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How to stop school shootings!!

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Healthcare concerns include athletic injuries, nutrition, physical conditioning and gun safety. All of us know of or have experienced tragedies of children or adults who have been seriously injured or even killed by accidents with guns improperly stored and/or accessible to children.

The study of American history includes arguments about the impact of the “frontier” on the development of this country. In 1894, Fredrick J. Turner first enunciated his view of the significant impact of “the frontier” upon the social development in the United States. While many will argue with his thesis, it cannot be ignored that the differences in the development of United States culture and the cultures of Europe were impacted by the United States frontier experience. It is this aspect of our history which helps us develop a rational explanation of our “gun” culture.

In our history, we recognize the significant transition between a “hunter and gatherer” social structure to an agrarian society where people no longer roam from place to place, “living off the land,” but now live in one place and produce life’s necessities in a non-nomadic culture. The ignoring of our history and of how deeply imbedded that history is in our culture can make us forget why we are who we are.

Far removed from our daily lives but not from our culture, these realities, while being forgotten in our daily lives, are nevertheless integral parts of our culture. Tragically, in the past thirty years, shootings at schools have also become a part of our culture. Which of us has not pondered school shootings and how to stop them? Why does Israel have zero school shootings and the United States is beset routinely with these travesties? Proposed solutions to our contemporary problems often ignore our history upon which our culture has been founded, and in doing so makes it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to fashion solutions which will work.

It is not necessary for us to deny who we are, to reject our values and our principles and/or to reject, or forget, our history to solve our current problems. Very often real answers are counterintuitive. That means that the answers are opposite to what seems obvious. Many believe that the answer to the stopping of school shootings is in having fewer guns. This fact ignores

that even including felonious use of guns, the incidence of gun tragedies is statistically very low compared to the widespread ownership of guns.

In fact, the answer to our school shootings may be more guns, just in different hands. What does that mean? Apparently, in Israel, selected and trained teachers are armed. But, who they are is not known to the students, or to other faculty. The weapons are concealed. It may be that if shooters are stopped immediately and, yes, even violently, that these shootings can be eliminated. Some, mostly those who are absolutely opposed to the possession of guns, argue that teachers should teach and not carry guns. Does that mean that teachers should not discipline students, but only teach? Does that mean that teachers should not monitor hallways and playgrounds, but only teach?

Second, it may be that school safety is going to require the sacrifice of certain non-essential liberties. Now before the ACLU has a seizure, think. In our country, ten year olds cannot legally drive, drink, vote or sign contracts, among other things. Does this mean that we are a totalitarian nation? Of course not, these and other limitations on personal choices contribute to an orderly and rational society. In addition, access to certain facilities and organizations are limited. If I walked to the front entrance of a chemical plant, I would not have free access to all areas, but again that does not mean that I live in a totalitarian nation.

Access to schools should be limited and controlled. The standard will be “maximum freedom with maximum safety” but neither of these will be absolute. If you are not a student, staff or faculty, you should have restrictions on your access to the school, even if you are a parent or a former student. If you are in any of the categories of those with routine access to schools — students, staff, faculty — you should routinely have screening to gain entrance. This screening should use technology to make it as rapid and non-intrusive as possible, but it should be effective.

Access to schools should be categorically denied to people under discipline, or who have been identified as a possible threat. There should be a method, relatively inexpensive, for “locking down,” a school when the barriers have been breached, which “locking down” will limit the extent of harm anyone can cause in a school.

Third, training of students, staff and faculty should be effective. We should study past school shootings to identify the necessary elements of that training. For instance, in the Florida shooting, we learned that students, staff and faculty must know when to ignore a fire alarm. Students and faculty should know how to judge instantly when a threat is best responded to by fleeing and when it is best to “lock down” and wait for rescue.

Effective principles and strategies for dangerous situations have been designed by studying past incidents in many fields. Learn from those studies. Study school shootings. See what is common and design active and effective emergency plans for eliminating them and for minimizing their damage if they occur.

Fourth, realize that our society has created this monster. The denigration of respect for authority, standards, values and principles has created the whirlwind which we are now reaping. The

glorification of victimhood and of personal entitlement has created a culture where respect for others has been eliminated as “what I want” has been exalted above everything.

Individual desire, choice and supremacy have been exalted above personal accountability, responsibility and liability. When, in the name of ultimate and absolute personal and individual freedom, we have eliminated morality, behavioral standards and right and wrong, we have created a monster where the ultimate good is what I want and the absolute value “is me and mine.”

An Example

School access is already controlled. When called by my granddaughter to get her at her high school, my wife thought she could just drive up front and our granddaughter would be out front. That was not the case.

The following is what my wife found:

1. Multiple, officially marked police units had designated parking places.
2. My wife had to park, go inside to the office and upon informing the staff her reason for being there, her driver’s license was taken and photo copied. Here is another place where safety and security required a photo ID. No civil rights were compromised but it is an appropriate limitation upon liberty.
3. Next, my wife, had to go to the truant office, identify herself again and the office went into computer data base to make sure there was no information that would prevent my wife from being allowed to see my grandchild, let alone, take her off campus.
4. Once Carolyn passed that protocol, the school called into the classroom for my granddaughter to leave her classroom and come to the office.

After this experience, my wife realized that school shootings are a mind/heart issue. It is a moral issue. When the entertainment of our culture is filled with violence, immorality, hate and discord: are we not reaping what we sowed?

When we were children, our parents could walk into a classroom without being announced. But then, there were no school shootings in the 1950s and 1960s. Television was new and programs were decent and non violent. Families had meals together and very often worshipped together. Children spent time playing outdoors. There were no video games and particularly there were no violent video games. Our movies showed good guys winning and bad guys losing. The violence depicted was not gory.

Policies, procedures and planning can stop school shootings, but there are more fundamental issues of faith, values, and decency which are the only means of ultimately solving this terrible problem.