



Dear Annoying Parkland Kids: We Gave You A Pretty Awesome World, Try Not To Mess It Up

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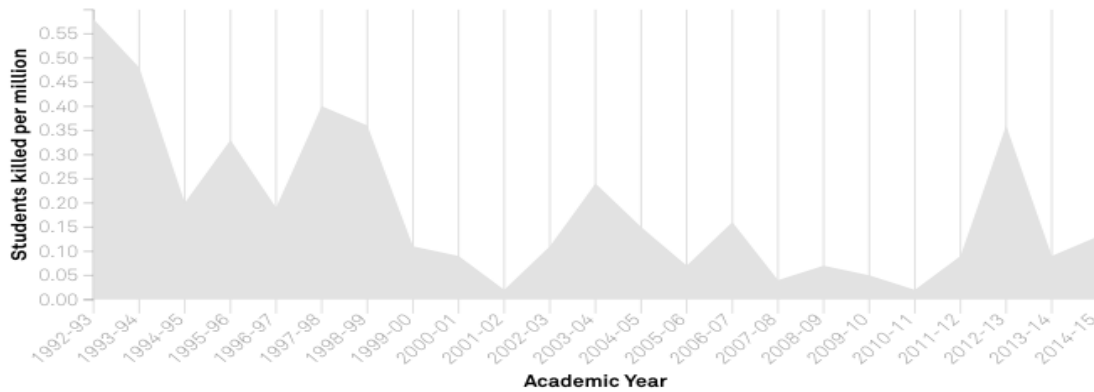
All the reasons for refusing to allow ourselves to be led by children were summed up in the latest coronation of the Parkland kids, this time by ancient leftist Bill Maher. He invited David Hogg and Cameron Kasky on his show so Hogg could boast about hanging up on the President of the United States, and so Kasky could give us this sanctimonious little lecture: “I mean this sincerely, I really do, to all the generations before us, we sincerely accept your apology. We appreciate that you are willing to let us rebuild the world that you f—ed up.”

This sums up everything that’s wrong with these kids’ astroturfed ride to fame. They get flown around the country, they get invited on TV, they get puffball interviewers like Bill Maher, all because they are willing to repeat in a cloyingly self-righteous manner the message favored by their adult handlers. But not because they actually know what they’re talking about.

Let’s look at their arrogant presumption that previous generations messed up the world, so that today’s kids, in their superior wisdom, have to “rebuild” it.

Start with the issues most directly at hand here. School shootings are actually down over the last 20 years. Northeastern University Professor James Alan Fox analyzed the data and concluded that mass school shootings are “extremely rare events” and that “there is not an epidemic of school shootings.” Here’s what the data look like.

Students Killed Per Million in Fatal School Shootings, 1992/93 through 2014/15



Data Source: James Alan Fox and Emma E. Fridel, "The Three R's of School Shootings: Risk, Readiness, and Response," in H. Shapiro, ed., *The Wiley Handbook on Violence in Education: Forms, Factors, and Preventions*, New York: Wiley/Blackwell Publishers, June 2018.

Moreover, Fox adds that “over the past 35 years, there have been only five cases in which someone ages 18 to 20 used an assault rifle in a mass shooting,” meaning that the most common proposed new gun control measure would have little effect.

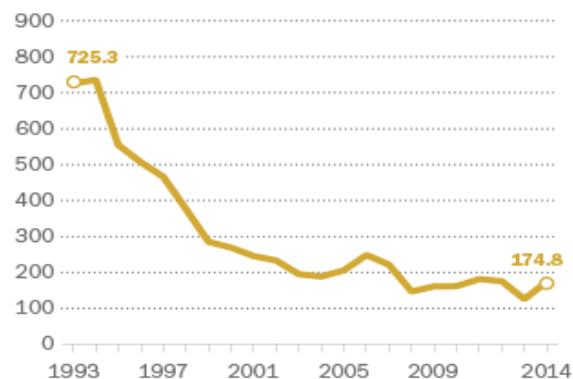
Speaking of guns, you might think that without gun control, we’re living in a lawless post-apocalyptic hellscape. In fact, crime is down. Murders are down. Violent crimes committed with guns are way down.

