

# The Last Word™

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## Ooh! Contractor gets Strongly Worded Letter!

Last month, I regaled you with the spoilage brung by a gentrification disaster unfolding in Bellevue. As an industrial warehouse is being converted into luxury lofts—in what has been described as one of the biggest gentrification projects in modern times in northern Kentucky—neighbors reported nonstop construction noise, the spread of lead paint, and other hazards. Meanwhile—in yet another handout to the 1%—this useless development is exempt from property taxes.

So what's the punishment for the contractor for its violations of noise, traffic, and other ordinances? From the evidence I can gather, the company will be receiving a Strongly Worded Letter from the city. Ooh, I bet they're terrified! The construction firm will be asked to stop driving its trucks the wrong way on a one-way street—which most people would be fined for. It will also be warned that it will be allowed to violate the noise ordinance for “only” 9½ hours a day instead of the 24 that it had been.

I think Harry Reid got a hold of some city stationery!

Bellevue officials used to talk a lot about the noise law and the city's comprehensive plan that was supposed to protect affordable housing. Now both documents are useless chaffs.

This is not an attack on any specific city officials—though Bellevue has a long way to go to meet the high standards set by Cincinnati City Council, which in recent years has been the best government body in the region. After Bellevue rubber-stamped this project and allowed it to “progress” as far as it has, can it now cancel it? Maybe not. But after Fort Thomas emptied an entire apartment complex to appease a rich neighbor who wanted to blow it up unless it got “better” tenants, it's hard to claim Bellevue can't halt an apartment project where nobody has even moved in yet.



## Stop the presses! Goodgum returns to Kroger!

Now—at least for the Time Being—you can relive the days from before America went to hell during the hard freeze of right-wing statism!

When you were growing up, you were a bubble gum poppin' peep. Whenever you went to the supermarket with your folks, you eyed all the beegie on display at the checkout lane. This gum had colorful wrappers, and your mouth watered. You begged the oldsters to let you buy a pack, and the answer was always the same: *No!* There were a variety of reasons why you weren't allowed to chomp beegie. Mayhaps you wear glasses, and your folks knew you'd blow a bubble big enough to burst on them and ruin them in a hilarious scene. Your home may have had a celery green carpet like mine did, and a discarded wad of pink goo wouldn't blend in with it. So—after being told no—you grabbed a pack of gum off the shelf anyway, opened it, and started going to town. Because you opened it, your folks would now have to let you

buy it. Before the pack of gum even made it through the checkout scanner, you were obnoxiously blowing head-sized bubbles that popped all over your face in full view of other customers and grocery clerks.

Admit it. *You* did that.

The next day, you smuggled the rest of the pack of bubble gum to school. When your last class was dismissed and you were just sitting at your desk waiting for the bus, you engaged in the same obnoxious spectacle and laughed uncontrollably about it. You even blew a bubble inside a bubble—and even a Dallas/Fort Worth! Best all, you have crooked teeth, so your skill at bubbling lopsided bubs was unmatched!

Admit it. *You* did that.

Why did you blow bubbles that popped all over your face? You did it because it was so obnoxious, and it made a mess. Parents and teachers objected, but they could never explain *why* it was so bad. So you win!

Now that you have dentures, you're eager to explore even more innovations in the world of bubble gum busting. The only thing that even remotely rivals the heehaw-inducing obnoxiousness of blowing bubbles that burst and stick to your face is gunking up your dental work with beegie. Your metal crowns have strands of the much-heralded goo wrapped around them just crying out for laughs.

Unfortunately, your efforts have been stymied by the growing lack of goodgum at Kroger. Our long-running Operation KroGum investigation has revealed that goodgum has in recent years made only very sporadic appearances at this grocery giant—and never in the checkout lane where you can easily find it.

But now it seems the tide has finally turned! A few weeks ago, I went to Bellevue's friendly commune Krogie-Wogie and noticed something very interesting in the checkout aisle. There they were. Packs of pink Bubble Yum—regular, not sugarless.

Bubble Yum is a bubble bustin' brand of gee, as its name implies. Occasionally, Kroger has Bubble Tape, but Bubble Tape has been slowly taken over by artificial sweeteners, despite its history as a sugared gee. Besides, Bubble Tape looks like it's intended for grade school kids, and most chewers I know prefer pieces of gum in fixed sizes (not randomly torn off a roll) because they want to know how big of a bubble they can blow. Bubble Yum has much more appeal to adults.

You may now have easier access to bubble gum than at any other time in your adult life! I bet that as soon as you read this, you're going to march over to Kroger and buy up every last pack of Bubble Yum they have! I bet you spend the rest of the day sitting in your easy chair, cramming bubble gum into your mouth, and puffing out some mean bubs that pop all over your face. Hopefully, it'll stick to your dental work. That would be funny. Go ahead! Gunk up your crowns so you can share some laughs with your friends! And then kablammo another big bub! Adults everywhere are doing it!

