

I am not opposed to gun control. I do not argue the worthlessness of assault weapons with high capacity clips to sportsmen and competitive shooters. I will not enter into an argument debating the intent of the second amendment, because I frankly don't care. I am opposed to making it the primary focus of our efforts to safe guard our children in the wake of the Sandy Hook tragedy.

I have little respect for the tenacious and stubborn way the gun community clings to its assertions that assault rifles are a valid sporting weapon. There is a reason they are called assault rifles. I they are effective, highly evolved people killing tools. But I have equally little respect for blaming our children's lack of safety entirely on the glamorous seemingly effective topic of gun control. It is a political winner in the wake of Sandy Hook, but it doesn't solve the problem.

My son has issues that closely parallel those of the Newtown gunman. He is autistic, and extremely impaired. He has the body of a strong athletic 20 year old, and the thought processes of a 5 year old. I don't have to imagine the impact a 5 year old's temper tantrum can have when in the body of a 20 year old man, I have stepped in between my son and my wife multiple times to protect her. Thanks to behaviorists from the State of Connecticut's Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) was trained in Passive Restraint in so I could physically control my son without harming him, but protecting those to whom his rage was directed. Thanks to those same behaviorists, my son and my entire family were trained to defuse s situations by recognizing his triggers and redirecting his behavior to non-violent ways. Thanks to a caring agency, he is now in a wonderful group home where his staff is even better trained and prepared to guide him in safe and productive pursuits.

However, Connecticut saw fit to discontinue the services which helped us steer my son away from violence to a happy life. The staff of behaviorists was drastically reduced when the DMR was merged with other agencies into the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). This merger resulted in cuts to and elimination of funding for job and social programs benefiting handicapped individuals too old for the care of the programs of our public schools. Even the number of case workers keeping an eye on impaired individuals and their families was reduced by budget cuts. Friends of ours with aggressive autistic kids can no longer get the kind of training we were able to receive that prepared our son for life as an adult, some are in a continual state of injury from daily attacks from their own adult children. Residential opportunities are few and far between. Fewer case workers mean fewer people getting the much needed advice and guidance on how to bring challenging and aggressive individuals into adulthood safely.

What happens when we pass stricter gun control laws and don't solve these issues. What happens if one of these kids snaps while driving (yes, many are capable of getting drivers licenses). How much damage could they do on a crowded sidewalk or playground? Will we outlaw cars? What if one of them watches a movie where so,wine gets revenge with a bottle full of gas, closed with a rag, lit with a match, and thrown? How much damage can they do? The numerous ways of hurting people don't have to be invented, they can be seen in any number of movies and TV shows, or read about in books on this shelves of our local libraries.

It is also questionable if gun control can really control guns. The slogans the NRA throws around resonate for a reason, many of them are true. Criminal users don't value legal guns, or guns they can buy after waiting periods. Registered weapons are not attractive because they leave a trail to the user. We can't stop gun smuggling until we are unwilling to exercise the required access by sealing our borders. Guns are easily made or improvised. Controlling ammunition is likewise futile, as a modestly experienced sportsman frequently makes his own reloads, why would anyone with bad intent find it less difficult? Finally, existing gun control laws have been ineffective in stopping gun violence. Even the Sandy Hook tragedy was carried out in spite of a law making possession of a gun on school grounds illegal. The fact that the only people who care about gun laws are people that don't have guns terrifies me, as these laws give us a feeling of safety that has no foundation in reality.

Where we can make strides is in supporting those who are likely to hurt themselves or others. Adequate numbers of case workers in agencies like the former DMR with sane case loads can adequately track the status and care of their clients, refer them and their families to qualified training, and get them the help they so badly need even to the point of placement in appropriate residential settings. Day programs for adults no longer under the care of the public schools can be reinstated to offer alternatives to the frustrations these people feel after they age out of school.

When our behaviorist told us how her department was being pared down to next to nothing, I asked her what would happen when kids who were no longer being served started to damage the world beyond their families. The look of fear in her face as he said "I don't know" was the most unsettling thing I ever saw. Until the news report about Sandy Hook. Go ahead and do the glamorous thing, but don't forget to do the thing that will actually help the problem.

Tom