

America Must Not Live and Die by the Gun

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When I woke up yesterday morning, I was shocked yet once again to read about Wednesday's mass killing of 12 people during "college night" at a country music bar in southern California, sending hundreds fleeing in terror. I have young children who occasionally visit these types of bars, and I can only imagine how devastating and heart wrenching it must be for any parent to lose a child to this heartless mass shooting phenomenon, which has tragically become routine.

All we hear from Trump and his stooges in Congress are hollow and insincere expressions of sorrow and condolences to the families of the victims whose lives are shattered. Like millions of citizens, I am offended by the callous way the Trump administration is dealing with this national disaster that robs the lives of more than 3,000 innocent fellow citizens every single month.

To be sure, America is at war with itself, and the National Rifle Association (NRA) is profiting from the slaughter of Americans by Americans. Our so-called lawmakers in Congress are benefitting from the political contributions the NRA generously hands out to these corrupt politicians, who couldn't care less that we are paying with our blood.

Every time the question of gun control is raised, the defenders of the wild west culture - of living by the gun - rush to invoke the Second Amendment that supposedly grants every American the right to bear arms for self-protection. I say supposedly because when this amendment was enacted, we were living in a different time under different circumstances, and had a different responsibility to protect ourselves and our loved ones.

The Second Amendment of the United States Constitution reads: "A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed." Today, we have "a well-regulated militia" in the form of the National Guard; we also have police forces to protect our inner cities, the FBI to investigate state-wide and interstate crimes, and of course the military. The responsibility of each branch of our collective security is well-defined, and they are accountable to a specific command structure.

Now given the changing order of our personal and collective security, the part of the second amendment that reads "the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed", needs also to be reinterpreted. We are not calling for a total ban on gun ownership, we are calling for stricter gun control laws on the right to possess a firearm, including of course a background check of any individual who wishes to purchase a gun.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, there were 39,000 deaths from gun-related injuries in 2016. Of this, 456 were from mass shootings—the rest were 14,000 homicide deaths and 23,000 suicides. The gun lobby asserts that these statistics have little bearing

on the number of people killed deliberately by mass shootings. True, but if guns were not readily accessible, how many of these people would have successfully committed suicide by stabbing or hanging themselves, or by swallowing deadly poison? While drowning, for example, is effective 66% of the time in attempted suicides, suicide by gun is effective 82% of the time.

Since November 2016, 10 mass shootings took place resulting in 152 deaths. Mass shooting here is defined by the Congressional Research Service, where a shooter a) kills 4 or more people; b) selects victims randomly; and c) attacks in a public place. In a looser definition (4 or more people shot but not necessarily killed at the same time and location, which includes incidents related to domestic violence and gang violence), 314 people have been killed in mass shootings in 2018.

Just think, nearly one third of the mass shootings that occur in the world have taken place in the United States—a country with five percent of the world's population has 31 percent of all public mass shootings.

There is indisputable proof that the people who died of gunshot wounds in every single developed nation is minuscule when compared to the US. Take a look at some countries with strict gun laws; their annual death by firearms speaks for itself: in the United Kingdom, with a population of 56 million, on average 50–60 are killed; in Germany with a population of 82.29 million, an average of 165; and in Japan with a population of 129 million, 13 or (often) fewer are killed by guns.

In Australia, before enacting strict gun control laws in 1996 following the deadliest mass shooting in Australian history, there were 13 mass shootings in 18 years. In the same time period following the legislation, there were zero.

Let's set statistics aside. Every person that dies as a result of a gunshot is one person too many. How do you console a father or a mother who lost their child without even knowing why? What do you say to a parent whose child was just gunned down, to alleviate their agony and sinking soul? What sort of condolences and prayer can you offer to assuage the penetrating pain that sucks out the parent's heart? There are no words, no expressions, no prayer, no sympathy, and no condolences that can ease the consuming suffering and grief that a parent must endure.

The answer, Mr. Trump, is not placing armed guards in every restaurant, night club, bar, school, synagogue, church, amusement park, museum, movie theater, bank, hospital, or in every store, every street corner, every hotel, and every railway and bus station. No, this is not how we should live our lives.

No, we cannot, and we will not succumb to your and Congress' whims to prevent effective gun control laws. And we will no longer live and die by the gun.

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