I'm sure that by carrying this item again, Kroger is trying to respond to the overwhelming demand for goodgum. Just because it was hard to find for so long doesn't mean demand isn't as high as ever. But get this beegie while it lasts, because Kroger usually doesn't carry items for very long that the rest of the world has.

## More stories about vacation rentals ruining neighborhoods

Short-term rentals like those offered through services like Airbnb continue to encroach on our neighborhoods. Wealthy investment companies stampede into our communities, buy up apartment buildings, and kick out poor and working-class residents so well-to-do tourists who are supposedly "better" than us can be served instead. The remaining neighbors are none too pleased about the decline caused by rich guests who predictably have no respect for the commune and leave a trail of destruction behind.

At an Airbnb in Boston, guests threw up and urinated all over the carpets. They even threw up on comforters and wadded them into a ball. They also burned all the pots and pans trying to cook—ruining them for good. And they destroyed a pool table by standing on top of it—and broke a chair trying to fix it.

An Airbnb in Canada was graced with thousands of dollars in damage. Guests vomited on the floor and used good sheets and towels to sop it up. They clogged the toilet with plastic bags and smeared ketchup on the walls. Neighbors even reported a fight in front of the unit.

Another service like Airbnb is VRBO. One VRBO owner said a vacationer somehow broke 2 beds, and another said a guest left dog shit all over the yard.

At another rental, small children kept throwing chairs and



rocks at the neighbor's house. At another, a guest set a dumpster on fire by filling it with burning clothes.

An Airbnb in England was demolished by a wild party where revelers threw items at police, lost a TV set, and tossed laughing gas canisters all over the street. At an Airbnb in Australia, a party got so out of control that the owner showed up and made the guests leave. Then the guests appeared again later, broke in through the window, and ransacked the unit.

Yet everyone throws a skizzum about toothpaste in the sink.

By the way, Bellevue just tightened its short-term rental ordinance—much to the chagrin of the out-of-town feudalists who screamed and cried that they wanted more vacation rentals in Bellevue. The rule remains that you can't own a short-term rental in a building that isn't your primary residence for at least 6 months a year.

## The politics of right-wing backlash

America's deteriorating "democracy" is way past the point where it's even news to say it's deteriorated. And one thing hasn't changed in decades: It's always about a "backlash" by the Far Right. Always.

It doesn't matter how long right-wingers have been in power or how much power they have. As long ago as the early 1990s—near the end of George H.W. Bush's reign of terror—I read media articles that said voter behavior was being driven by a "backlash against liberalism" or a similar phrase.

Right-wingers had controlled almost everything for 12 years. So how can there be a "backlash against liberalism"? What were they so angry about? Even later, when they were even more powerful, it was still a "backlash." And who were these voters?

Why am I supposed to give a shit about these whiners' drama? Most of them seemed to be owners of large businesses who complained about petty—often victimless—crimes that didn't affect them. They acted like a "vagrant" camp over a mile away had an impact on them. But when we or those we love suffered *real* crime...silence.

They became softer on crimes that represented power. I'm not talking about minor crimes that resulted from desperation. A far greater threat is posed by crimes of power and privilege, and the perpetrator often knows that no matter what, they always win. The system will protect them.

Right-wing crybabies complained about the poor and disabled receiving welfare or even Social Security Disability Insurance—which nobody receives unless they've paid into it. The Far Right even says Medicaid and Medicare are welfare. But the state of Kentucky recently gave a huge handout to the 1%—adding to the other real Toy Money they already got. The response? Again, crickets.

