

GUN CONTROL
Tuesday
March 6, 2018

We've had yet another mass shooting, and as in just about every previous instance, we're once again placing the focus on creating new gun control laws, but is this where we should be concentrating? There's no doubt that people have used guns to carry out some horrendous acts of violence, not just mass shootings, but individual murders, robberies and rapes. If a gun could be used to help perpetrate the crime, it was, but for some reason, it's the mass shootings that have drawn our attention, like a moth to a flame. Anything less than 2 people killed, and we pretty much tune it out, probably because murders are a daily occurrence.

There are a lot of proposals on how to stop mass shootings, most of which seem to be centered around eliminating assault style weapons, like the AR 15, but would this really make a difference? Does not having (legal) access to an AR 15 make it impossible for me to take out an entire neighborhood of innocent people? If you think so, then you're living in a fantasy world.

If you ask me (and no one has, yet I'll volunteer my opinion anyway), the problem isn't guns, regardless of what type they are, it's with the people who wield them, and their frame of mind. Maybe, instead of trying to dictate to responsible, law abiding citizens what they can, and can't, own, what we need to be doing is trying to devise a way of stopping acts of violence, all acts of violence, before they happen, as opposed to dealing with the aftermath.

While watching TV, I noticed something. We have laws for just about everything you can possibly imagine, from archaic laws which used to tell us what positions we could have sex in, to laws mandating how many fractions of a cent we have to pay when buying a gallon of gas. We've even got laws mandating that our students be taught how to recognize victims of sex trafficking, yet, somehow, we don't have any laws dictating things like conflict resolution, alternatives to violence, etc. Why not? Our children are in school, being taught things that, chances are, they'll never use once they graduate, yet the one thing they need, on an almost daily basis, we've left completely out of the equation. Tell me, does this make any sense to an of you? Instead of teaching these things to our children, when they're young and impressionable, we wait until they're arrested and sent to prison, by which time they're ways are pretty much set in stone, and then we try to force it down their throats.

Something interesting I've noticed is that, when it comes to sex offenders, we take a much different stance. If a man (or a woman) is convicted of a sexually based offense, instead of being released, the State attempts to confine him in some sort of mental facility indefinitely. While I'm not trying to minimize the trauma that a victim of a sexual assault goes through, when it comes to sexual assault, the victim is at least able to make an attempt at recovering. When it comes to murder, there is no such ability. Once you're gone, you're gone, plain and simple. Now, I'm not implying that we should be incarcerating anyone and everyone who might commit an act of violence, the potential for abuse is simply too high, not to mention the fact that you're violating their civil rights for incarcerating them for nothing more than a suspicion that they might act, but with that said, why can't we at least mandate some sort of intervention by someone trained in conflict resolution? I'm not saying that we should "force" them to accept mental health counseling, just that it would be a nice thing to have someone trained in conflict resolution go over there and meet with them. Find out what the problem is, offer some potential solutions, like a referral to someone for additional counselling (free of charge), referral to someone for psychiatric medication (again, free of charge), maybe even a referral to some sort of mediation specialist (yep, you guessed it, free of charge). And yes, these expenses might add up, especially over time, but wouldn't it be well worth the expense, to prevent who knows how many acts of violence?

Another point to ponder, in almost all situations, the shooters went online far ahead of time and posted their plans, or at least left some sort of clue as to what they planned on doing. And in almost all instances, law enforcement failed to take proper steps, particularly with this latest incident in Broward County, Florida. While I don't condone violating people's rights to privacy, keep in mind that none of these warnings were posted privately, they were all posted on social media, in publicly available, digital bulletin boards, Tweets, etc. No search warrant has ever been needed to review something someone posted publicly, which makes me wonder, why were these warning signs ignored? Perhaps, at least in some cases, they were recognized as warning signs only with the clarity of hindsight, but in this most recent instance, he was crystal clear about his intentions: he wanted to be a "professional school shooter." Yet, law enforcement failed to even make an attempt to investigate, and now that he's acted, instead of protesting them, we're protesting gun ownership.

There might not be a solution that solves all of the problems associated with violence, or even just gun violence, but on one thing we can be sure: ban the guns, and only the criminals will have them. Well, criminals and law enforcement, and we've all seen how reliable they are when it comes to gun use.

As always, I appreciate any feedback, positive or negative. In fact, I welcome it. I'd love nothing more than to be able to debate this issue with someone, so please, feel free to leave a post here, or contact me directly at the address listed below.

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