

# DAILY NEWS

## **LUPICA: In a country where a 15-year-old can get a gun and kill classmates, a wall won't keep us safe**

Mike Lupica

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This is a time in America where the main political debate is all about the wall between our country and Mexico that President Donald J. Trump has been talking about for more than a year-and-a-half, and the status of Dreamers, the children of illegal immigrants raised in this country and never having known a country other than this one.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, is the official name for a program created by President Barack Obama, one that used to protect nearly 800,000 young people as American as you and me until Trump rescinded it last fall.

And now we are where we are, with those 800,000 facing deportation and being used as pawns in a cynical and self-serving political game that will likely end up with Trump getting his wall. At which point we can all sleep better at night, of course.

“...if there is no wall, there is no DACA,” Trump tweeted Tuesday.

There were no tweets from this President about another school shooting in America, this one at Marshall County High School in Benton, Ky. But once again, as there was more senseless death in a country in which a 15-year-old shooter could get his hands on a gun, in a country lousy with guns, you wondered about what kind of wall could have kept Bailey Nicole Holt and Preston Ryan Cope — two 15 year olds shot to death for the crime of going to school Tuesday morning — safe.

You similarly wondered what the reaction would have been from this White House and from all those in Congress who are more than willing to use Dreamers as pawns so they can look tough as Marines on border security if the shooter at Marshall County High in Benton, Ky., had been a Dreamer, or an illegal immigrant, or someone from Pakistan, or someone pledging his or her allegiance to ISIS.

Everybody wants to talk about immigration, a subject that now tries to divide this country as much as race has. Everybody is quick to demonize immigrants first chance they get, even though the CATO Institute recently published statistics that point out, more than somewhat stubbornly, that both illegal immigrants and legal immigrants have incarceration rates far below those of native-born Americans, especially the native-born Americans who make us the all-time world leader in mass shootings.

Imagine if it were immigrants continuing to shoot up schools in America at the rate that we shoot up schools in America. Imagine if it really were an illegal or Dreamer who walked into Marshall County High at a little before eight o'clock Tuesday morning, with the whole school day in front of Bailey Nicole Holt and Preston Ryan Cope the way the rest of their young lives was supposed to be ahead of them.

According to the local police, the shooting started at 7:57 a.m. By the time the first responders got to the school, a little after 8 o'clock, Bailey Nicole Holt was already dead. And those who knew her and loved her and mourn her, family members whose lives will never be the same without her, have a right to wonder what tighter border security would have saved her from another American with a gun.

A junior at Marshall County High School who had not yet arrived for a first class when the shooting had already started, said this to a reporter from NRP later:

“You just never think it’s going to happen to you.”

But why not? Why would anybody think it wouldn’t happen to their friends, at their school? Here is what another Marshall County High student, a young man named Bryson Conkwright, said on “Good Morning America” on Wednesday:

“I see this kid walk up. I didn’t pay that much attention to (him). I turn back and he draws a gun out from his side and I’m like...I didn’t know what to think at all. And I see this kid draw up his gun and he just points it.

“By the time he pulled the trigger, it hit me that this kid...he’s shooting at us, he’s shooting at us and I was just sitting there in shock and watching my friends and people that I’ve known forever...just dropped. It was unbelievable.”

Then this teenaged boy, who watched it happen at his school this time, watched his friends get shot, spoke of how the latest gun tragedy in America involved some of the nicest people he had ever met. You know who had dreams? Bailey Nicole Holt did. Ryan Preston Cope did. But there was no real conversation about them on a day when Trump wrote of “Cryin’ Chuck Schumer” on Twitter, when Sen. Ron Johnson of Wisconsin turned into Sen. Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin and started yelling about secret societies in the FBI.

And underneath all this posturing and rhetoric was the sound of more gunfire, at another American high school, the first fatality this time at a little after 8 in the morning. The only border worth talking about in Benton, Ky., was the front door of Marshall County High, 20 high school dreamers shot, two killed. Dreamers spelled with a lower-case “d.”

You tell me what the conversation would be like today in America if it had been a Dreamer, capital “d,” with the gun.