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American youth: Swimming against the stream of blood money

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Nine days ago, 17 people died in a preventable whirlwind of blood, chaos and gunfire.

That's nothing new. America is adept at cultivating and ignoring the slaughter of children.

And, since Parkland, we've gone through a familiar dark-comedy routine that follows such shootings.

The president has called for throwaway half measures — background checks and a bump stock ban — aiming for short-term appeasement and no long-term follow-through (remember the bump stock ban proposed after the Vegas shootings last October?).

As an added distraction, the president resurrected the notion of arming teachers — an idea long-rejected by the National Education Association. No, it can't be that we need to tighten rules under which a Nikolas Cruz can legally buy tactical rifles. Obviously, the only possible answer is that Timmy's kindergarten teacher should wear a Glock to class.

For a more deluded proposal from a less suitable world leader, we'd have to throw back to 1997, and Dr. Evil's plan for "sharks with frickin' laser beams attached to their heads."

Wayne LaPierre also wasted no time drumming up alarmist, right-wing fears. Gun control advocates "hate the NRA, they hate the Second Amendment, they hate individual freedom," Wayne told the Conservative Political Action Conference Thursday.

Apparently, if you think a 19-year-old with a violent past shouldn't be able to buy an AR-15 and 30-round magazines, well, you just hate individual liberty.

This high-dollar hysteria isn't new. Wayne likes to claim liberty and sensible gun regulations can't co-exist. Perhaps he's confusing NRA blood money with individual liberty. Or, maybe he's overlooked the Cato Institute's 2017 Human Freedom Index.

That report found 16 nations that rank higher than the U.S. in individual liberty — mostly European countries and Canada. Each of those nations has significantly more stringent gun laws than the U.S., and yet, their people are more free. That's quite the head-scratcher, Wayne.

Cato, by the way, is a Libertarian think tank — hardly the socialist elite bogeyman Wayne wants you to believe is trying to crack open your gun safe.

But, again, none of this blood-outrage-apathy-blood cycle is new.

What is new is the lead role our nation's youth are taking in responding to the crisis.

The survivors in Parkland and their peers have too-often seen adult apathy, “alternative facts” and outright lies yield no substantive response to the bloodshed.

They have seen how easily their adult leaders are whored out for blood money.

They have seen us collectively fail to do our damn jobs, and they are stepping up.

Whether you agree with their policy proposals or not, they have proven themselves articulate, educated and persistent.

These young Americans — patriots in the truest sense — have captured national attention with their passionate desire to lead in a nation where leadership and integrity have been abandoned by the adults.

But, the survivors and their peers have captured the attention of the NRA and the right-wing tinfoil hat brigade for another reason: they’re too young to have been bought.

And that, it seems, is what makes them so dangerous.

The president and a handful of politicians have granted these young leaders some platitudes and camera time. But, so far, their demands for real reform have gone unheeded.

In the short term, those in the pocket of the NRA believe these young people, like their parents, will simply tire of the fight and go away.

But, these young people bear the marks of every great social movement that’s shaped this nation — you know, the ones that made us great.

This movement is only just beginning. But, it draws its strength from a youth that has staying power, and that still has the audacity to dream of an America worth calling great. These young people don’t seem inclined to forget the wellspring of blood spilled by our greed and apathy.

Failure to recognize their power may be what finally undoes the NRA’s stranglehold on American politics.

Ignore them, if you choose. In the short term, that may not mean much. But, in the long term, an ideology that ignores the passion of youth is doomed to die.