

## IT TAKES A VILLAGE AND OURS IS NOT DOING ITS JOB -- Dwight Panozzo, PhD, LCSW

Every effect has its causes, every arising is conditioned on those that preceded it, and so it is with gun violence.

Adam Lanza killed 26 human beings, most in the flower of their innocence. His mother bought him guns and utterly failed to protect us from his psychosis. Our laws failed to keep guns out of the hands of Adam and his mother.

Despite this horror, we get to go on with our lives unscathed while the victims of gun violence are dead and gone or suffer through the days left to them.

Since Sandy Hook, little has been achieved across most states and nothing has been achieved at the federal level. As a country, we have succeeded in playing to the NRA's game book. I am deeply ashamed of this outcome, and I hope that you are as well.

I bear witness to you today that this is the civil rights challenge of our era. Its naysayers enjoy the cultural delusions that accompany the issue of gun rights--having a gun makes me feel safer, I have to protect myself from home invasion, my child won't reach into my nightstand and get my loaded gun while I'm away. These are delusions, but they are spoken with great certainty. Their advocates are historically in good company: their brethren include slave owners, racists, and Xenophobes.

I bear witness that the solution to this problem is remarkably simple and unfathomably burdensome. We need only do everything to achieve social change that those who have come before us did to achieve the successes that they achieved.

I bear witness that great change does not come from the actions of politicians, the wealthy, or the powerful, despite how well meaning they might be. It comes from ordinary people of good conscience who are willing to say "no".

What we are called upon to say "no" to is the immorality of our gun culture.

I bear witness that it is immoral to support politicians who support the agenda of the NRA and its misguided ilk. Anyone who votes for such a politician is an accessory before the fact to every act of gun violence that comes in the wake of that politician's inaction.

If you vote for a politician who does nothing about gun violence, then you are part of the problem.

Instead, we must support politicians who work for sweeping changes in our gun laws at both the state and the federal level. As for the many politicians who do only what is politically expedient, it is our job to help them by making sweeping change the expedient choice.

I also bear witness that it is immoral to remain silent about the need for comprehensive gun control that includes licensing, registration, training, malpractice insurance, and continuing education. Speak up in any situation when doing so won't cost you your job or your life. As AIDS activists taught us nearly 30 years ago, silence = death.

Our actions such as raising consciousness and demanding change in our gun culture can make a difference. Our forefathers did it for slavery and rights for minorities.

It can be done, just not easily.

When our children's children judge us, and they will, may our cowardice and complicity be overtaken by our steadfastness and courage.

Namaste.