

Community Comment
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Sam Pennisi

School Shootings

My wife was a professor and university administrator for nearly 40 years. I taught undergraduate and graduate courses at Humboldt State for more than 12 years. Both my daughters teach in the K-12 arena. My oldest at a local high school and my youngest at a middle school. Education, especially public education, has not only been a career path for our family but is somewhat a calling. Speaking for myself, my immigrant grandparents knew that education was the best way out of labor intensive work and living in or close to the poverty level of income. My high school graduate Mother and my 4th grade only Father both made it clear to my older brother and myself that college was not a choice. We would go and do the best we could with our natural talents to have a life that was better than they had.

There was nothing wrong with their lives. They were no different than many others of their era. They had a strong work ethic, would work at any job they could get if necessary, and would work more than one job if that's what it took to put a roof over our heads and food on the table. My brother became a successful mechanical engineer and I taught until the opportunity to own our own business came about. We both accomplished the goal that my parents had for us; we have enjoyed a more satisfying and lucrative life and life style than they had. I wished the same for my children.

I'm told that my grandfather had a pistol in his cash register when he owned a liquore store and , later, a shoe repair shop. He was robbed a number of times and never went for his gun. My dad had a 22 rifle that he got as a young man and he gave it away when we showed no interest in it. My wife grew up on a farm in Michigan and hunting was a popular and useful activity. We know about guns.

Guns do not provide us with any sort of entertainment value. Neither of us have a problem with hunting or related activities by people who are trained to respect the weapon and learn how to be a safe owner.

With more than ^{000 5P} 3 million of us living closer and closer together, it makes sense to have tighter gun control laws. We shut down most of our mental institutions and now the police not only confront criminals but the mentally ill as well. But frankly, I think anger and frustration is what we see more of every year.

The high school shooting in Florida last week may turn the tide on how we look at reasonable gun control in this country. Unlike Sandy Hook, which killed 5 to 7 year olds, the surviving high school students in Florida are not only saddened by the loss of their friends, but they are angry about it, they know we all have let them down with our failure

to enact sensible gun control laws, and they are hell bent on changing this murderous course we are on. These kids won't sit back and take it anymore.

I, for one, applaud their passion, their drive, and their sense of purpose and responsibility to their fallen classmates. They know that arming their teachers is not an option.

Because of these kids, from 14 to 18 years old, we are going to see some changes. Why not them? It's their future.

This has been Sam Pennisi for community comment.