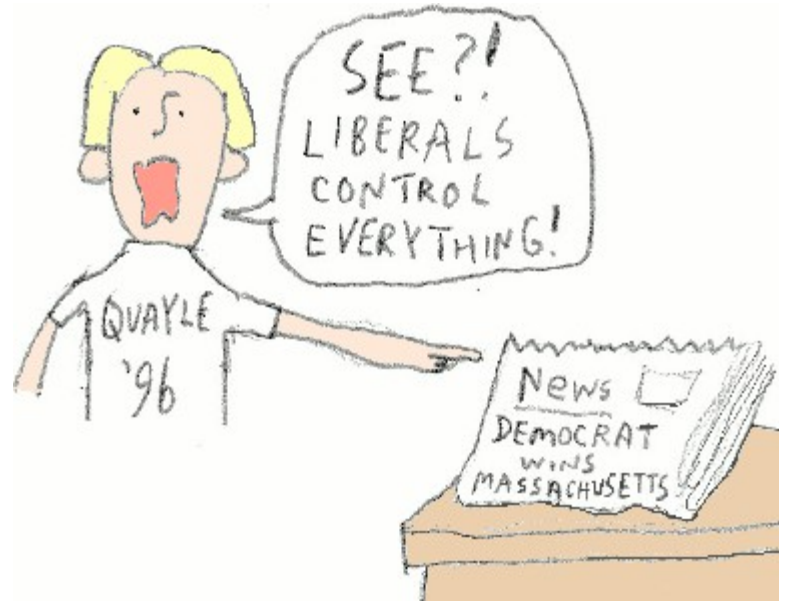
They complained that religion was being "censored" from the public sphere—simply because public agencies refused to use taxpayer dollars to impose specific religious beliefs on the public. But while they grumbled about this "censorship", they led legislative hearings about the fabricated crisis of "dirty" and "violent" TV shows and video games as an excuse to censor these works (even though these works were not intended for small children).

They cried about "big government", yet they expanded government control over personal behavior.

More recently, they accused Black Lives Matter of vilifying police—even though right-wingers were involved in repeated violent standoffs with law enforcement, like their illegal occupation of Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon. If anything encouraged violence against police, it was right-wing standoffs like that.

If everyone else wasn't bullied into trying to soothe the ridiculous right-wing drama, we'd be living in a much freer land now. As the right-wing intelligentsia somersaults from one issue to another, people lap it up like toilet water.

Why did right-wingers need to launch a "backlash" when they had so much power? They could do almost whatever they wanted all along. And if they're so powerless, how are they allowed to rewrite history? Even before Ronald Reagan died, they tried rehabilitating his disastrous record. They held up Reagan as a champion of freedom even though he supported South Africa's apartheid dictatorship, illegally slashed Social Security by raising the retirement age (a fact the media swept under the rug), and funded unlawful foreign military conflicts that killed many. In Hamilton County, commissioners decided to deify Reagan by naming a freeway after him—even after he closed a major auto plant in Hamilton County. The right-wing media is now trying to rehabilitate



George W. Bush's image even after his record of war and despair.

It's no wonder that some real crimes are never reported. Look at how victims are treated when they report them.

Right-wing class hustlers receive so much real Toy Money from the taxpayers for their phony drama that they should be made to watch the Toy Money commercial from 1990 for 24 hours straight. Then for the next 24 hours, they should be required to listen to people singing the annoying jingle as they dance around and wave a Coke bottle at them.

## A person spilled water on a Magic: The Gathering card

There's no wa!

Actually, there *is* wa—where there shouldn't be wa!

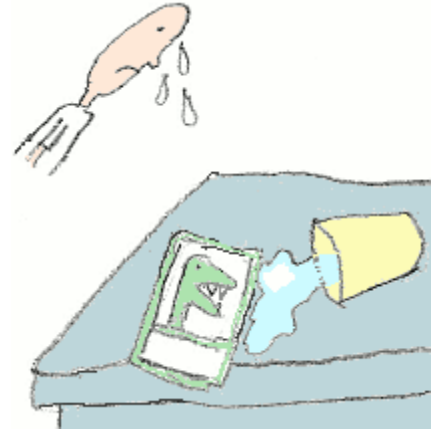
I had no idea what Magic: The Gathering was until I found someone on the unambiguously public Internet talking about a priceless card from the game being ruined. It's a game involving collectible trading cards and is based on role-playing games like Dungeons & Dragons.

A few years ago, somebody posted that they had just gotten a rare card for the game, and their nephew promptly spilled water all over it—thereby wasting the card. The post reads, “My nephew spilled water on my newly acquired Siege-Gang Commander from Scourge and it's warped. How can I save this card?”

The consensus was that they're out of luck. One said that “water damaged cards are kinda boned” and that they wouldn't be accepted in tournament play.

A person in an older thread said their entire collection was destroyed when their basement flooded. Another respondent said they spilled Gatorade all over their valuable cards, reducing them to shambles.

In a world of rare comic books, baseball cards, and Speak & Spells getting ruined, Magic: The Gathering cards are a whole new vista for this zine when it needs stories of destroyed collectibles. Not like there's a big shortage of other collectibles getting ru. One person on a baseball website said they ordered a rare baseball card, and it got spoiled when the mail carrier crammed it into the mailbox and crumpled it.



## Sometimes bad is bad

In northern Kentucky in the early 1990s, you could always start with the assumption that *everything* was bad. Bad schools, bad neighborhoods, bad jails, you name it!

It was so much so that my school didn't even take current events education seriously. I attended an alternative class in my later high school years. The school system didn't care about us.