Gun Violence Has Declined Since '90s

Deaths by firearm per 100,000 people, all ages



Nonfatal violent firearm crime victimizations per 100,000 people ages 12 and older



Note: Total gun deaths include police and accidental shootings and shooting deaths of undetermined intent, which are not counted as homicides or suicides.
Source: CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (firearm deaths), Pew Research Center tabulations of National Crime Victimization Survey, U.S. Justice Department (nonfatal victimizations)

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This is the period in which restrictions on gun ownership have been substantially rolled back — the assault weapons ban of the 1990s was allowed to expire, and Supreme Court rulings invalidated gun bans in cities like Washington and Chicago. Americans now own about 300 million guns. So clearly, gun ownership is not causing an increase in crime rates. In fact, statisticians who looked closely at gun deaths concluded that none of the frequently suggested gun control measures would do much to reduce these numbers.

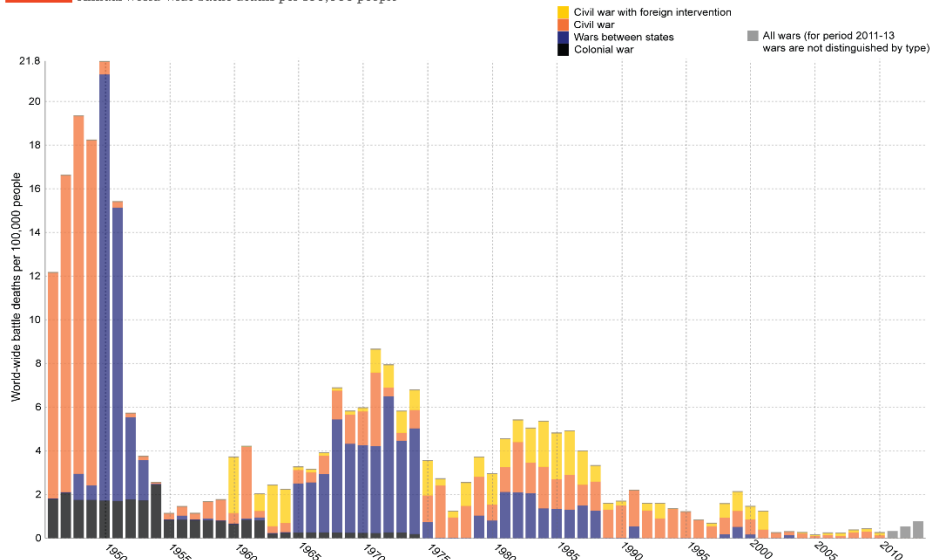
But cite these statistics and you will be told that you cannot contradict the Parkland kids because being present at the scene of a mass shooting makes them unquestionable experts on the topic. No, really. Kasky tells us, “We’ve seen our friends text their parents goodbye. We *are* the experts.” I can hear Tom Nichols grinding his teeth from here. Obviously, being an expert on

guns, crime, and mass shootings requires actual knowledge and research, including the ability to read and understand crime statistics.

This presumption that we adults have ruined the world has wider roots. Today's young people are bombarded with a lot of doom and gloom that tells them everything is getting worse, pushed onto them by people who have an interest in recruiting them as activists.

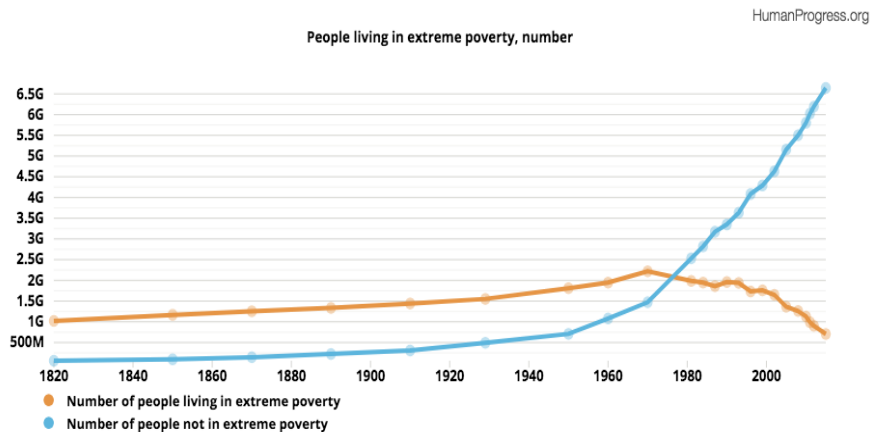
They may be surprised to learn, for example, that in addition to crime being down, war has decreased across the globe. The number of wars and the number of deaths in wars decreased dramatically after World War II, of course, but it decreased dramatically again when the Soviet Union collapsed, almost as if Communism was an engine of global conflict.

