OMNI
NEWSLETTER #8 ON VIOLENCE USA, March 24, 2014.

Compiled by Dick Bennett, OMNI BUILDING A CULTURE OF
PEACE AND JUSTICE.
(#1 Feb. 25, 2008; #2 August 20, 2011; #3 April 8, 2012; #4 July 26, 2012; #5 Aug. 22, 2012;
#6 June 8, 2013; #7 Nov. 7, 2013)
See OMNI Newsletters on International DAY to End Violence Against Women,
part of OMNI’s National/International DAYS Project.

“Violence has become the nation’s leading industry….” J. William Fulbright, The
Crippled Giant (1972).

Here is the link to all OMNI newsletters:

http://www.omnicenter.org/newsletter-archive/  Here is the link to the Index:

http://www.omnicenter.org/omni-newsletter-general-index/  Many of OMNI’s topical
newsletters confront different kinds of violence:  assassinations, battering, bullying, causes of wars,
consequences of wars, death penalty, drones, empire, extra-judicial killing, hatred,  individual wars,
International DAY to End Violence Against Women, militarism, torture, women, etc.  Also see the
newsletters on resistance to violence:  Gandhi, MLK,Jr., Peace Churches, Peace Organizations, Dept.
of Peace (proposed), nonviolence, conflict resolution, diplomacy, negotiation, peacemakers, UN,
compassion, etc.

Nos. 6-7 at end.

Contents: Violence USA #8
Murder Victims’ Families in Arkansas, Monthly Meeting
NRA
Totten, Epidemic of Gun Violence
MVFR News & Updates

Dear Friend,

This is a quick reminder that the March meeting of the Central Arkansas Chapter of MVFR will be held this Tuesday, March 25th, in the Fribourgh Room of the Main Library, 101 Rock Street in Little Rock, Arkansas.

The Central Arkansas Chapter is open to both MVFR Members and Supporters in Arkansas. They started meeting in January 2014 and generally meet on the 4th Tuesday of each month except in April and December when they meet on the 3rd Tuesday.

Please share this information with others you know who may be interested in participating.

For more information about this chapter please contact Judith Elane at judithlane@gmail.com.
Warmly,

Marcelle Clowes, Member Engagement Coordinator

How the Gun Lobby Became a Threat to Public Safety

Joshua Holland, Op-Ed, NationofChange, March 9, 2014: Just a generation ago, the NRA was a nonpartisan and relatively non-ideological organization that advocated for responsible and safe gun ownership in addition to defending gun rights. But in its twenty years under the leadership of chief executive Wayne LaPierre the organization has become another cog in the broader conservative advocacy machine. At the same time, with gun ownership declining, the organization has come to rely less on its members’ dues and more on firearm manufacturers, which now account for over half of the NRA’s revenues according to Walter Hickey at Business Insider.

TOTTEN'S EDITORIAL RE EPIDEMIC OF GUN VIOLENCE IN US -- BALTIMORE SUN

samuel totten

Dear All,

Here's an editorial I had published in the Baltimore Sun today. While
I am pleased the Sun published it, I am not happy that the editors interjected some of their own comments (i.e., about Gabby Gifford) as that changed the focus of my piece significantly. They also added the info about the recent shooting in Maryland (which I certainly appreciate, but that meant that they cut even more of my original submission).

Those of you who kindly provided me with feedback re my initial draft (Michael, Jim Randi, and Jill), a huge thank you! I actually addressed/incorporated many of your concerns in the final piece, some of which made it through the Sun's editorial/cutting process, some of which did not.

I realize that not everyone will agree with me but that is to be expected. Even if that is the case, I do hope there is at least some food worthy of thought here by each of you.

All the best,

sam

BALTIMORE SUN

Congress capitulates to the NRA [Commentary]
Do members need to experience tragedy firsthand to act?

By Samuel Totten
3:03 p.m. EST, January 28, 2014

"Guns don't kill, people do." What a flip response to the horrific epidemic of gun violence in the United States. Just this past weekend in Maryland, three young people, including the gunman, were shot to death in a mall in Columbia, and others were fatally shot in separate incidents in Anne Arundel County and Baltimore City.

On average, 32 Americans are killed with guns every day (not counting suicides, which add another 56 daily deaths), and 140 are treated for gun assaults. The U.S. firearm homicide rate is 20 times higher than the combined rates of 22 peer countries, and mass killings occur in the United States every two weeks.