When I was a junior, the class launched a baby step into current events, but it didn't last. Each pupil was supposed to find a news story, and the class was supposed to discuss it—within the confines of what the school considered acceptable, of course. Someone found a *Kentucky Post* article about a fairly typical local altercation. The *Post* wasn't exactly a voice of progressive populism, but at least it had detailed coverage of some local events like crimes and fires.

One of my classmates was known for his zany classroom behavior. He was entertaining. Anyway, our teacher picked him at random and asked him what he thought about this news story.

He replied, “Racism...is bad.” That it is. We can all agree on that. But nobody had claimed that the confrontation in this story was racially motivated.

When this was pointed out, the student said, “OK then. Drinking...is bad.” But it appeared that everyone involved in the incident had been sober.

Then our teacher turned to an instructor who was visiting our class and—regarding this student—said something like, “He's been like this all day.”

In one other episode—maybe even on the same day—somebody found a piece about a very minor local crime. By that point, everyone had given up on this project. Nobody took it seriously anymore—because we had been discouraged from gaining insight from it. Students from another class had joined our classroom. When a teacher asked a student from that class what should be done about the crime in this story, he slouched back and blurted out, “I don't know, man! Just give 'em the chair!”

In a state that hadn't carried out an execution in 25 years? Remember, this was before the flood of executions several years later, which was designed to show how “tough on crime” our public officials were (even though all the crimes against me were never punished). This narrative shows that the student wasn't even paying attention to what the crime in the story was. He had pretty much given up—just like everyone else had.

Weeks or months later, someone suggested doing a current events lesson like this again. But our teacher put the kibosh on this because it worked out so poorly the first time.

I don't remember whether it was that year or the next that we had a similar project where we "made paper." This involved tearing up used scraps of paper, soaking them, and placing them on a screen to dry out—creating a new sheet of paper. Unlike paper that comes out of a recycling plant, our new sheets of paper weren't useful for anything. But a moment of hilarity ensued when a teacher noticed that someone had wiped a booger on one of the sheets as it was drying.

## People keep wosting bananas and milk

Bananas and milk keep getting ruined, and—unlike when people Chew Gum And Think It's Funny—nobody thinks it's funny.

Recently, I goed to an important family gathering. While I was there, a family member said they bought bananas only to see them get wosted. The bananas are fresh and green when they buy them, but—after days of deliberating about whether to consume them—the bananas rot and become inedible brown husks. My sophomore homeroom teacher used to hoard rotten bananas on the shelf behind him, but I don't know if he actually ate them.

Much of the banana wastage is caused by grocery stores lately not carrying bananas that are fresh enough. They appear fresh when you buy them, but lately, they've had a remarkably short shelf life. If you don't gulp them down within a couple days, forget it.

Bananas aren't the only foodstuff that has gone wastage bastrophe. I was also regaled with recent stories of family members buying spoiled pork roast and moldy nectarines at local supermarkets. The spoilage was not discovered until after the items arrived home. The wasted pork attracted 12 flies.

And that ain't all! Milk recently got ruined too! At this same gathering, a family member had an extra half-gallon carton of milk—never opened—to unload. So they gave it to me—but I didn't hear them telling me. They put it in a gym bag full of swimming gear for me to take home. I don't know why they thought I'd even think to look for milk in a bag of swimming gear. I didn't even know I had this milk until the following day when they e-mailed me about it. By then, it was long since ru. I'm not even sure it was fresh to begin with, because their refrigerator was down so low, but at least it may have had a fighting chance if it hadn't been stowed in my gym bag where I'd never find it.

Think of all the delicious, smooth mill-mill that cascaded down the drain because of this unmitigated disaster.

It's not the first time food taken home from a momentous family event got wosted. More than once, I've received leftovers in a container whose lid wasn't on tightly enough. The container would later fall off a shelf in my refrigerator. The contents did not survive, because the lid was on so loosely. One time, an entire chocolate cake was famously ruined because it was wrapped in red cling wrap, and the stench of the wrap rubbed off on this dessert. One other time, a relative got leftover barbecue ribs, and they were misplaced in a closet for an entire year—thereby stinking.

My longtime readers may know that Bishop Brossart High School is the undisputed state champion in the sport of wasting things. They'd smear poop on rare records if they had the chance. I even tried to count all the good sheets of paper the school threw away or rendered useless, and I divided them into categories—including sheets that were just plain wasted. The ongoing wastage of vittles must cease lickety-split. Otherwise I'll cry like the macho superman I am.

## A person stole gum from Walmart by hiding it in a loaf of bread

I found a story on the public Internet from some years back about a person going into a Philadelphia area Walmart and shoplifting a pack of gum. You know, that stuff people bubble with.

