

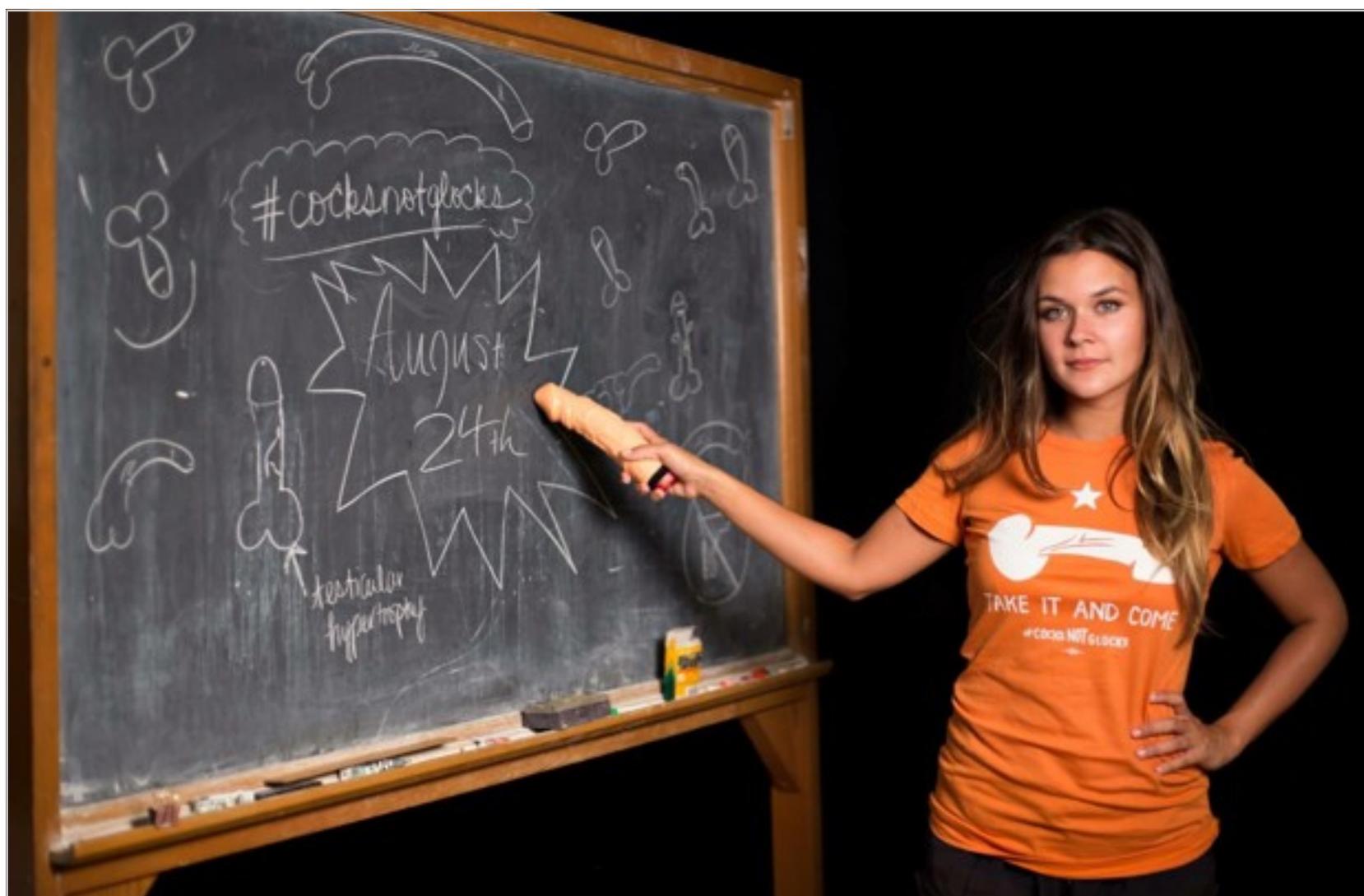
From The Atlantic

CITYLAB

Sex Toys and Gun Laws Collide on Campus in Austin

What started as a protest over campus-carry gun laws at the University of Texas at Austin has exploded into a college culture war.

