

The Second Amendment, Politics And Violence In America

by Tarcísio Beal

Ten years after the massacre of 20 first graders and 6 school employees at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut on December 14, 2012 and the ensuing horrors of many more mass shootings since, including the recent slaughter of 19 children (9 and 10-year olds) and two teachers at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, on May 24th of this year, the widespread shock of the public is still being downplayed by those who are ultimately responsible for these atrocities.

How could the nearby presence of 379 police and security forces, including some standing right next to the closed doors of the classrooms where the children and teachers were being gunned down, do nothing for more than an hour to stop the carnage?!? If the authorities who ultimately bear the blame for this tragedy, say they regret the loss of the children and teachers, they still are not acknowledging their own responsibility for failing to enact real gun legislation and establish policies and means to prevent future similar tragedies. They have even issued false reports about what happened at Robb Elementary. In fact, in 2021, the Governor, the Lieutenant-Governor, the Attorney General, and the Republican legislators of Texas did the opposite, greatly facilitating tragedies like that of Uvalde's Robb Elementary School and, not surprisingly, earning praise from the National Rifle Association. What Congress passed recently, which has been advertised as "effective reform", was definitely not so—and was appropriately labeled "bull...t" by Rock star John Mellencamp, for it did not fully limit the purchase of AR-15s, powerful military-like weapons. Still, it was criticized by the NRA because it cut down on gun-makers' sales' profits. Given the multiplication of the victims of guns, including children and youth, Congress should come to its senses and adopt the kind of legislation enacted in Australia,

where gun violence has been substantially reduced.

The NRA convention held in Houston during the weekend of the Uvalde school massacre showed that what their supporters glorify is the killing power of their weapons and the profits they can earn. Then you hear their statements of regret for the children's deaths, as if their killings were not facilitated by their own attitudes against responsible gun legislation that would limit the use of weapons of mass destruction and set limitations on the use of weapons. Ex-President Donald Trump, the Texas Governor and Attorney General and some Republican legislators even voiced ridiculous commentary stating that the solution to tragedies like the mass slaughter of Uvalde's children and teachers is to have more good guys with guns to bring down the bad guys with guns. Wayne LaPierre, head of the NRA, said as much.

Banning assault weapons and large capacity magazines could greatly help, but it will not be enough; raising the age of the gun buyer to the age of 21, if it still leaves the door open to other killers; and expanding background checks through red flag laws that place suspects under surveillance makes little difference in many cases. The more guns are sold, the more killings will occur!

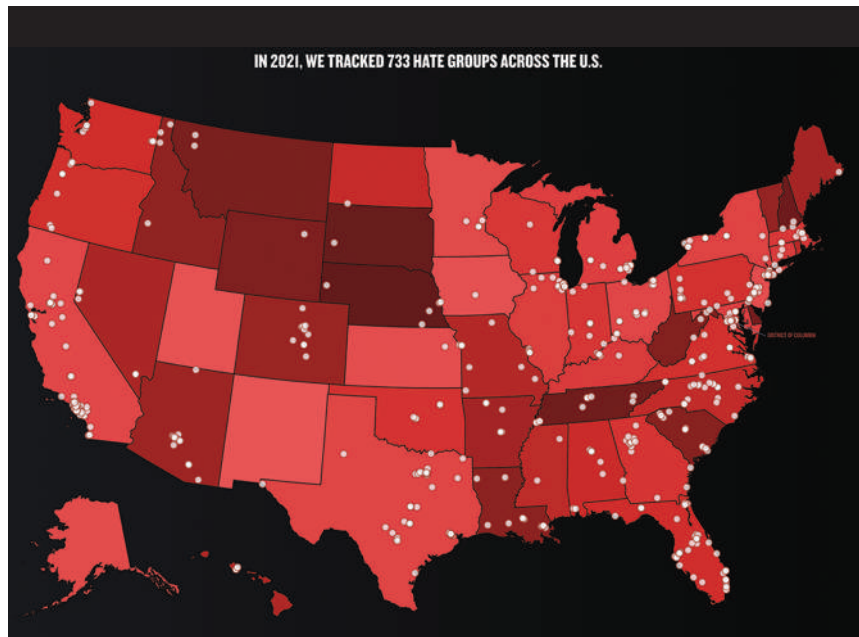
At the bottom of it all, however, lies the misreading, abuse, and manipulation of the Second Amendment that was ratified on December 15, 1791 and includes the shortest text of all amendments in the Constitution:

"A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed."

This right to bear arms was instituted because of the threat against the young American Republic by the many British loyalist armed groups who refused to recognize its independence. To say



Floyd Mendoza's mural dedicated to victims of the Uvalde shooting was unveiled Monday, June 13, 2022, in Pasadena, Texas.