How did they purloin this pack of beegee? By...bipping! Just joking! They accomplished this death-defying feat by slipping the pack of gum betwixt the slices of a loaf of bread they were buying.



Someone replied saying that their son used to steal Legos from school every single day. When the youngster was finally caught, his parents required him to donate all his Legos to the school. Uh, where do you think he got all those Legos from in the first place? It reminds me of the time when I was in 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade and put a few crayons from school in my pocket. I wasn't intending to take them home. I was just trying to "reserve" them for a project at school. I forgot about it, and the crayons went through the washer and dryer at home, stinking up the whole house.

According to that online thread, another person once stole an eraser from a store and buried it in their backyard so they wouldn't get caught.



## 30 years of credit score elitism

This year—2019—marks an unfortunate milestone: the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of credit scores.

Today's young whippersnappers may find it hard to believe there ever was a time before credit scores. But all-encompassing credit scores weren't introduced until 1989. We survived without credit scores until only 30 years ago. So why do we need them now?

We don't. We should abolish them.

Credit scores are like a Bible to our economic gatekeepers. You have to *have* credit to *get* credit, and credit scores can even determine how much you pay for insurance or even whether you can get a better job. In fact, there's a dating service that finds mates using credit scores.

A few people—a *very* few people—say credit scores are actually better than what came before. They say that in the olden days, retailers would collude to compile financial information on customers. You could be denied credit all because someone didn't like you. But what do you think is going on now with credit scores? Companies today inspect customers' social media accounts and use that data to influence scores. It's no fairer than the old methods of pawing through newspaper articles and the like. Studies in recent years say all types of discrimination still loom large in the lending industry.

If credit scores are so much better, why are more and more people being unfairly denied credit? Why do today's younger adults have so little personal wealth compared to those in past years? Most adults who are my age or younger who have any wealth at all had parents who were financially secure. They started out in life with an advantage that gave them a good credit score right from the beginning.

Credit scores were introduced only a few years before folks my age reached adulthood. Why do you think people my age are often so much poorer than people who are just a few years older? Largely because of these scores, those my age or younger haven't been able to invest in their future. They've spent their adult lives watching their earnings go up in smoke for expenses that produce no long-term gain. If you're my age—especially in Kentucky—you had some truly rotten luck, as credit scores came along in the same era as other discriminatory expeditions that the right-wing media cheered. The situation is so bleak for today's young adults that Monopoly has put out a "millennial edition" whose box says, "Forget real estate. You can't afford it anyway."

You can argue that there's been one recent improvement in credit scoring, which is that—according to one website—FICO's current scores ignore ridiculous collection accounts if the original balance was under \$100. But rogue collection agencies should have been dealt with by government action long ago.

Some fear that abolishing credit scores would somehow make it difficult for people to obtain credit. Isn't it already?

Credit scores are a title of nobility—which makes them unconstitutional. These scores often confer hereditary privileges, and government muscle is used to uphold them. In my America, we live by the values we claim to stand for—not grant special rights based on class. This is why the system of credit scoring should be flushed down the pooper instantly.

## WellCare sent me more free firewood

WellCare—an HMO that monopolizes healthcare in Kentucky—is still mailing out useless letters with all the speed of melting Orabase.

A few months ago, WellScare was sending me a new medical card every few days—wasting paper and plastic all the while. Now they've sent me yet another—with the accompanying letter. The letter says they sent the card for one of 3 reasons...

- I'm a new WellCare member. Nope. I'm not. I've been forced to use WellCare for several years.
- I have a new doctor. No—unless WellCare changed my doctor again without asking

first.

• My medical card was lost or stolen. Nope—because I haven't been up at NKU in a while for someone to steal my wallet.

Come on, WellCare! I'm not homeless *yet*, so it'll be a while before I need all that paper for campfires. Just give the Trump recession another year or two, and we'll probably all be living in the woods.



## Yes! A person spit their ADHD meds into the toilet!

Ever since this zine really hit its stride 2 or 3 years ago, I've been chomping at the bit for stories about kids refusing to take psychiatric drugs that have been prescribed to them but which they don't need.

To me, the whole idea of defying the psychiatric racket is pretty neat, and any young person who defies it has guts. It's a topic I can relate to. When I was growing up, I was poisoned with Ritalin for years. And yes, it was *years*. When it wasn't Ritalin, it was other toxins—like Cylert, which was discontinued because it causes permanent eye and liver damage.

But on the public Internet, stories of kids refusing to take ADHD drugs are scarce indeed. So—as a substitute—I found stories of children refusing or destroying treatments for other conditions. Everyone tells me they loved all the stories about kids breaking their own eyeglasses. But I only use those narratives if it appears the child doesn't really need glasses. I ran a couple stories about kids prying out their braces, but that's a topic to be used sparingly. Those specific articles were good for some laughs, but this zine is for people with no money, so that's not a subject they care much about.