If this country were experiencing a cholera or typhus epidemic, the medical, public health and social welfare communities, along with various arms of local, state and national government, would band together immediately to stanch the havoc it was wreaking.

Related

Glorifying guns gave us the Columbia Mall shooting [Letter]
Howard police prove their mettle [Letter]
Columbia's tragedy [Commentary]

Mall violence surprising but gun control no remedy [Letter]
Equal measures grief and remorse [Commentary]
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In comparison, the epidemic of gun deaths has been met with a lot of
hand-wringing and public condemnation by political leaders but not much else. That's not leadership, that's capitulation.

Those who have not experienced firsthand the shooting death (or serious wounding) of a loved one or close friend by an individual wielding a firearm are not likely to suffer the same severe and perdurable sadness of those who have. In fact, many only begin to address a specific social ill after being impacted by it directly, be it drunk driving, breast cancer or AIDS.

Tellingly, numerous members (and former members) of Congress have initiated and founded their own programs and foundations to combat a major social problem or disease only after having experienced a family tragedy. The late Sen. Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, who had prostate cancer, told a reporter: "There is no question that we [members of Congress] are motivated by what we know and what's been our experience with our families."

More specifically, Stevens asserted that he had lost count of the times lawmakers asked for money for various diseases or medical conditions directly affecting themselves or their family members.

(Full disclosure: I too have a personal interest in this topic. When I was 18, my volatile father, a former cop, held my mother, brother and me hostage at gunpoint one evening, threatening to blow our heads off.)

I fear, really fear, that little to no real movement regarding the epidemic of violence perpetrated by individuals with firearms in this country will ever be made (at least not in a way that truly ameliorates this epidemic) until members of Congress, or their close family members, are victims of such violence, though I hope that never comes to pass.

Then again, even that may not be enough to make Congress act. The 2011 attack on Arizona Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, who was critically wounded from a gunshot to the head, did not spur much action from her Congressional colleagues, despite her impassioned pleas.

Far too many Congress members seem too beholden to large private and corporate donors and/or too fearful of the National Rifle Association to act in the common good. They will do anything to avoid the possibility of losing votes, including doing little to nothing of consequence when their nation’s own citizens continue to be cut down like so many figures in a video game.

We can’t trust politicians to solve this matter on their own.

We, the people, of the United States who care deeply about the horrific carnage enveloping our nation perpetrated by young hoodlums, impressionable and mentally and morally immature teenagers, repeat violent offenders, and the mentally ill need to rise up and carry out a loud, aggressive and sustained onslaught against those members of Congress who fail to address this epidemic in a serious and efficacious manner. Either that, or we must accept the fact that the mass killings will occur regularly just as surely as the seasons of the year.

Samuel Totten, professor emeritus at the University of Arkansas,
Fayetteville, is a scholar of genocide studies. His email address is samstertotten@gmail.com.


20 December 13 PM

Reader Supported News


William Powell, Guardian UK
Powell writes: "The anger that motivated the writing of the Cookbook blinded me to the illogical notion that violence can be used to prevent violence. I had fallen for the same irrational pattern of thought that led to US military involvement in both Vietnam and Iraq."
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HANNAH LEVINTOVA

Editorial Coordinator

Hannah Levintova is a lover of stories—both telling and consuming them—and is an advocate for public broadcasting, golden delicious apples, the Oxford comma, and the em-dash.

FULL BIO | GET MY RSS |
The Gun Lobby's Stealth Assault on Small-Town America

Since Newtown, a pro-gun group has bullied local governments into repealing firearms ordinances. —By Hannah Levintova

| Wed Dec. 11, 2013 3:00 AM GMT. | The article I read in MJ Jan./Feb. 2013 is entitled “Sue First, Ask Questions Later.” —D |

This past spring, strangely similar pieces of mail started arriving at the offices of city attorneys in 28 Maryland communities. The tersely worded letters, many dated March 26, warned each town that some of its firearms laws were illegal and needed to be repealed immediately. Takoma Park's letter claimed that ordinances against carrying unlocked guns and possessing or selling guns in public places "grossly" exceeded state law and should be taken off the books, "out of respect for the rule of law." All of the letters warned that failure to comply would put the towns "at risk for a lawsuit."