OurWorld in Data Battle death rate in state based conflicts by type (1946-2013) – by Max Roser
Annual world-wide battle deaths per 100,000 people



Data source: PRIO Battle Deaths Dataset (1946-2007) and data provided by Steven Pinker for 2009 and later (based on UCDP and PRIO). The interactive data visualisation is available at OurWorldinData.org. There you find the raw data and more visualisations on this topic. Licensed under CC-BY-SA by the author Max Roser.

Along with war, extreme poverty across the world is down significantly over recent decades and especially since the Industrial Revolution.



America has done especially well. Median family income in America is nearly triple what it was in 1950. The rich have gotten richer, and the poor have also gotten richer.

Surely, all of this economic growth is ruining the environment. Yet according to the EPA, U.S. GDP has grown by 253 percent since 1970, while emissions of “six common pollutants” — things like lead, carbon monoxide, and sulfur dioxide — are down 73 percent. Our air and water are about as clean as they have ever been.

And so on. The world we older generations have given today’s kids is actually pretty awesome. We can’t protect them from every danger and every risk, and we can’t stop every tragedy like the Parkland shooting. But by historical standards, our kids will be safer, healthier, and wealthier, and they can expect to live longer and more untroubled lives than we did, or than our parents did, or than our grandparents did.

I can see, though, why they wouldn’t realize any of this, because there are some who have a political interest in making things look worse. If you want young people to think capitalism is the cause of war — a view they hear often — you don’t want them to find out that the triumph of the capitalist countries in the Cold War led to a decrease in war. If you want them to rail against “global capitalism” — I can’t decide if this is a cause of the left or of the right these days — you can’t have them realizing that capitalism and trade are wiping out global poverty. If you want them to think free markets are inferior to socialism, you don’t want them to understand the massive increases in prosperity in free market societies, or to question the latest environmentalist panic. And if you want them to become televised activists for gun control, you have to create the impression that there is an epidemic of gun crimes and mass shootings.

The Parkland kids have swallowed all of this, and hence their ignorant ranting to us about how the older generations have messed everything up.

To be sure, the kids we're seeing on TV are not representative of their peers. We don't hear much about the Parkland students who don't fit the left's narrative. Instead, we're mostly getting a couple of the high-school debate club types. Once I found out that detail, it all fell into place, because we all remember the guys from high-school debate club. They weren't the smartest kids, just the most preening and self-important.

The important point is that too many of today's young people are not being taught to see and appreciate what has made the world as good a place as it really is for them. They have no idea who designed the large and complex systems that produce the peace and prosperity they enjoy, no idea how those systems work, and no idea how much they can foul them up by knocking out pins and levers and constitutional amendments just because they're angry.

The fastest way to mess up the world the older generations gave them is to think that they are all experts at age 17 because they read some lefty rhetoric and got "woke." You know who also thought that? The Baby Boomers. People my age — technically, I'm Gen X, but early enough in it that we never thought of ourselves that way — grew up with this. We grew up with smug Boomers like Phil Collins assuring us that, "My generation will put it right. We're not just making promises that we know we'll never keep." Spoiler alert: they didn't keep those promises, and everything turned out just fine. But now the same people who were wrong about war, wrong about poverty, wrong about capitalism, and wrong about guns want to get the grandkids to give one more shot at fixing what isn't broken.

Then again, they also thought lame hand-puppet parodies of Ronald Reagan were really clever, so the lesson from this is to show a little humility, kids. You're still learning, and you would be well served not to be content to repeat what you learn at school, but to go do your own reading and research and listen to people who disagree with you. It's not as traumatic an experience as you have been led to believe. When you can show that you understand what's good about the world we are giving you, and you have some idea of how it got to be that way — *then* we'll listen to your ideas for changing it.

Then again, the previous generations are not blameless. We did create cable news, and for some reason none of us can really remember, we made Bill Maher famous. Sorry about that.