

Guns in America: How Many Lives Is It Going to Take?

Miles J. Zaremski – 12/17/12

There but for the grace of God, go I.

Recall this coinage? Recall it again as you think about the innocent children slaughtered at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., not by a single person, but by the epidemic called, guns in America. It does not matter that a lone gunman went on an incomprehensible killing spree and had "only" three or more firearms at his disposal. It could have been you or me anywhere in America who was in the wrong place at the wrong time that took a life-ending bullet, as we have seen with students at Virginia Tech, with persons at that shopping mall in Portland, Ore., with the beltway snipers, at an LA fitness center, at a Sheik Temple outside Milwaukee, recently in a hospital in Alabama, at Columbine, in Tucson and Gabby Gifford, at Ft. Hood, Texas, on a street corner in Chicago, the murder-suicide by the NFL Kansas City Chiefs football player, or in the movie theater in Aurora, Colo.

To those who oppose gun control measures, like the leadership of the NRA, we hear that people kill; guns do not. Or, the more concealed guns on the street, the safer we all will be. But to this I say, without guns on the street, people cannot kill. Look at how effective gun control laws are in other industrialized nations to show this point.

The other day in Chicago, the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit ruled that Illinois' ban on carrying concealed weapons outside the home was unconstitutional based upon an earlier decision of the Supreme Court, finding that carrying guns inside the home was protected by the Second Amendment and thus could be applied to the states. Illinois was the last state to absolutely ban carrying concealed firearms outside the home.

The analysis used by Judge Richard Posner, a leading conservative intellectual on the bench who wrote for a two judge majority (Judge Ann Williams dissented), was premised on the Second Amendment protecting those just as much outside the home as it does inside the home, and inasmuch as the Supreme Court has already spoken that the Second Amendment protects the latter category, so it must the former too. Posner stated, "A right to bear arms thus implies a right to

carry a loaded gun outside the home." The executive vice president of the NRA, Wayne LaPierre, said, "Today's ruling is a victory for all law-abiding citizens in Illinois and gun owners throughout the country." The headline of a blog of the conservative think tank, the Cato Institute, concerning this decision reads, "An Important Victory for the Right to Keep and Bear Arms". Tell all this to the 20 families who will never see their young and innocent children again in Connecticut or those who lose sons and daughters on the streets of Chicago, or those in Aurora, at Columbine, at Virginia Tech, and... !

When will the expansiveness of the Second Amendment be curtailed? When will elected representatives in Washington act and not utter wasted words? When will President Obama act to make gun control part of his second term? The answer to all is in one word: *now*.

We view what goes on in the streets of Damascus, Syria, in Benghazi, Libya, and in other parts of the Middle East where human beings are killed senselessly because everyone has guns to use "outside the home." Such violence was even the predicate for Susan Rice withdrawing her name for Secretary of State. In America, we deplore seeing and reading about any of this, but with the likes of a decision from the appeals court in Chicago, or those who say that having concealed weapons on America's street will reduce death or injury from gun violence, we are becoming what we detest seeing worldwide. Let's go back to the horrific carnage that just occurred. To those NRA folks and their lobbyists, I suppose you would be telling us that one or more of the school faculty or staff should have carried a concealed weapon to minimize loss of life or injury, in a school no less, and when that deranged 20-year-old started shooting, to return his fire. In the crossfire, more lives of innocent children could well have been taken. Is this what we have become, a police state?

So, let's stop the talking and take action, and take it now! We must have laws in place that ensure as much as possible that guns will not be the source of people killing people. For starters, bring back the federal law that banned certain assault weapons that expired eight years ago. Or what about reducing the ammunition that can be sold or placed in a magazine clip? Ensure background checks for those who do wish to purchase a gun, with an annual or periodic renewal of registration, much like with how a driver's license is renewed. Make those who purchase and register guns be legally responsible for anyone using or accessing them. Create and populate interlinking national and state data bases, including the military. Put tighter restrictions on the sale of guns at gun shows, including registration of any such sales. Also, as has been shown too many times now by those deranged human beings who have used guns to kill others, beef up the country's mental health system to not only treat those who are afflicted with mental illness, but preclude them from possessing or accessing guns as

reasonably as possible. And while are at it, how about Illinois' Attorney General Lisa Madigan challenging Posner's decision by requesting that the entire circuit court review the decision (called an "*en banc*" hearing) or, if not, ask the Supreme Court to take and review it.

Our innocence as a country was taken away after 9/11. With what has just occurred, the innocence of being a child in school has too. Too many tears have flowed. How many more lives is it going to take to change the status quo about [not] regulating firearms in the U.S.?