Now, however, we've finally hit poodirt. I've found a story about a kid refusing to take ADHD drugs! Best all, it's not something from 40 years ago when more people knew how to stand up for themselves. It's from 2017! This narrative was posted on an ADHD website by someone complaining that their 16-year-old son was refusing to swallow the poison that was being prescribed to him. The particular drug was not specified in the post.

According to this story, the teen decided during the previous Christmas break that he wasn't going to take his meds anymore. He refused because the drug made him sick to his stomach and ruined his appetite. Instead of swallowing these pills, he secretly spit them into the sink or—even funnier—the toilet. Toilets usually are funnier than sinks. The pills were seen bobbing up and down in the frigid waters of the tinkletorium. This post said he had an upcoming appointment about new meds—and he declared his intent to refuse to take those too.

Unfortunately—but all too predictably—programmies promptly chimed in about how great they think residential programs are for kids with ADHD. They falsely claimed that kids diagnosed with ADHD will all start abusing drugs unless they're sent to a phony “rehab” *first*. However, as far as I know, all teen residential programs are abusive—without exception. The good news is that the parent who started this thread seems to have ignored these respondents' crackpot advice.

Incidentally, the programmies owe me money because of their activities just within the past few years. For 30 years, they screamed that everyone else was on drugs, but when a chance to go after some drug kingpins finally fell right into their laps, their response was, “Huh? What?” They also supported the Tea Party, which sells

heroin to fund its activities. Their uncaring attitude almost killed a person I knew who had a substance use disorder—and it cost me a significant amount of money, not all of which I was able to recover. There’s not a damn thing funny about people dying all because programmiees yelled about how they thought *American Gladiators* was a “druggie show”, but cheered on the Big Pharma drug lords.

As for the teen who spit his meds into the toilet, it’s unlikely he was sent to a residential program. He very well may have won his war to be free of forced druggings altogether. After all, he was 16 then, so 18 wouldn’t have been far off. Besides, the mature minor doctrine should have already protected him.

Think. Do. Be.

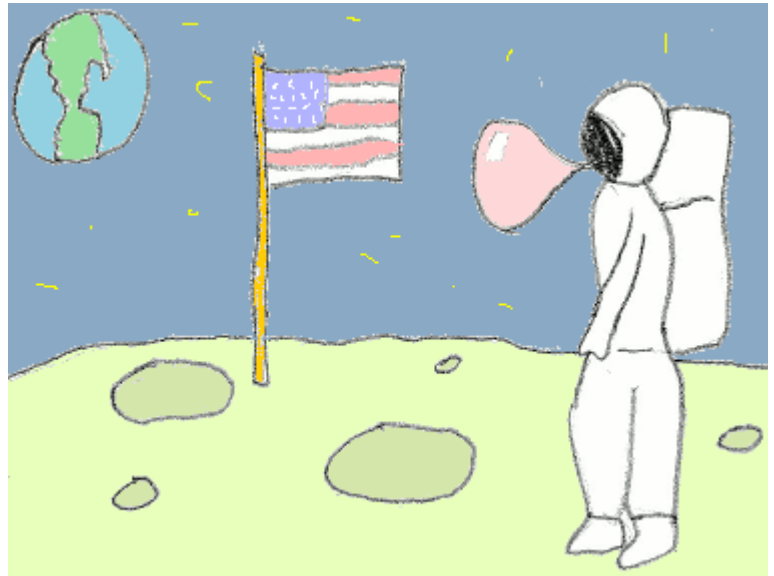
## They brang gum to the moon

As the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first moon landing is being celebrated, it’s been revealed that the astronauts carried gum with them to the moon. It’s unclear if they blew bubbles, but it would have been interesting if the lack of atmosphere on the moon led to better bubbling.

A transcript of the astronauts’ conversation in outer space has emerged. Buzz Aldrin is quoted as saying, “Trade you that for a piece of gum.” It’s unclear what he was trading.

Elsewhere in the transcript, Michael Collins says, “Let’s have a little chewing gum. Anybody like some chewing gum?” Who doesn’t?

I bet one of your greatest fears is that Earth will become uninhabitable and we’ll all be forced to move to a planet whose atmosphere does not permit bubbling. I’m sure this horrifying prospect keeps you awake every night.



## Era of lost hits now lost!

Remember when there used to be songs that received some radio airplay but then vanished—never to be heard again? Did you know Eddy Grant, Katrina and the Waves, and Wang Chung each had more than one hit single?

These days, however, lost hits seem to have become a thing of the past!

