

GUNS FOR TEACHERS?

In the wake of the recent school massacre it seems one response [Letters, 12/20] proposes letting teachers bring guns to school.

I am a teacher in Eugene, and I would never consider carrying a gun to school! First of all, I have no desire to use a gun and don't personally know any teachers who like to shoot guns, although I'm sure they exist. I would be much more worried about how the teachers would be expected to keep guns secure and simultaneously available in an emergency. Do we want to ensure there are guns in the school that a troubled student could possibly get hold of in a moment of heated passion?

My daughter's high school went into lockdown on Monday [12/17] as a rumor surfaced about a couple kids who planned to bring guns to school. I feel the Eugene Police Department was extremely proactive and dispensed trained officers to deal with the threat immediately. I strongly feel we should let the trained security professional deal with security and let teachers deal with teaching and creating relationships with students and perhaps provide more training in how to keep kids as safe as possible

during a lockdown situation.

On an aside, with all the budget cuts to education, attacks on teachers by the right, increased workloads and reduced support, we may want to think about the psychological effects that might inflict on teachers. Remember the term "going postal"? Just saying.

Teachers don't need guns. They need more support with smaller class sizes and more time for each student in order to help them succeed emotionally as well as academically.

So my solution is: more teachers/smaller class size plus schedules that allow for relationship and community building equal safer, more successful schools.

Michele Renee
Eugene

WRONG LESSONS

Schools are the first "public" socialization that our children receive [see "Seclusion Rooms" story 12/20]. If students with disabilities are treated differently (including seclusion), what lesson is that teaching our children?

Beverley Mowery
Eugene

RAGING MALES

Taking the Second Amendment folks at their word, sure, a well-armed populace might be a good safeguard against tyranny, but how would a 15-day waiting period interfere with that? How would more rigorous background checks designed to eliminate criminals AND the mentally ill interfere with the Second Amendment? What about a requirement that all gun owners provide the means to keep their guns reasonably secure from theft? None of these suggestions are terribly onerous.

But what I really want to address is male rage. On Dec. 16, 2001, an Oregon man named Christian Longo murdered his wife and three children, dumped their bodies in a lagoon and fled the state. Responding dutifully to a heinous Oregon crime, *The Register-Guard* reported on the murders, the manhunt, Longo's Jan. 12 arrest in Mexico, Longo's extradition, trial and sentencing. But never once did the *R-G* report or editorialize on the elephant-in-the-room question: What would drive a man to murder his wife and children?

I speak from direct personal experience when I state that male rage churns away in the psychology of countless millions

of men. They're in the bars, they're at the sporting events and they're at the gun stores. The sooner our society begins to address this extremely widespread public mental health problem, the sooner we'll address the true root cause of mass-shooting tragedies.

Robert Bolman
Eugene

TASTELESS CRITICS

Usually I just bite my tongue when I read a misinformed and snarky article in your publication but I am blown away by the ignorance expressed by Alex Notman and Elliot Martinez last week [Gift Guide, 12/20]. Evidently these two professionals would rather roll on the ground giggling than discuss the true merits of vodka.

I don't know if the idea behind the comment was to suggest there isn't "good" vodka or the neophyte belief that all vodkas taste the same but there couldn't be a more foolish view. Unfortunately, it's an amateur assumption that vodka is tasteless as it happens to be an enlightening and exceptional distillate to taste and compare when conducted in the proper manner.

Some "good" vodkas that enthusiasts might want to try include Tito's, Zubrowka, Karlsson's Gold, Russian Standard Imperia

VIEWPOINT BY DARREN REILEY

An Uncomfortable Truth

WE LIVE IN A CULTURE OF VIOLENCE

It's time we face some uncomfortable truths. Last Friday, as the news poured in about Sandy Hook, I was teaching my peace studies class with my high-schoolers. It's a class that investigates the roots of violence and war on personal as well as international levels. If that doesn't sound important to you this week, I've got some questions for you.

When I heard that those gunned down were largely first graders, I lost it. I'm a dad. All children are my children. And while those with the nationwide microphones begin clamoring for answers and causes, responses and policies, oversimplifying the problem to gun control, or mental illness, I say we need to look with broader eyes at our culture.

In America, we have the blissful luxury of pretending we're somehow different from the rest of the world. Call it American exceptionalism if you like, the notion that somehow we don't have to follow the same rules as everyone else; call it a sort of national Peter Pan Syndrome; or perhaps you prefer Jean Baudrillard's *simulacra* — the idea that our simulations of reality have more meaning than reality itself. Whatever we call it, it's time we face some uncomfortable truths.

CHILDREN DIE. Around the world, kids get gunned down every day. They get killed during drone attacks on wedding parties in Pakistan. They get hit by Israeli airstrikes taking out Palestinian batteries that were set up in schools. They get forced at gunpoint to shoot family members to make them child soldiers. It's brutal, it sucks, and most Americans, if they hear about these things at all, don't take the time to put themselves in the place of those parents, or get pictures of the children's faces to make it real. And if we can ignore that reality, we will.

OUR CULTURE IS OBSESSED WITH VIOLENCE.

Consider cage matches, *Call of Duty*, snuff footage on the internet and a century-long foreign policy that thinks it appropriate to bully other countries with military force. As the poet Briathar Kinesi wrote: "We are a nation of children with guns, given only the tool and driven by a foolish fuse to use it for a powder-flash of power that ignores

the hour of consequence." People like this guy in Newtown, or that guy in Aurora, or those boys at Columbine, or this kid in Thurston. Feeling powerless, they're trying to find power in the only way our culture appears to respect. And until we can evolve our cultural definition of power, we're stuck in what Gandhi called the "law of the brute."

IT'S A MALE THING. It's not women who do these things. Overwhelmingly it's men who respond to conflict with brute force, who launch the missiles or pick up the assault rifles and go for a shooting spree. I refuse to believe there's something inherently violent about testosterone. I do think we're facing an epic crisis in masculinity. If we cannot figure out, as men, how to evolve past the middle-school mentality of "meet you at the flag pole after school with our patriot missiles," then putting an armed security guard at the door of every school in America will not prevent the next Sandy Hook. The problem is not a lack of adequate defenses, it's a lack of adequate consciousness.

I wish I had better answers, *any* answers. I've spent the last 10 years trying to create educational models that reduce violence and teach kids peaceful ways of being, and all I have are suggestions:

- Pay attention to how you speak to other people, especially your kids. Do you use your words to dominate, manipulate or belittle?
- Pay attention to what you and your kids watch on TV or play on their Xboxes. There are clear relationships between violent video games, saturation of violent images and a desensitization to violence in life. What entertains us reveals a lot about what's going on inside of us.
- Pay attention to how we create culture. About 75 percent of our state standards for teaching history in high school highlight some war or another. Is this because war really is the dominant force in history or because that's what we're taught to focus on? Eisenhower didn't coin the term "military-industrial complex" to be cute.

If human beings really are conscious creatures, then we are responsible for living and developing *consciously*. That's why I work in education, which is not about teaching stuff, but in helping kids figure out how to ask the right questions. And asking the right questions invariably requires us to face uncomfortable truths.

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