SOURCE: Southern Poverty Law Center - www.splcenter.org/hate-map

that the Founding Fathers intended it to be interpreted as it now is by gun lovers, and even by some American courts today, is placing precedence of individual freedom over human life and social peace. In the late 18th century, the killing power of guns was minimal in comparison to what it is today when one single weapon can kill dozens of people within minutes.

The Second Amendment, just like every constitutional right, must be interpreted in line with the current realities, something the Supreme Court emphasized in 1913. It is totally false to say that the Second Amendment must be enforced literally as if the Founding Fathers would justify the prejudices, the racism, the terrorism, and the mass violence of today's America.

Underneath and behind all the violence that has been multiplying during the last two decades lies the inaction on the part of the nation's public authorities, especially in the States controlled by Republicans and in the Senate, where their blind partisanship and resistance to dialogue has thwarted every needed reform and quashed our democratic ideals. The universal right to vote, authentic dialogue, and constant major reforms to deal with the social problems, all central elements of a true democracy, have been abysmally lacking since 2016. Violence and racial prejudices are organized and carried out by a growing white minority which refuses to recognize and respect the basic human rights of Blacks, Native Americans, Latinos, Asians, Muslims, and Jews, and that glorifies "White Supremacy" as the only legitimate face of America. Today 54% of the the violence sweeping our society is connected with the Nazi-like ideology of white supremacists. Meanwhile, a large segment of the media, led by Fox News and Tucker Carlson, keeps spreading lies, distortions, and antidemocratic maneuvers, playing up the agenda of MAGA ideology, the extreme right wing that threatens the very soul of the U.S. Now Fox News has decided, since June 7th, not to air the revelations of the House Committee that exposes those responsible for the January 6th assault on Capitol Hill, of which Fox News was aware during its early stages.

Meanwhile, the epidemic of gun violence has doubled from 30 incidents in 2019, to 40 in 2020, to 61 in 2021, and the dreadful count will certainly be much higher before the end of 2022. "Every single day" – notes the Rev. Deanna Hollas, a Texas nati-

ve and Minister of Gun Violence for the Presbyterian Church – "incidents involving guns kill more than 120 lives." (cf. Alejandra Molina, Religion News Service-San Antonio Express-News, June 5, 2022, F1). During each of the weekends of June 3-5 and of June 10-12, there were dozens of mass killings across the country.

Research published by the Southern Poverty Law Center (*The Year in Hate and Extremism 2021*, pp. 44-61) exposes the many undemocratic, nazi-fascist, racist, and wedded-to-violence **organizations** that have multiplied enormously, especially in the last decades while the legal authorities do little or nothing to stop them. Their numbers alone should alarm every true American patriot: there are today in the USA **733 Hate Groups** and **488 Anti-government Groups** for a total of **1221**, thus identified:

Hate & Anti-government Groups

733 Hate Groups: 18 Ku Klux Klan groups

(two in Texas); **54 Neo-Nazi**; **98 White Nationalist**, including a publisher of *Third Reich Books*, an *Aryan Network*, Georgia's *American Nazi Party*, and Columbia, S. Carolina's *Fight White Genocide*; **17 Racist Skinhead groups**, **9 Christian Identity** (anti-Semitic), including one with the title of "*Church of Israel*;" **16 New Confederate**; **18 Anti-Immigrant**; **65 Anti-LGBTQ**; **50 Anti-Muslim**; **61 Anti-Semitic**, including *Nation of Islam* with three locations across the USA; **295 General Hate**, including 7 locations with the name of the *House of Israel* and 49 called *Israel United in Christ*;

488 Anti-Government Groups: 92 Militias which offer gun and field training exercises; **75 Sovereign Citizens** who interpret law their own way and claim to be exempt from its standard meaning; **52 Conspiracy Propagandists**, including the *John Birch Society* with 23 locations; **3 Constitutional Sheriffs** that claim that only the counties, not the state nor the federal government, have the right to control land; **266 Anti-Government General groups** with 49 locations. Source: bit.ly/year-hate

The rise and multiplication of many of these violent, hateful, antisocial, antigovernmental organizations have been swelling ever since Donald Trump became President and the Republican Party began betraying everything that Abraham Lincoln stood and died for. Under the leadership of Mitch McConnell, the U.S. Senate has practically shut down dialogue with the Democrats and the GOP embraced the antidemocratic crowd with the manipulation of lies, distortions, and the worship of power and control.