Some of the best radio stations that I remember were those that would occasionally dig up lost records instead of taking all their marching orders from a consultant who vetted all the music first. These actually were mass-appeal top 40 stations, but they happened to play some lost hits. I remember WCLU playing “The Border” by America and “Sky High” by Jigsaw after they had been lost for years. WLAP-FM played “Runaway” by Jefferson Starship after it was lost for a decade. Around here, some lost hits were played regularly only on small stations or fringe signals even when they were new.

Later, I managed to find copies of lost hits at music stores. A few times, I bought whole stacks of great used 45’s—cheaply. Knowing how right-wing leaders had foisted standardized playlists upon the public, I’d listen to a record, and after it, I’d say in a Ronald Reagan voice, “Damn! You heard it!”

Maybe I found these songs interesting because, for years, life kept getting worse and worse, and these tunes represented a much better time. Back during Peter Wolf’s string of solo hits, I didn’t have to worry about Brossart yet, and I never expected legislation to worsen the exclusion that came in the Brossart era. Before then, the biggest threats were things like being falsely accused of breaking something at school and being fined for it. Then again, that problem later got worse too.

What ever happened to the lost hits phenomenon? YouTube happened! YouTube consists of more than just nearly identical family vlogs and the world’s unfunniest home videos of babies spitting up. A vast majority of records that have hit *Billboard*’s Hot 100—the most authoritative, controversial, stupendous chart in the beeswax—seem to have been posted on YouTube. There are exceptions, because some artists are touchy about copyrights and don’t understand that YouTube clips actually encourage people to buy their music legit and explore it further. Often, however, a song that snuck into the top 40 for only a week—never to be played on the radio again—is as likely to be found on YouTube as a #1 smash is.



Radio stations and their consultants are no longer the arbiters of what oldies we're allowed to hear. Songs that have been absent from radio for 30 years might now appear on YouTube, and today's music fans can hear these lost hits and go out and buy a copy—if it's not out of print.

The waning influence of older methods of music delivery was also noted when Drake beat the Beatles' record for having the most songs in the top 10 at the same time from the same album. In the olden days, record companies would release certain tracks from an album as singles and furnish radio stations with only those tunes. Today, a new album might have all its tracks appear on YouTube all at once, and fans can readily inspect all these tracks.

These days, your fear of being decapitated by a record flying out of its sleeve at a record shop has been replaced by the fear of a YouTube video that throws Fun Snaps out of your computer screen.

## When I sort of fought back

America has been faced with moment after ghoulish moment of victim-blaming—so much so that I'm not always able to get worked up about it anymore. Time after time, we've seen victims of bullying punished severely for daring to fight back. Often, it only got to this point after schools intentionally refused to intervene against the perpetrators.

Sadly, the more Team Tyranny has puffed up and blustered about other issues, the less regard they've had for victims' right to self-defense. It used to be that a person was allowed to physically defend themselves if they had reasonable fear of bodily injury and did not instigate the conflict themselves. Unfortunately, that's not the legal standard we live under these days. Now we live in a society where people can assault others with impunity—because the “justice” system is biased in favor of aggressors.

This bias is intentional, malicious, and makes those in charge of the system just as guilty as the direct perpetrators. It's aggravated by laws in some states that were motivated by the desire to be petty and vindictive instead of improve schools. Some of our elected representatives are petty and vindictive people.

So—as a case study—what do you think happened when I finally started fighting back? I don't mean years later when I was out of school and it was less relevant. I'm talking about in college when I once made a faint try at fighting back. I know it shouldn't have even been an issue in college—I repeat, *college*—but NKU was primarily a commuter campus that drew its student body partly from schools that had maliciously normalized bad behavior. This gave people I went to middle or high school with chances to start fights there. Like the alt-right gangs of today, brawling was their hobby.

I think we can all agree that at some point, enough was enough. I was in physical danger. So I had a few conversations with university officials about it. I believe one was an assistant dean, and one other was a coordinator for some campus services. I was already acquainted with the latter, and after I discussed the matter with him, he kept insisting he was on my side. I don't think I made any type of official report with these or any other officials I talked to—because I don't think I was given the chance.

I actually had faith that something was going to be done about the threats and harassment—or at least that I wouldn't be blamed for it. Instead, NKU turned out to be thoroughly inept at dealing with it. Back then, I was a DJ on WRFN—the student radio station—and the station fired me because its managers thought I'd allude to the latest incident over the air. Not only was I being punished for reporting a crime, but I was being punished because I *might* report it. If I was going to be fired for offending their fragile sensibilities by referencing the incident over the air, they were supposed to wait until *after* I did so—not practice prior restraint.

