally injure a deputy U.S. marshal during the botched raid. Weaver's son was killed in the initial raid. These deaths led to a standoff in which Weaver's wife was also killed.

Enter Janet Reno. Though not directly involved in these events, Reno made up for lost time in her handling of the cleanup. It was her administration at the Department of Justice that indicted only one member of the FBI staff in charge of the debacle and did nothing to every other agent involved. The agents responsible for this tragedy should have been given the boot and put in jail.

Yet these misdeeds pale in comparison to the mess Reno helped to make of the catastrophe outside Waco at Mount Carmel. The BATFs' procedure for serv-



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ing the warrant was similar to the one used in Ruby Ridge, involving several dozen agents with machine guns surrounding the building. However, a publicist with the agency tipped off a reporter that something important was about to happen at Mount Carmel. After hearing about the report on the radio, the Davidians simply looked outside and saw a massive force of law enforcement officials outside of their compound, seemingly poised to attack.

When the agents finally did approach the building, shots were fired on both sides, killing several federal agents and Branch Davidians. This incident precipitated a 51-day standoff that eventually

led 76 people dead inside the compound.

Two years after the fact, a congressional committee held hearings on the incident. During these hearings, it became clear that several officials in the Justice Department had acted unethically and probably illegally.

Yet Reno's Justice Department did not file charges against any of the perpetrators, nor did Reno appoint a special prosecutor in the case, as she should have because of the obvious conflict of interest.

Again Reno failed to prosecute those responsible and allowed an extensive cover up to mask the blatant abuse of power by several of Justice Department agencies.

In the Ruby Ridge and the Waco cases, Reno did not fulfill her duty as the nation's chief law enforcement officer. She allowed those sworn to protect and defend the Constitution to trample peoples' rights without punishment.

It remains to be seen what action, if any, Reno will take regarding the Los Alamos spying case. But based on past experience, it seems likely she will not even attempt to prosecute those responsible, again letting down the American people she is supposed to serve.

Marc Grether is a graduate student in mathematics.

Intolerance sometimes good, not synonymous with hatred

One of the prevalent goals of contemporary political culture is to discourage intolerance and hatred. Hate-driven crimes are becoming rampant in society, and certainly these deeds must not go unpunished. From the Jasper killing to numerous attacks on abortion clinics, hate crimes must be stopped, and if it takes legislation to help curb the violence, then so be it.

However, many misconceptions have arisen due to the actions of the malevolent people who commit these crimes. Because of their actions, the word intolerance has been wrongly associated with hate. Anyone who shows any signs of intolerance is quickly labeled as hateful and evil. Even the thesaurus gives synonyms for intolerance such as bigotry, prejudice, racism and sexism.

Obviously anyone who has those characteristics has a great deal of intolerance and has allowed it to foster hatred and ill will.

However, although all hate most certainly involves intolerance, not all intolerance involves hate. In fact, intolerance is in some cases a form of protection, and in others a form of love.

Intolerance must be recognized as a form of protection. The zero-tolerance laws in Harris County help to keep teenage drinkers off the roads, and make a safer driving environment for all patrons of the highway.

Our country does not tolerate certain acts, and these acts are made illegal by laws. This intolerance attempts to make our country a better, safer place to live. No one can deny that this is a good thing.

Intolerance can also be a form of love. Consider the example of parents and their duty to raise their children. The blame for the killings in Littleton has in part been placed upon the parents of the killers, whose leniency and lack of parental guidance led to these boys' strange and evil detachment from reality.

If their parents had only been less tolerant of the boys' misdeeds then this terrible tragedy might not have occurred. If they truly loved their children, they would have disciplined them more.

Parents must be intolerant of some of the things their children do to show they truly love them. Even as children, everyone knew that. When we heard little Johnny boasting about how his parents "didn't care what he did," we could see through the bravado to a sad little child who wished they really did.

If the principle of intolerance and love can be applied to good parenting, then there must be applications elsewhere.

Consider the case of the abortion clinic attacks. The people who attacked these clinics obviously did

not understand this concept. Had they understood the concept of intolerance and love, they would not have allowed their purported love for unborn children to manifest into hatred for the patients and employees of the clinics. Just as "a house divided against itself cannot stand," one cannot show his or her love through hate.

Our country provides better forms of expressing one's beliefs than bombs, break-ins and threats.

Vote for candidates who oppose abortion, write letters to congressmen, peacefully protest, stand up and speak against it publicly or form or join an interest group. People

should voice their intolerance of what they believe to be wrong, but on the other hand, they should not perform more wrongs to make their point about it.

By way of another example, the Christian faith believes that homosexuality is wrong. To a Christian, this intolerance is a commandment from God.

