

While I can certainly understand the visceral, emotional response to the tragedy of Sandy Hook I must speak out against rampant emotionalism trumping sound reasoning. For weeks I have seen anti-gun vitriol from not only the citizenry, but far worse from elected officials, some seemingly in a mad rush to cast themselves as the “gun lobby’s fiercest opponent.”

The first step in solving a problem is to determine the exact nature of the problem. Too many people are too quick to scapegoat the gun, a tool incapable of wreaking any harm on anyone absent an individual who does not recognize or respect the rule of law. This mindset ignores the reality that while guns have been a part of the American culture since its inception, mass-murder by gun has not. In fact, this time of crime is a fairly recent phenomenon. If then, guns have been around (and in point of fact the AR-15 has been around for decades prior to Columbine) the principal question I’ve yet to see asked that needs to be is “What has changed?”

First we have been doing a deplorable job of promoting awareness of and then treating mental illness. The common thread in Columbine, Portland, Aurora, Tucson and Sandy Hook does not begin and end with guns; it lies rooted in the mental illnesses of the individuals involved. When we attack the gun we treat the symptom and not the disease. Until we recognize this the “disease” will continue unabated.

Second, we have created a culture over the past few decades that not only promotes violence but glorifies it. Our impressionable children are bombarded 24/7 with violence on television, violence in the movies and violence in arcade-style and on-line video games. In all the hue and cry over guns the few voices calling this reality out are being almost completely drowned out. It may interest some to know that there are on record, medical studies showing a direct link between exposure to violence and violent acts.

Third, we have created what the military terms a “target-rich environment” for the criminal through the creation of gun-free zones. If ever an action evoked the term “unintended consequences” surely this one does just that. While I cannot fault the principle sentiment behind the creation of gun-free zones the reality is they serve as an open invitation to the criminal element that they have a guarantee of defenseless prey at their mercy.

Instead of castigating the NRA for the suggestion that armed personnel in schools is one leg of a multi-level approach for preventing future tragedies such as Sandy Hook calm reason should have seen the wisdom in this proposal. I’ve heard countless arguments about how a limitation on magazine capacity might have prevented Sandy Hook; a competent guard or police officer with a weapon at the ready **would have** prevented Sandy Hook.

The answer will never be found by abrogating any of our Constitutional liberties; that my friends is taking the easy way, the coward’s way out. We can prevent future tragedies without sacrificing precious liberties if we have the resolve to take appropriate action.