How much better off would the nation be today if McConnell and the GOP had not blocked the removal of the egomaniac President of the USA, and not gone along with his "Big Lie," the totally irresponsible claim that the 2020 election was stolen by the Democrats!!! McConnell has commented that the problem of mass murders is a mental one, not one due to guns. Never in U.S. history has a congressional leader failed so miserably to deal with

The Second Amendment

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the threat to democracy; never has a Party sought the support of a popular base by spreading lies and false accusations against its critics, by manipulating the facts, by refusing to engage in true dialogue and by resorting to all sorts of antidemocratic politics. Since 2021, Republican legislators have proposed more than 360 vote-suppressing bills in 47 States, still insisting on the “Big Lie.”

The 733 Hate Groups listed above provide plenty of evidence that our society is contaminated by a large number of organizations and individuals who threaten its very soul. It is more than time that all responsible Americans form a united front to save the nation from a major, bloody confrontation with those who wish to destroy it. **At the bottom of it all lies a worship of violence that dominates even some sports.** American football, for example, is so dangerously violent that 95% of its retired quarterbacks end up suffering or dying from brain injuries. Then there are some forms of wrestling and of boxing that are basically an awful display of violence upon the human body. The televised program called “Monday Night Raw” stands as an example of the most violent, no-rules confrontations between males versus males and/or females versus females, projecting the ugliest of the spectacles which is wildly applauded by crowds.

The worship of violence has become quite widespread during this last decade, setting up a climate for evil, and terroristic acts that are facilitated by the lack of control of deadly weapons under the excuse that their possession is a legitimate constitutional right. Thus freedom is turned into a supreme value, making human life expendable. Hence the recently-voiced, ridiculous solution that we can deal with a person armed with a bad gun by having another person holding a good gun; or by militarizing our schools, hospitals, churches, synagogues, restaurants, marketplaces, etc. The majority of the Republican congressmen and governors, instead of emphasizing the sacredness of human life, exhibit a strong devotion for guns and a blind, ahistorical interpretation of the Second Amendment, as shown by the Republican congres-



Havoc wreaked at the U.S. Capitol Building on January 6, 2021 included: burned and stomped American flags, shattered windows, and vicious attacks on police officers. Photo by Marco Verch, Creative Commons License 2.0.

man who brought his own gun to a meeting of the House of Representatives. We must alert the American public by exposing the governors, congressmen, and major groups that have for too long prevented effective control of guns. Lobbyism, that is the control of Congressmen by billionaires and by powerful organizations with money and power **must be abolished** because it makes a mockery of the democratic system.

Finally, it was heartwarming to see the ongoing solidarity of thousands of Texans towards the families of the victims of the Robb Elementary tragedy in Uvalde. Among them has been San Antonio’s Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller who has become fully involved in the healing of the survivors and of the families of the victims. He went well beyond consoling the victims and standing by their grieving families and courageously denouncing the lack of preventive measures and the worship of killing weapons, noting that “guns are treated as idols.” Yes, peace and brotherhood will reign supreme only when the sacredness of every human life takes precedence over a selfish concept of individual freedom and as the central value of a truly Christian and democratic society.

BIO: *Tarcisio Beal is professor Emeritus of History at the University of the Incarnate Word. [Note: Sources used for this article can be obtained from lavoz@esperanzacenter.org]*

What you going to do big boy

What you going to do big boy
What you going to do today

Your mommas gone to Vegas
With that keno player nick
Daddy’s off to Nashville
Gibson on his hip

Sister Susy left for Hollywood
Gonna be a big screen star
Brother Billie’s in Alaska
Prepping for the end

The flames are getting hotter
Your country’s gone to hell
Extremist on the right side
Gonna take our nation down

What you going to do big boy
What you gonna do today
What you going to do big boy
What you gonna do today

Preacher Jacksons slamming Women
Good book in his hand
Mullah Omar cut a video
Took the head right off that boy

Black people show your gratitude
You were happily relocated
Emmitt Till’s open coffin showed
The white man’s righteousness

Supreme Courts lost its reverence
Politics set the course
Barrett Gorsuch Kavanaugh
Unleashed the right wing Kraken

What you going to do big boy
What you gonna do today
No rapists here our Guvnor says
Texas women need not worry
That unexpected baby growing
In your belly Gets to stay

Brown people at our open border
Need to get their ass back home
Predators, animals, invaders, killers
Gonna take our jobs rape our women

The day you turned 18
Locked and loaded AR’s waiting
30 rounds per magazine
You’ll need it for the school

What you going to do big boy
What you gonna do today

There’s nothing I can tell you
You gonna go ahead and kill today

—Edward Guadalupe Acuña Lucio
Cody Jr

BIO: *Edward Cody Jr. is a Vietnam veteran and a member of Voces Cosmicas, a poet’s group in San Antonio.*