Opinion
NCR Voices
Voices of Sisters



Participants hold signs calling for an end to gun violence outside the Tennessee Capitol in Nashville April 18, during a Voices for a Safer Tennessee event. The group organized a three-mile-long human chain that drew more than 8,000 people and ended at the capitol to urge the Legislature to take steps to address gun violence. (OSV News/Tennessee Register/Andy Telli)



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This is a very difficult topic to write about. I know the truth of that because I've done it myself — long before this — and nothing has changed. Why? Why won't we hear what is really, truly killing us? Body and soul.

The fact is that we are living far too quietly, docilely, with what may be one of the determining questions of this society: its character, its quality, its spirituality.

The question: Why are sensible, educated, moral adults allowing the so-called political leaders in this country to go on enabling the militarization of what has always seen itself as a peaceful society? How is it that guns have become more important in this society than peace, justice, equality and life?

How is it that politics and money have taken over human development and social justice?

We know who these people are. They profess their allegiance to oversize military arms regularly, proudly, loudly. Without restraint. And so, in the end, the allegiance is to the National Rifle Association, not to the U.S. at all.

After every mass shooting in this country this year, we cry over our annual some 40,000 deaths and over 100,000 people injured by guns — and do nothing at all about it. We simply go on allowing easy accessibility to guns, domestic violence, organized crime and mental health issues.

And we say that we can't do anything about it. It's a government problem, we insist. So why don't we put the government on notice before every election?

It goes like this: "Sir, Ms., Do you — as the Supreme Court does — support open carry of military guns?" Thank you for your quick, clear answer. It means that we will not vote for you again to keep your seat while you cash your NRA checks and do

nothing whatsoever to stop this pandemic of violence that you have created.

That's how simple it is: Stand up and say no!



Michigan State University students protest for gun control in front of the State Capitol in Lansing Feb. 15 following a mass shooting at the campus. A gunman who opened fire at the university the previous day left three dead and five others critically injured. The shooter eventually killed himself, police announced early that morning. (OSV News/Reuters/Rebecca Cook)

In fact, why do we keep sending representatives to a Congress that itself is out of emotional control, that will not allow every member of Congress to decide their votes independently? Instead, they are herded into political cages by their respective parties. Conscience is clearly a thing of the past in politics.

Why would we allow those things? Because maybe we are becoming less and less of a democracy every day.

The gun violence crowd has arguments, of course: We hear them over and over again. Maybe we aren't listening to them carefully enough. We can learn a lot more about our leaders by listening to their arguments for preserving, accelerating and arming the country for its own demise than we can from their clever little election ditties.

First, they smirk at us, "Guns don't kill people, people do." As in, "Cancer doesn't kill people; doctors do." The fact is that these guns can do the harm they do because we are aiming them.

It's very difficult to hear such inanity come from educated adults and have much hope for society anymore. Maybe it would at least be thoughtful to say: "Guns don't kill people; it's underdeveloped people who give underdeveloped people guns that do."

Second, guns aren't illegal; they are implements of random force that we now allow to be strutted around our streets. As a result, the faith in feminism never obscures the machoism that comes with dominance and force.

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Third, "We'll never take guns away from hunters," they insist, fists thumping on their empty hearts, cheerleading the right to satisfy the dulled brains of a society that hasn't lived on the animals they killed to eat for almost a century.

Until now.

Now, apparently, we have given ourselves the permission to kill defenseless breeds of animals for our own childish entertainment. Now, with some of the most powerful military weaponry ever known we are really blasting doe and rabbits, squirrels and ducks to smithereens. Surely healthy, intelligent, mature, careful hunters would never attack animals with heavy-duty automatic equipment meant to decimate humans.

Women wonder how it is that we are being hounded for wanting to preserve the right to do medical abortions while we can arm and kill at will. And no one questions the difference.

Instead, school kids — curious kindergarteners or unconstrained adolescents at wild weekend parties and cheap bars — are bursting with macho from the "carry laws" that endanger our streets. It is an errant gift from the highest court in the land — which could make us wonder about our institutional health, too.

The final argument for this one is that if we all had more guns — our teenage sons, our grandmothers, our teachers, our nurses, our ministers, even our professionals who claim human reason as our protection against social breakdown — we would all be safe. Or at least some of us, maybe.

The argument reads like an appeal to the cowboys of the "Old West." Except that what we are dealing with now is not the struggle for an equitable use of land. No, now we're facing the need for public safety. Ours. Yours and mine.



Muralist Roberto Marquez, left, and his friend Israel Gil from Dallas erect a memorial May 7 to honor the eight people killed the day before by a gunman at the Dallas-area Allen Premium Outlets mall in Allen, Texas. "This is like a refuge for the people who lost loved ones, a place where they can come and express all their emotions," said Marquez, who believes the memorial was a priority because people need a

place to gather at such a difficult time. (OSV News/Reuters/Jeremy Lock)

What we are dealing with now is the insane use of militarized weapons for the sake of personal satisfaction.

What we are dealing with now is rampant chaos and social decline.

Have we turned democracy over to those with the most dangerous and damaging weapons we can supply?

It is a pitiable time in the United States when public order is being turned over to street corner liquidators instead of to public servants of peace, order and justice.

Clearly it is the public itself that must put peace, order and justice into the hands of public servants rather than license public marauders.

Which means that the real question is: What has happened to us as a people? Has reckless force become our only protection? Is America as a country coming apart?

From where I stand, remembering a century when we trusted that public protection could be maintained by public officials who were sworn to do so, it is time for us to throw away those guns and release the civic system to maintain the system again.

Instead of sending flowers on Mother's Day, maybe we should start to count the number of children who will not be there to celebrate it because of gun violence. Just to prove how strong we've been, how tough we've been, how independent we are.

What has happened to us as a people?

Clearly, our souls have shrunk, our hearts have been poisoned against one another, the defenseless have been ignored and the Supreme Court, the greatest court in the land, has given away the rule of law to gunslingers.

It's a dark time in America. Aristotle put it this way: "It is during our darkest moments that we must focus to see the light." Surely we are out of focus now. Surely now is our moment to begin again. Or else.

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