I still wasn't reinstated at WRFN the next semester. I was being discriminated against. Enrolled students were supposed to have access to amenities and activities provided by the school—but this was denied to me. Plus, the assailant in the incident that prompted my firing was a star basketball player, so he got special treatment. The school official who had previously said he was on my side told me right to my face that he didn't want to hear about this incident. In doing so, he managed to demonstrate a fundamental misunderstanding of his own job.

What ever happened to the basketball star responsible for this incident? Last I heard of him was after a 2015 police chase in which he rammed a sheriff's deputy with his Mercedes and was busted with large amounts of meth and cash. He was also charged with possession of a gun during commission of a felony. You really picked the wrong side, NKU.

After I was fired, NKU continued to create drama about the incident and the subsequent firing. One day, I



was peacefully walking through a hallway between classes, and the official who claimed to be on my side happened to see me. He demanded that I come with him to the radio station. When we got there, he and the station managers harangued me—though I had done nothing wrong. As his tone got increasingly nasty, this official screamed and yelled at me like a maniac and accused me of being a troublemaker because I had dared to complain about an incident months earlier. Let me reiterate that this was a man who had claimed repeatedly to be supportive of me. I walked out of the meeting, because I wasn't going to sit there and be hollered at for nothing.

What? You mean I made someone angry? Struck a nerve, didn't I? To hear them talk, you'd think *they* were the victims. By then, I'd realized I had to start doing *something* to fight back against a system that claimed to stand for high ethical standards but didn't practice what it preached. If people felt uneasy when I fought back, good. That was the point.

Think of how ridiculous this is. I was a victim of an altercation that almost caused me to flunk a class I needed for my major. So I complained about the event to the university. I was brushed off because the instigator was a star athlete. Then—*months* later—I was called in to a meeting to be bawled out because I had complained. This was a low point of my school career, because I *knew* I was right. There were times when I was a kid when I knew I'd misbehaved, but the school I attended didn't react fairly. This time was different. Not only did I do *nothing* wrong, but I was actually a victim! It wasn't the first time in my life I'd been punished for being a victim, but I had thought NKU had higher standards than, say, Brossart.

Wait! There's more! I don't remember whether the tirade at the radio station office was before or after the disastrous 1994 "election"—whose most prominent figure was Newt Gingrich. Gingrich was a piece of shit. One of the first things he did after the "election" was hire a Nazi apologist as House historian. Gingrich was an ideological attack dog who intentionally caused harm to the public. According to people, WRFN actually went to the *police* about me *the day after* the "election." Not *earlier*, when it looked like the "election" *might* turn out the way it did. Not *later*, when the 104<sup>th</sup> Reich was sworn in and began cracking down on dissenters at college campuses. They did it *the very day after*. Although the new Congress hadn't been sworn in yet, this proves that the "election" gave cover to the university to persecute dissidents. It's like how Donald Trump has encouraged hate crimes. (A recent study shows that hate crimes soared 226% in counties that hosted Trump rallies. Although most of the right-wing media ignored this study, the *Washington Post* covered it. You can find it easily in an Internet search.)

Let me refute WRFN's complaint—lest anyone actually try to dig up what others wrote 25 years ago without getting my side of the story. The reason I kept visiting the radio station after I was fired is that it was my right as a student to use it as other students did. What do you think all those mandatory activity fees were for? Was it just so NKU could buy a bulk subscription to a far-right newspaper (which it did)? Furthermore, in my America, you don't whine to the police about stuff like this. I was a victim of actual *crime* on campus. The police are there to deal with that. They're not there to deal with politically motivated drama. This is like how Joe Deters wants to call out the National Guard to fight crime in Cincinnati—where I've seen no serious street crime in years—but nobody fought the real crime wave in Campbell County 30 years ago.

A made-up crime wave brings calls for the National Guard, but a *real* crime wave didn't even bring in Barney Fife!

A few years later, I tried to enroll again at NKU. The official who harangued me at the radio station whimpered that there were "no hard feelings" about what had happened, but he proceeded to be very condescending. He sounded like a store manager lecturing a 4-year-old about stealing candy. You just couldn't trust people anymore.

How wrong was NKU? Later, when I went to Gateway Community College, there were never any problems like this. Plus, I'm not the guy who led police on a chase during one of the biggest drug investigations in the history of the state of Tennessee.

Bullying doesn't always get reported, because victims end up being treated the way I was. You're made to feel like a criminal. Even a long article like this can't convey the feeling of shame and helplessness. The long-running war against me shaped my work even years after I last attended NKU, and if anyone trots out something I said then with the intent of creating controversy where there is none, all I need to do is point out how my enemies behaved earlier. If the aggressors can't take responsibility for their actions, that should be their problem and nobody else's. If people were allowed to fight back, the assailants would have run away crying like the whiny babies they were.

