



NIKKI SHRIEVES, 42, practices her aim with help from Tom Nguyen at Burro Canyon Shooting Park in Azusa last year.

Photographs by FRANCINE ORR Los Angeles Times

COLUMN ONE

Gun class for those who hate guns

L.A. Progressive Shooters provides training for people who abhor U.S. firearm culture

BY JAMES QUEALLY

At least two hours have gone by in the Pistol 101 class, and no student has fired a bullet or even picked up a gun.

This isn't a lesson for anyone eager to pull the trigger. Tom Nguyen's teaching style is patient, aimed at demystifying an object many of his students have spent their lives fearing, even hating.

Something of a leftist firearms whisperer, Nguyen pokes fun at stereotypical American gun culture, mocking "alpha male" behavior and the John Wick film franchise with its video game levels of violence. Owning a gun doesn't have to define your personality, he preaches, and it doesn't mean you have to seek conflict.

"Being peaceful," he says, "is not the same as being helpless, or harmless."

A wiry longtime martial arts practitioner who sometimes wears his hair in long pigtail braids, the 53-year-old Nguyen plays the role of firearms sensei.



"IF YOU'RE nervous, you're my favorite kind of student," says Nguyen, who is from Irvine. "It means you're aware."

But unlike the "gun fu" on display in the Wick franchise, Nguyen teaches form and thought over sudden bursts of close-quarters violence. Lessons often touch on focus and intention.

Among the students paying rapt attention inside a Norwalk martial arts studio is 42-year-old Nikki Shrieves, who wears a sweatshirt with "decolonize" written on the back over and over again, each iteration a different color of the Pride flag.

She trembles slightly as Nguyen places a disassembled Glock on the table in front of her. Nguyen knows why the weapon fills her with dread, so he breaks it down into its components: a spring, a slide, a barrel.

"A gun is a tool to put holes in things," Nguyen says in his gentle rasp that sometimes takes on a surfer bro affectation.

Gun ownership has boomed in the U.S. over the last several years, including in California.

Among those first-time gun owners are L.A. liberals, and more [See Firearms, A10]

Housing makes L.A. less livable, poll says

60% of Angelenos—renters and young residents especially—have weighed leaving the city due to cost.

BY LIAM DILLON

A majority of Los Angeles voters are considering abandoning the city because housing is too expensive, according to a new poll.

The finding follows years of dissatisfaction with crushing housing costs and is threatening the city's future as young adults and renters are the most likely to contemplate leaving.

Nearly three-quarters of renters and those under 35 have given consideration to moving out of Los Angeles, compared with 37% of homeowners and 26% of those 65 or older, according to the poll, which was conducted for the Los Angeles Business Council Institute in partnership with The Times.

Overall, the poll found that 60% of Angelenos have debated leaving the city because of the rising cost of housing, with 35% saying they've given "serious consideration" to doing so.

The results reflect what voters believe to be "foundational unfairness" when it comes to housing, said Aileen Cardona-Arroyo, a senior vice president at Hart Research, the Washington, D.C., polling firm that administered the survey. Angelenos, she said, think they are working hard but still find themselves failing to keep pace with rising costs.

"People feel like, 'I'm doing the right thing. I have a job. I do my part. So why is it that I'm struggling to pay my bills when it comes to housing?'" Cardona-Arroyo said. [See Housing, A7]

Anger rises over shift in how most in state will pay for electricity

With little public debate, California lawmakers passed a complex bill upending the cost structure.

BY MELODY PETERSEN

With little debate two years ago, state lawmakers passed a complex energy bill that enabled a sweeping change in how most Californians are billed for electricity.

The legislation was what Pacific Gas & Electric had asked for from the state Public Utilities Commission three months before: a transformation of electric rates so that households would pay a fixed charge each month in exchange for lower rates for each kilowatt-hour they used.

Gov. Gavin Newsom submitted the bill as part of a massive 2022 budget revision. In four days, it was passed out of an Assembly committee hearing without discussion, approved by the full Assembly and Senate

and signed by Newsom.

The state's three largest investor-owned power companies that pushed for the change say it will encourage Californians to ditch cars and appliances that run on planet-warming fossil fuels and replace them with vehicles, stoves and heaters that operate on electricity from solar panels and wind turbines. They also say the new monthly fee will allow them to more evenly allocate fixed costs among customers.

But opponents say the legislation was a financial gift to PG&E, Southern California Edison and San Diego Gas & Electric, and will cause millions of Californians who live in small homes or apartments that use little electricity to pay more, while residents in large homes that use a lot of electricity will save money.

"If you wanted to design a policy that would send the signal that conservation doesn't count, this would be it," said Ken Cook, president of the Environmental Working Group.

Now, as governor-appointed members of the Cal-

Hackers, trolls and AI deepfakes rev up for election

BY JEFFREY FLEISHMAN

In the analog days of the 1970s, long before hackers, trolls and edgelords, an audiocassette company came up with an advertising slogan that posed a trick question: "Is it live or is it Memorex?" The message toyed with reality, suggest-

ing there was no difference in sound quality between a live performance and music recorded on tape.

Fast forward to our age of metaverse lies and deceptions, and one might ask similar questions about what's real and what's not: Is President Biden on a robo-call telling Democrats to not vote? Is Donald Trump

chumming it up with Black men on a porch? Is the U.S. going to war with Russia? Fact and fiction appear interchangeable in an election year when AI-generated content is targeting voters in ways that were once unimaginable.

American politics is accustomed to chicanery — opponents of Thomas Jef-

erson warned the public in 1800 that he would burn their Bibles if elected — but artificial intelligence is bending reality into a video game world of avatars and deepfakes designed to sow confusion and chaos. The ability of AI programs to produce and scale disinformation with swiftness and [See Election, A5]



LEE JIN-MAN Associated Press

INTERPRETER TO PLEAD GUILTY

Ippei Mizuhara, left, shown with Dodgers star Shohei Ohtani, will admit to a scheme to steal \$17 million from the player, the government says. SPORTS, B10

Tagged building goes up for sale

Brokers for recently vandalized Oceanwide Plaza hope for a fall escrow. BUSINESS, A6

Dudamel isn't hanging around

L.A. Phil leader stops by for a short stint between three-month absences. CALENDAR, E1

Weather
Turning sunny.
L.A. Basin: 75/55. B6

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