

"Writing the truth
as I see it;
trying not to
offend
those who will
disagree."

The truth as I see it™

Idaho Common Sense™



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Virginia Tech, one year later April 14, 2008

April 16, 2008 is the first anniversary of the 32 people murdered on the Virginia Tech campus. The state of Virginia has reached a legal settlement with most victims' families. The reactions to this settlement, the ongoing evaluations of what occurred that day, and the many assertions of who is to blame for the tragedy continues.

Some families feel the settlement is inadequate for the perceived negligence displayed by Virginia Tech personnel that day. Their aim is to make the university administration accountable for their failure to protect the campus. Others are concerned this settlement is "hush money" designed to avoid determining "why poor decisions were made that could have prevented this violence from occurring." Others claim that after the first two killings, Virginia Tech personnel failed to anticipate this was the beginning of a killing spree rather than the end and should have been more diligent, rapidly alerting the entire campus.

On that day, a young man with significant mental health problems decided to kill as many people as possible ending the violence with his own suicide. Sadly, he was successful. Can we learn from such a tragedy? Can we decrease the ease with which this was accomplished? Was there really any negligence? Or was this something so horrendous, so out of the realm of conceivable, so unimaginable that city and university personnel were appropriately unable to anticipate the first two killings were the beginning of a massive tragedy?

I am always amazed we react with shock and disbelief when something like this occurs. We have mental health laws that legally and financially limit our ability to either help these individuals or to protect society from them. We also have the well-intentioned "Brady" bunch, always at

the forefront of any such tragedy claiming if we only take away enough guns and civil rights these incidents of gun violence would disappear. This is an explosive, dangerous combination. Our society provides inadequate mental health care resources while continually trying to ignore the Constitution disarming our citizens.

Before the killing spree, Virginia Tech proudly and publically announced their safe, gun free campus. They stated that parents, students, and faculty could be proud and confident their campus was now safe because no guns were allowed. Is this announcement anything less than an engraved invitation inviting violence? Is this anything less than alerting any crazed would be killer exactly where he or she could safely achieve their insanity? And when a crazed individual does accept the invitation we feign nativity, appalled that something this heinous could happen. We then offer righteous indignation, aligning with the "Brady" bunch, claiming this could have been prevented if only we had more gun control. Never mind this thesis continually fails to match reality. Never mind these well-intentioned people simply refuse to allow factual information to interfere with their decision making process. Never mind we accepted the myth that gun control works? And never mind we refuse to reevaluate that erroneous assertion?

What can we learn from the murders at Virginia Tech? Did those murders show the need for more gun control or did they show the need for less gun control? Should we allow well meaning, albeit misguided, people to take away our guns, our rights with the erroneous belief that will reduce the possibility of another Virginia Tech? Should this be allowed when the data on gun control actually suggests the opposite.

Are there examples we could study of situations similar to Virginia Tech? There are two other notable similar situations that ended with staggeringly different outcomes. Would be Virginia Tech shootings were attempted at Trolley Square in Salt Lake City and at the New Life Church in Colorado Springs. There was one very crucial difference. Neither area had declared itself a gun free zone, neither area refused to recognize legal concealed weapons permits. And neither incident had the staggering death toll of Virginia Tech. Why? Because honest citizens legally carrying a concealed weapon shot and killed the would be murderers.

What would happen if society aggressively supported the Second Amendment, if society promoted allowing responsible citizens concealed carry permits? In 1987 Florida passed a law "allowing citizens who could demonstrate that they were law-abiding and had sufficient training to obtain permits on demand to own and carry concealed weapons." Let the carnage begin. Watch people kill each other over traffic arguments. Watch Florida's parking lots become OK corrals.

What actually happened? Surprisingly, especially to the "Brady" bunch, few concealed-weapons permits were revoked and there were only rare instances in which people with concealed-weapons permits used them unlawfully. As it turned out, Thomas Jefferson was correct; ordinary law-abiding people are pretty trustworthy. We would do well to listen to Albert Einstein's admonition, "The definition of stupidity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."

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