The Christian must also know, however, that this belief must be born of love, because God is long-suffering and calls all to repentance.

The whole reason to be intolerant of such actions is to try to show the sinner the error and hope that he or she makes his life right with God, so that he might find salvation.

The faith says nothing about hatred of those who are believed to be in sin, and it most definitely does not say, "God hates fags." Hatred is despicable and absolutely contrary to the way Christians are supposed to be.

However, the possibility exists to state and uphold one's beliefs against homosexuality without hate or malice and in fact with love. Sit and talk reasonably with someone about it, but do not shout profanities from the rooftops.

This is what should and must be done with all beliefs — not just with Christian ones. Find a way to express them in a sincere and caring way, whether it be publicly or privately.

Intolerance does not always lead to acts of hatred, and sometimes a lack of permissiveness is beneficial.

Americans have the freedom to choose, and the First Amendment allows for intolerance.

They can choose what they will tolerate and what they will not. This allows Americans to form their opinion and what side of the issue to stand on. Just because they are resistant to someone's views, beliefs or actions does not mean that they are intolerant of the people who are behind them.

Jeff Becker is a sophomore computer science major.

Misguided decision on school sexual harassment impractical

The United States Supreme Court acted before thinking when it recently ruled that school districts can be held liable for sexual harassment of one student by another.

In a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court ruled that a Georgia school district can be held financially responsible for the sexual harassment of a fifth-grade girl if officials with the authority to help her knew about the harassment but were deliberately indifferent to it.

The ruling, applicable to all schools accepting federal money at any level, is a theoretically sound decision, but theory rarely coincides with reality. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor's majority opinion is articulate, but it lacks the foresight that should be expected from the Court.

This ruling deals with issues of such a subjective nature, that even the Supreme Court ultimately backed out by leaving it up to the school districts to determine if and when simple teasing is actually sexual harassment warranting disciplinary action.

By placing the onus on the school districts, the Supreme Court has effectively detracted from the learning environment by fostering an ultra-paranoid atmosphere for school staffs from teachers to administrators.

School districts will find their paranoia justified as they prepare for an epidemic of frivolous lawsuits, resulting from parents overreacting to nothing more than immature teasing.

Even more problematic is the Supreme Court's failure to distinguish between different grade levels. Behavior considered merely immature for third-graders may be completely unacceptable in high school or college students.

In the dissent, Justice Anthony M. Kennedy wrote, "A teenager's romantic overtures to a classmate are an inescapable part of adolescence."

This is not to say sexual harassment does not exist in school, but rather addresses the absurdity of assigning it one definition for grades kindergarten through college.

"We can be assured that like suits will follow — suits, which in cost and number will impose serious financial burdens on local school districts, the taxpayers who support them and the children they serve," Kennedy said.

The Supreme Court's ruling attempts to discourage frivolous lawsuits, but its language is ambiguous, stating the harassment must be of a "severe" nature and have a "disruptive" effect on

the learning process.

In addition, to be held liable, the ruling states school officials must have taken a position of "indifference" regarding the matter.

Many times, such harassment occurs when the monitoring of such behavior is impractical, if not impossible. Should a teacher be bound to punish each and every claim of "Johnny is picking on me" out of fear of a potential lawsuit?

Is too mild of a disciplinary action considered a position of indifference? The Supreme Court's decision has forced school districts to fight a fight with both of their hands tied

behind their backs, leaving their purses vulnerable to litigation abuse. Guarding against such lawsuits, schools will now, more than ever, resort to questionable disciplinary actions in an effort not to appear as indifferent.

The Supreme Court's belief that schools can act in a reasonable manner when confronting such issues is an error in judgment. For example, in 1996, schools in North Carolina and New York City suspended a first-grader and second-grader, respectively, for kissing classmates.

In 1997, prosecutors in Arlington, Va., abruptly dropped a sexual harassment charge against a fourth-grade boy who allegedly rubbed against a girl in a school lunch line. It was determined he accidentally brushed against the girl.

With the recent ruling, the potential for similar events is even greater.

"Next year, kids will be suspended for behavior nobody's ever been suspended for, and the parents will ask why," Bruce Hunter of the American Association of School Administrators said in an Associated Press article.

It cannot be denied that the Supreme Court's decision is rooted in good intentions.

However, it is undeniably evident that the Supreme Court sidestepped a controversial issue by passing the buck to the school districts of the United States after reluctantly opening a can of worms it couldn't handle.

Trapping each and every teacher, administrator, school board and school district between a rock and a hard place, it is clear that the only "severe and disrupting" action that has taken place is this ruling.

Ryan Garcia is a senior journalism major.



JEFF BECKER

Americans have right to be intolerant without being hateful



RYAN GARCIA

Supreme Court invites frivolous litigation with recent decision