KRISTON CAPPS | [@kristoncapps](#) | Aug 22, 2016 | [117 Comments](#)



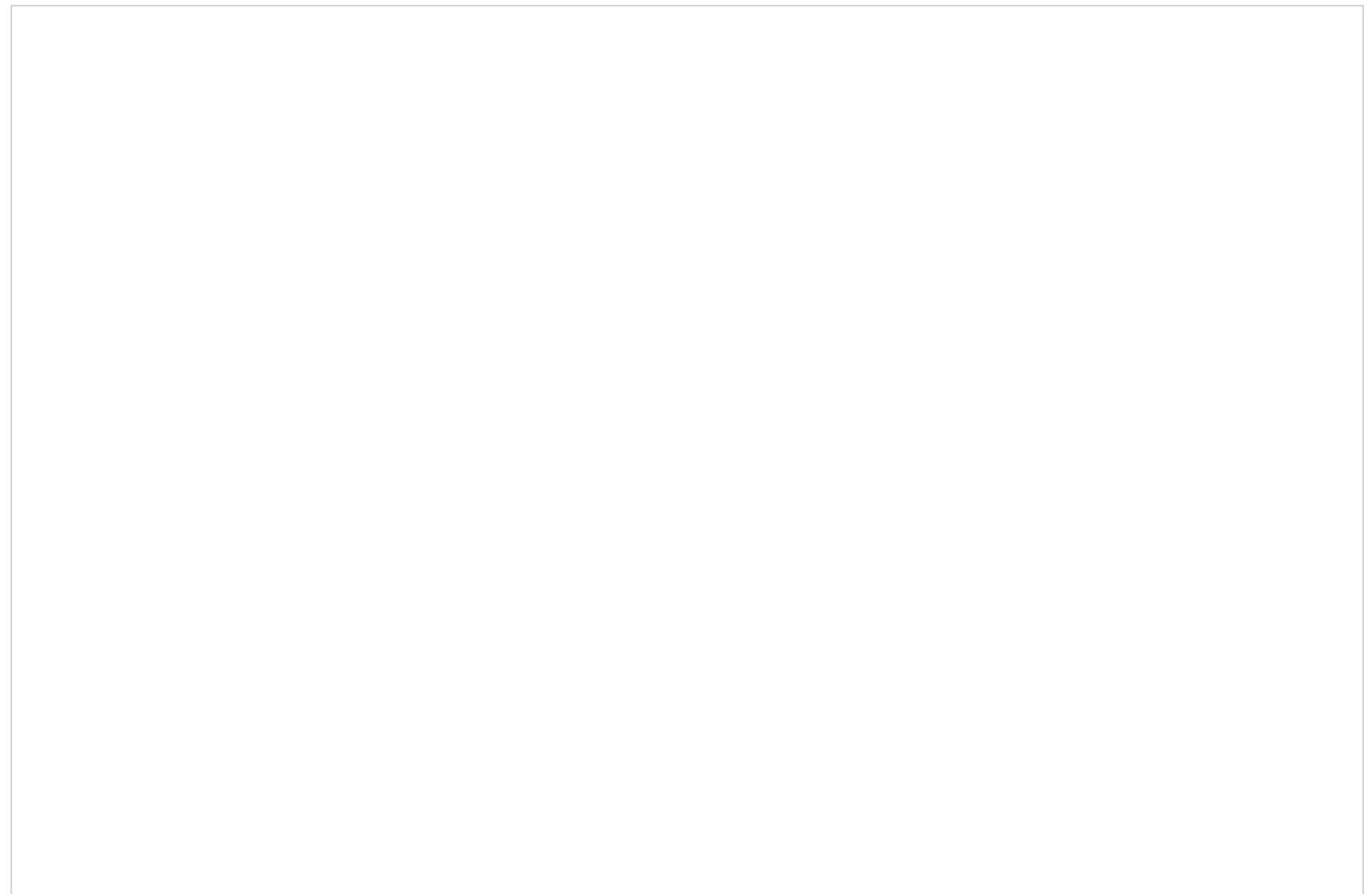
Marshall Tidrick/Cocks Not Glocks

Jessica Jin was stuck in Austin traffic, late getting somewhere, and listening to the radio. It was October, the week after the [Umpqua Community College shooting](#) and the same week as [fatal shootings](#) at Texas Southern University and Northern Arizona University. As she recalls, the pundits on the radio were talking about how there is no conceivable solution to gun violence, that mass shootings are just something that we're going to have to learn to live with in America.

"I felt like, you know, what a bunch of dildos," Jin says. "They were taking the safe route and not wanting to say anything that would piss anybody off or be too divisive. They act like there's no solution or steps that we can take."