Pho
to: Greg Henry/Shutterstock; Crosshair: Iysanmas/Shutterstock

• At Least 194 Children Have Been Shot to Death Since Newtown

• Interactive: Portraits of the Hundreds of Children Killed
"Once in a blue moon we get these kinds of letters from activist organizations," says Ryan Spiegel, vice president of the Montgomery County chapter of the Maryland Municipal League and a member of the Gaithersburg city council. What felt different this time, he says, was the coordination—and the timing: Just a month earlier, the Maryland Senate had passed some of the country's toughest gun control measures in the wake of the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre.

The letters came from the Second Amendment Foundation, a prominent pro-gun legal-defense organization, as part of a quiet but mounting campaign to strike down local gun laws across the country. So far, SAF has sent out about 425 letters to cities, towns, and counties in Maryland, Oregon, Virginia, and Washington and has announced plans to target hundreds more local laws.

Though they may be obscure and not always enforced, local gun laws have become low-hanging fruit for anti-gun-control activists since Sandy Hook. The strategy rests on the legal concept of "preemption," which restricts local lawmakers' authority to regulate firearms beyond what's in state law. For more than 30 years, the National Rifle Association and other pro-gun groups have successfully lobbied for preemption laws nationwide: In 1979, 7 states had them, but today, 45 do. Some states, such as Alabama, Idaho, and Maine, make exceptions for local restrictions on when and where people can shoot; some, like California, let localities control where and how guns are sold. All of them, however, set some limits to municipalities' ability to regulate guns, and that's where the Second Amendment Foundation comes in.

[Read the full article]
Moyers and Winship, Gunpowder and Blood on Their Cold, Dead Hands

*Bill Moyers and Michael Winship, Moyers & Company*

Moyers and Winship write: "There has been a lot of killing in America since Newtown a year ago, perhaps more than 30,000 gun deaths since that fatal day. And gun purchases are way up."

READ MORE

Why Cops Pull the Trigger

*Nicole Flatow, ThinkProgress*, RSN, Dec. 23, 2013

Flatow reports: "While the LAPD incident is still under investigation, a critical look back at several of the other recent incidents through ThinkProgress interviews with former officers, firearms trainers, and academics, reveal that policy and training may be as much to blame as human error."

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2014 Kicks Off With Gun Crimes Across the Country

*Annie-Rose Strasser, ThinkProgress* 02 January 14 PM

Strasser reports: "One thing didn't change at all as the calendar page turned this year: America's gun violence epidemic continued without pause through midnight Tuesday."

READ MORE
So, this morning, I did what I always do before the sun comes up: I read Tibetan Buddhist literature. Today, it’s Dzigar Kongtrül, and the book, *It’s Up to You*. Normally, what happens is this: one passage sticks, and as the day wears on, I can’t shake it. The passage sets up shop in my head for a good reason, I figure, and so most of the time, I try to figure out why. Here’s the passage for today that keeps returning:

*The root cause of suffering is ignorance. Ignorance is the ground of all actions and experience in samsara. In the sense that it is universal, we can say that ignorance is impersonal. We’re all equally subject to the karma and suffering arising from ignorance. In this respect, we’re all innocents, really. We don’t need to blame ourselves—or anyone else—for our suffering. Instead we can blame ignorance.*

First, a clarification: samsara is a big word in Buddhism, which means it’s hard to define. But for Buddhists, samsara has the ring of reality about it, and we all know the problems with defining reality. Right?

But typically samsara refers to the cycle of birth and death, the round of suffering that confronts us each day: it’s an equal-opportunity suffering that ranges from the subllest cravings for the tiniest pleasures—like eating a French-fry we don’t need—to the most senseless human tragedy—like a two-month old shot dead *accidentally* by a parent.

We can’t escape samsara until we diminish the ignorance that keeps us tied to it, and so here’s the kicker: all the stuff we’re doing to make ourselves happy or create a better world—having a French-fry or trying to protect a two-month-old from a handgun—can easily mire us more deeply in samsara, if we don’t know how to eat a fry or stop a senseless murder without cultivating the very same conditions that made us eat the fry or allowed the baby to get shot.

Doing the right thing for the right reason—it’s a balancing act. We’re ignorant—in the Buddhist sense—and because we often do the right things for the wrong reasons, we never get exactly what we
want. Then we get frustrated; then angry; and the cycle starts again; and then things go really wrong. Think Newtown, for example.

What does this have to do with reasonable gun control? That's what you're wondering, right?

