

Is this our new normal?

by Kayla Miranda

For as long as I can remember, I've dreamed of walking up the capitol steps and wandering around its halls, making a difference in the world. As a child I always wanted to be a lawyer. My parents were very political. I remember seeing the chambers on T.V. and imagining myself arguing passionately about something that would bring world peace or end world hunger, and maybe get my parents to lighten up a bit to allow me a later bedtime. When Legally Blonde came out, it was one of my favorite movies. Yes, I know it's not a popular opinion, but I'm almost 40 years old and still prefer quote on quote "wholesome" movies and shows, like Family Matters and Full House, Disney, Hallmark etc. I watched some of the shows I had watched back in the day recently, and I'm shocked at so many things I missed, that I find completely offensive now. It just means my eyes are open to what they were not before.

I was given the opportunity to visit the Texas Capitol in Austin when our legislative session started. I was nervous and excited. We have so many housing bills introduced this session. Even if they don't make it, it's still a win. It's the changing of tides. It shows me that all my work is towards something, and that the far-off future I dream of isn't so far off after all. My daydreaming and muses were lost the moment I walked past the first officer holding an automatic rifle. Just like how I missed so many things in my favorite shows and movies that are a complete slap in the face now, I watched as hundreds of elementary school children walked past these extremely armed officers every few feet like it was completely normal to see so many big guns in a hallway. I couldn't help but wonder how my own teenage children would have reacted, or how I as a small child would have felt. I would have been scared. I asked around, was there a threat recently? Why does it look like a military installment around here? San Antonio is Military USA and I have never seen so many guns around here. It put me off. I felt on edge. It didn't make me feel safe and secure. It made me feel threatened. Human beings are prone to error. All it would take is someone with a mental illness or someone that lost their temper that waves their hands when they talk (I do this), one officer to get spooked and the gunfire would mow us all down. I had flashbacks from martial law in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. I could tell you some horror stories from there, the abuse that officers and military personnel took because they could, because they were heavily armed and on edge, because it was a crisis. Is this really our new normal?

I know that guns don't hurt people, people hurt people. It's a tool, just like any other. It depends on the person wielding that weapon on what they do with it. But I also know that even the most trained individual is human. There has to be a better solution and a better way of protecting than this. I don't want my children to ever get used to seeing that in their everyday life. It's way too easy to pull a trigger and the result could be extinguishing a life. Shouldn't life be held in a higher regard?

BIO: *Kayla Miranda, a housing justice advocate organizing in the Westside of San Antonio, resides at the Alazan/Apache Courts and is a lead teacher for Esperanza's Escuelita de paz y justicia.*

