

# The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

# @issue

**MORE INFORMATION AND OPINIONS ON TODAY'S TOPICS:** Two opinion columns discuss the Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

► **ONLINE:**

History: [www.guncite.com/journals/vandhist.html](http://www.guncite.com/journals/vandhist.html)

Myth: [www.bradycampaign.org/facts/issues/?page=second](http://www.bradycampaign.org/facts/issues/?page=second)



► **BOOKS:**

"A Well-Regulated Militia: The Founding Fathers and the Origins of Gun Control in America" by Saut Cornell

## Water a weighty topic around world

By ELIZABETH KISS

Over the past month, I have learned something new about water: It weighs a lot. Every morning I carry a bucket of "gray water" from my shower down two flights of stairs to water the trees and shrubs in the garden. Every morning, I am surprised by how heavy and awkward the full bucket feels.

Like many Atlantans, I was slow to grasp the severity of our water supply crisis. After all, my taps still flow, and the towering trees in our backyard adjacent to the Agnes Scott campus remain leafy and green. Now, after weeks of local and national coverage of Lake Lanier's rapidly shrinking shoreline and of the startling mismatch between our growing demand for water and our limited supply from the Chattahoochee basin, it's starting to sink in.

Our shiny, confident and dynamic city is facing the basic human challenge of access to water that confronted, and eventually destroyed, India's Mughal capital Fatehpur Sikri and the Anasazi civilization of the American Southwest.

But what really got to



Elizabeth Kiss is president of Agnes Scott College in Decatur.

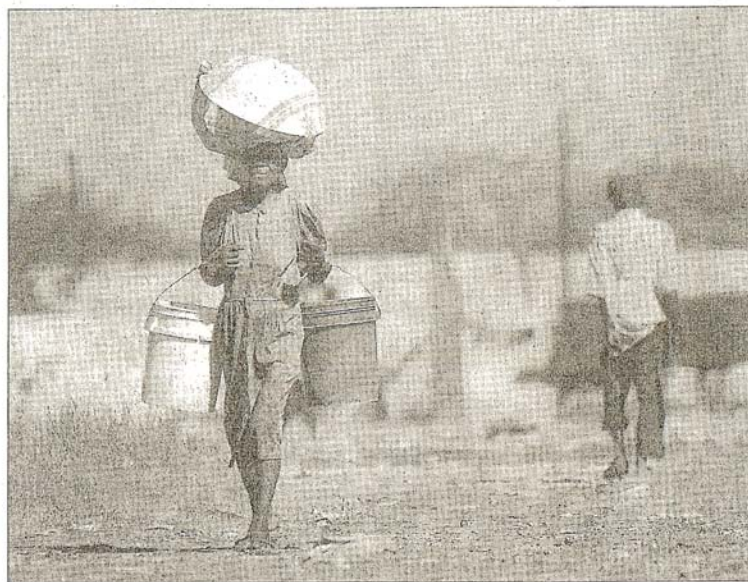
me was the startling weight of my water bucket. What would it be like, I wondered, to have to carry my water for cooking, bathing and washing every day — not just down two flights of stairs but for miles along rough or dusty paths? That is the reality for billions of women and children in the world today.

According to the World Health Organization, 1 billion people around the world

lack access to clean, safe water.

Imagine spending up to eight hours every day walking to a water source and returning with a 20-liter jerry can.

Imagine spending up to eight hours every day walking to a water source and returning with a 20-liter jerry can, only to find that the water is contaminated and your children come down with typhoid and diarrhea. Yet this is life for many women in rural sub-Saharan Africa and Asia as well as in the sprawling informal settlements surrounding major cities like Nairobi and Cairo. This is why every year 4 billion children contract diar-



A woman carries drinking water in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Several efforts are under way — including a new program at Agnes Scott College — to improve access to clean water worldwide.

ARIANNA CUBILLOS / Associated Press

rhea and 1.8 million die.

Many good efforts are under way to address the world's need for clean, safe and accessible water. The United Nations Millennium Development Goals include a target of reducing the number of people who lack adequate access to water by 50 percent by the year 2015. Atlanta-based CARE International is running 54

water and sanitation projects around the world, from Angola to Pakistan to Haiti and Peru. The Atlanta Rotary Club has launched a clean-water project in rural Kenya coordinated by Trish Anderson, one of our alumnae. Corporations such as the Coca-Cola Co. have identified clean water as a major philanthropic focus.

Because women bear

a disproportionate share of the burden of gathering water, expanded access to clean water will be key to achieving the social and economic benefits that come from the education and empowerment of women. As a women's college, we are launching a center to pursue education, research and action to help women address urgent global chal-

lenges such as clean water.

Both the regional and global water crises will require technical know-how, organizational skill and political commitment to solve. But as we celebrate the holidays, let's keep the nature of these crises in perspective. The global standard for adequate water access is to have an "improved source" of water, such as a clean and protected well, within 1 kilometer (0.621 miles) of home. Even among those the global community considers adequately served with clean water, many have to carry every liter by hand. Only 2 percent of those living in the world's least developed countries have access to water within their homes — something we take for granted.

According to the U.N. Human Development Report, it would cost approximately \$4 billion each year for 10 years to meet the U.N. Millennium Development Goals target for clean water. That is how much Europeans and Americans spend on bottled mineral water per month. So as we prepare to celebrate the holidays, let's install low-flow toilets, take shorter showers and recycle gray water. But let's not forget the larger water crisis affecting poor and vulnerable people around the world that desperately needs our commitment and support.