In the campaign to bring this country toward a more reasonable relationship with firearms, Kongtrül’s teaching shows me how to move away from personalizing the radical disagreements that often surface in the gun debate. “In the sense that it is universal,” Kongtrül writes, “we can say that ignorance is impersonal.” If I can even momentarily envision my red-faced disagreements as the result of a shared ignorance, not as the conflict between my opponent’s ignorance and my good sense, then I believe new solutions will begin to reveal themselves—slowly at first, but reliably and more regularly. These will then be solutions based on a sense of community, a feeling of working together toward a common goal.

Can I really do this? Can I really move toward a vision of what Martin Luther King, Jr. and Sister Helen Prejean recognize as the blessed community? A place where tolerance and compassion work hand-in-hand with political action? I don’t know. I’ve watched the Dalai Lama do it with the Chinese for 35 years. I watched King do it with the American South, and Sister Helen do it with death-penalty advocates.

And I’ve seen the Tibetan monk, with whom I teach here at Arkansas, make a blessed community wherever he goes: kindergartens, primary schools, college classrooms (where I make my living), picnics, chance encounters.

Works for them. So this year, I’m going to try it.

I’ll take notes and get back to you.
related violence is most common in poor urban areas and frequently associated with ...

Suicides involving firearms - Violent crime related to guns - Gun ownership

2. Crime in the United States - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crime_in_the_United_States
Wikipedia
Jump to Violent crime - The burglary rates of selected industrialized countries as published by the US Bureau of Justice Statistics. The reported US violent ...

Race and crime in the United ... - America's Safest and Most ...

3. Violence Against Women | Amnesty International USA
www.amnestyusa.org › ... › Women's Rights
Amnesty International USA
Amnesty International fights to stop violence against women and create a world where women and girls are afforded their basic human rights.

4. In 2013, the US lost 30 people a day to gun violence. Obama ...
www.theguardian.com › ... › On politics... and whatever
The Guardian
Jan 31, 2014 - Ana Marie Cox: The president should be talking about guns (and gun control) a lot more. This goes way beyond horrific school shootings.

5. USA Gun Violence Statistics | heedinggodscall.org
heedinggodscall.org/content/pftoolkit-10
GUN VIOLENCE in the UNITED STATES. Some Indicative Data: Gun Ownership. The US has an estimated 283 million guns in civilian hands; Each year about ...

6. Violence in the United States - Netwellness.org
www.netwellness.org/healthtopics/domesticv/violenceUS.cfm
Power and control appear to be the basis for much of the violence that occurs. Firearms play a large role in violence in the U.S. because of their availability and ...

7. Office on Violence Against Women: USDOJ
www.ovw.usdoj.gov/
Office on Violence Against Women
Principal Deputy Director. Bea Hanson is the Principal Deputy Director of the United States Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women (OVW).

8. YWCA Week Without Violence™ - YWCA USA
www.ywca.org/.../YWCA_Week_Without_Violence8482.ht...
YWCA USA
The YWCA Week Without Violence, the third week in October, is a signature initiative created by YWCA USA nearly 20 years ago to mobilize people in ...

9. Here's how U.S. gun violence compares with the rest of the world
www.washingtonpost.com/.../schoo-shooting-how-...
In the wake of Friday’s deadly shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary school in Newtown, Conn., gun-control advocates have taken to social ...

10. The National Domestic Violence Hotline | 24/7 Confidential Support

www.thehotline.org/

National Domestic Violence Hotline

If you're interested in writing for us and becoming part of our blogging ... About Us. For over 17 years, the National Domestic Violence Hotline has been the vital ...
Lawrence Wittner, US Gun Control, International Arms Control, World Awash with Weapons
Baum, The AR-15 Can't Be Banned?

Contents #7  2013  Look at the good news first
2 Films from PBS Frontline
Brady Campaign
2nd Amendment Foundation Will Not Celebrate Guns on This Day
Steven Pinker, Violence Declining
Murder Victims’ Families for Reconciliation (MVFR)
Sidney’s Good News in Gunsense
Burris, Gunsense, Compassion in Action
Killing Blacks, Video
Epps, 2nd Amendment
Boothroyd, Police Violence
Frank Rich, US Soft on Domestic Terrorism
Burris, Gunsense, Vedder, Orwell, Gun Violence
Burris, Gunsense, “Transformation” Nov. 6, 2013
US Regional Violence

END VIOLENCE USA NEWSLETTER #8

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Dick Bennett

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