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OPINION

We Must Do Better for Our Children

Look at the facts on gun violence

BY MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

Nearly 2,000 people attended Molly Conley's funeral this summer to mourn the young humanitarian who was the victim of a random drive-by shooting the day after her 15th birthday. She was shot in the neck while walking with friends to a sleepover in a residential neighborhood in Lake Stevens, Wash. Molly was a 4.0 student best known for her kindness which she used to encourage her parents to care for infants waiting for foster families and to start a group called "Mother's Helper" that raised money to aid victims of domestic abuse.

In Caldwell County, Mo., sheriff's deputies went to the home of the Curtis family after receiving an emergency call on Jan. 11, 2012. Their 12-year-old son Steven had mishandled



a gun and accidentally shot himself in the head.

Steven loved playing football and being outside. He also spent a great deal of time hunting and grew up learning about gun safety and had a hunter's safety certification from the Conservation Department. In Breckenridge, Mo., a town of just 450 people, hunting safety is an important part of the middle school's agricultural curriculum. Steven's father didn't know how his son got the gun from a locked cabinet that was in their living room.

Eleven-year-old Tayloni Mazyck was walking near her apartment building in Brooklyn on May 31 with her mother and niece when she was caught in gang-related crossfire. A bullet crashed into innocent Tayloni's chin and lodged in her spine.

According to Brooklyn prosecutor Jordan Rossman, she will be paralyzed for life. Instead of walking in her fifth-grade graduation ceremony, Tayloni was transferred to Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine for the summer. Her mother says some days Tayloni is in in-

tense pain and easily frustrated because she can't do simple things such as scratch her nose; other days she is convinced she will walk some day in the future. Tayloni suffers from post traumatic stress, says she is too scared to go home, and wakes up crying from flashbacks of that terrible night.

These are three of the child and youth stories shared in the Children's Defense Fund's new report Protect Children, Not Guns, three of the 18,270 children and teens killed or injured by guns in America each year.

Like Molly, Steven, and Tayloni, every one of these children deserved to live their whole lives. We can and must do better.

The defense fund report documents the truth about guns and the facts about the preventable gun violence epidemic in our nation including the economic cost of gun violence; a state-by-state breakdown on gun deaths among children and teens; comparisons on gun violence rates between the United States and other high income countries; positive and nega-

tive state actions on gun violence prevention, and more.

It also documents the progress made since the Newtown, Conn. massacre and lists steps for continuing action with urgency and persistence.

What can you do? Urge your members of Congress to protect children from gun violence by supporting this year's common sense gun violence prevention measures including universal background checks and limits on assault weapons and high-capacity ammunition magazines.

We also need policies that support consumer product safety standards for all guns, public funding for gun violence prevention research, and resources and authority for law enforcement agencies to properly enforce gun safety laws. Parents, consider removing guns from your home and be vigilant about where your children play. Boycott products and places that glamorize and normalize dangerous weapons and violence.

Have we been fighting the wrong wars to keep our children

safe? Nearly five times more children and teens were killed by guns in 2010 than U.S. soldiers killed in action that year in Iraq and Afghanistan.

America's military and law enforcement agencies have four million guns. Our citizens have 310 million. And we have no idea how many of those guns were purchased without a background check. The gun lobby has been enriching gun manufacturers at the expense of our children's safety for far too long.

For years the National Rifle Association has blocked the truth and actively fought against the passage and enforcement of gun safety laws. Please use the resources in Protect Children, Not Guns to find the latest research and actions you can take to protect children, not guns, in your home, in your community, and as a citizen to help create a better, safer America for all children. Together we can—and must—do better right now. So many child lives depend on it.

Marian Wright Edelman is President of the Children's Defense Fund.

Leaving Immigrants out of the Conversation

Media coverage robs voice of people impacted

BY PETER HART

Unless you're a politician or a star athlete, the news of the day is rarely about your life. But sometimes, the media is buzzing quite specifically about you. Are you part of that conversation? Nope.

That kind of treatment is reserved for people who lack political power, yet are the subjects of media coverage.

Like immigrants. Congress has been working for months to pass a law that would, among other things, provide a path to citizenship for millions of undocumented immigrants currently living in this country. That's millions of lives directly impacted by this conversation. But the media hardly give immigrants a chance to speak.

Who are media talking to about immigration? When the media watch group FAIR, where I work, looked at a month of TV coverage around the president's State of the Union ad-

dress, the voices of immigrants could hardly be heard. We counted 157 sources in total addressing immigration issues. The vast majority were U.S.-born white male politicians.

Only three sources were identified as current or former undocumented immigrants — the people the conversation was about. That means the voices of the immigrants impacted by this political tussle, as well as those of the activists who made it a front-burner issue in the first place, were mostly absent.

Instead, the conversation is mostly among lawmakers. More than half of the appearances by Latinos in the study were by one Republican lawmaker, Senator Marco Rubio of Florida. The Cuban-American politician was born in Miami.

Of course, it's understandable that the politicians debating the laws will be in the news. But a media system that's almost entirely focused on inside-the-Beltway maneuvering and policy squabbles isn't informing Americans about the real lives that could be transformed by Congress. That matters a lot more than whatever John McCain thinks about the issue.

And this doesn't just happen

with immigration. FAIR looked at three months of coverage of discussions about raising the minimum wage — an issue that, like immigration, affects millions of people.

Out of 32 stories that featured 87 sources, just three of those sources were low-wage workers. Executives and managers — many of whom

wildly popular with the general public. It's not, as some media accounts put it, a "divisive" issue — unless you think the most important debate in the country is between politicians and business owners.

And it's important to note that while the political discussion focuses on a modest increase to \$9 per

hour favored by the White House, some economists point out that if the minimum kept pace with worker productivity, we'd be talking about raising the base wage to somewhere in the neighborhood of \$16 an hour. That's not a point a business owner is likely to make.

Can you imagine the media deciding to cover war without talking to the military? Or covering Wall Street without talking to bankers or chief executive officers? Me either.

But that's exactly how the corporate media cover issues that affect working people — by robbing them of a voice in the debate over their own lives.

Peter Hart is the activism director of Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting.

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aren't keen on paying workers higher wages — were heard from 17 times. In total, businesspeople and their advocates outnumbered workers and their advocates by more than 5 to 1.

The tragic thing about the debate over raising the minimum wage is that by focusing so much attention on political and business elites, the media give us an absurdly skewed version of reality.

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