Jin complained to friends about those dildos she heard on the radio. Speaking of dildos, she remembers telling them, I bet you can't even brandish a dildo in a classroom in Texas without getting into trouble. "They challenged me to look up the laws," Jin says. "And so I did. I went to the school rule book, and sure enough, they follow the state obscenity clause." At the University of Texas at Austin, "it's a misdemeanor to openly brandish or distribute these objects that portray the human genitalia in turgid form."

And so [Cocks Not Glocks](#) was born: a protest to openly brandish and distribute dildos on August 24, the first day of classes at the University of Texas at Austin. Jin and her fellow activists plan to hand out several thousand phallic objects in order to protest the new campus-carry policy mandated by the state.



(Marshall Tidrick/Cocks Not Glocks)

Texas Governor Greg Abbott signed the campus-carry bill into law in June 2015,

extending the right of gun owners to carry concealed handguns on campus. The law went into effect on August 1 of this year. While the bill affects colleges across the state, the date is especially meaningful for the University of Texas. August 1 marked the 50th anniversary of the [University of Texas Tower massacre](#), when Charles Whitman, a former Marine, shot 49 people from the bell tower, killing 17.

Campus carry has opened a deep political fault on campus. One [dean](#) and [at least three faculty members](#) (at Texas and other colleges) have resigned over the law. (This writer, a University of Texas alum, knows one prospective hire who declined a faculty position at the school due to the campus-carry ordinance.) Gun-owners'-rights groups, meanwhile, [staged a fake mass shooting](#) in Austin in December to demonstrate their belief that so-called "gun-free zones" are the problem making mass shootings so lethal. Faculty members also [sued to block the law](#), which has [inspired numerous protests](#) at the Texas state capitol.

The campus-carry law changed very little about where students can actually bear firearms. According to the university FAQ page (campuscarry.utexas.edu), students have had the right to carry concealed firearms on campus, but not inside buildings, for 20 years. Fewer than 1 percent of students at the university are licensed to carry firearms; only students over 21 are even eligible to be licensed, and fewer than 500 students of age live in on-campus dorms (where concealed firearms are now permitted).

Yet a simple count of the number of students enabled by the law does not convey its total impact in Austin. Jin, an alum who graduated from the university two years ago, says that a small but vocal minority of students has persistently harassed and threatened her and other demonstrators. She says she has received thousands of emails and posts on the group's event page expressing misogynist, hateful, and racist messages. One group even published her home address.

"There's a lot of people openly expressing that they would take joy if we were assaulted or raped with our protest devices," Jin says. "They're like, 'We can't wait to see them get raped by their own toys, because they'd be inviting sexual assault, and then they'll wish they had a gun.'"



A demonstrator protests for expanded gun rights outside the Capitol in Texas in January 2015.
(Eric Gay/AP)

Wherever individual students might stand on the Second Amendment—or on First Amendment rights to protest a state law—the campus-carry argument has divided college students into familiar camps. Women, people of color, and members of the LGBT community on campus make up the majority of the more than 10,000 people who have expressed support for the Cocks Not Glocks protest by RSVPing for the event.

At present, Jin has 4,500 dildos to pass out, most of them donations from sex-toy distributors far and wide. The majority, in fact, are shapeless vibrators from Singapore. Hustler Hollywood and local artists have also contributed to the cause. While Jin was previously housing the devices in a sympathetic faculty member's attic, she is now storing the sex toys in a warehouse maintained by a local sex shop, [Dreamers](#).

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Jin characterizes the students who are most aggressive about their rights to carry firearms on campus as cisgender straight white men. They are anecdotally the same men who face off opposite against women, people of color, and the queer community in the culture wars over rape culture, internet speech, and transgender rights. Campus carry has introduced more firearms, however few in total, into a culture war already brimming with violent rhetoric.

“These are the same people who call themselves level-headed, law-abiding gun owners, yet they’re wishing violence on other people,” Jin says. “They can’t even take a joke.”

Jin courts this cultural confrontation directly by twisting a motto favored by gun owners. Instead of “Come and Take It”—the very don’t-tread-on-me logo supported by open-carry activists, usually appearing over an image of an assault rifle—the Cocks Not Glocks campaign marches under the slogan, “Take It and Come.”

“There have been, obviously, straight and heterosexual men who are part of our team,” Jin says. “But the people who are running forward, dildo flags flying, are mainly not them.”

About the Author



Kriston Capps is a staff writer at *CityLab*. [MORE](#)
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