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MENTAL ILLNESS AND MASS GUN VIOLENCE

By Steve Bakke  September 19, 2019



I've always felt that mental illness has some influence on a person's emotions, and therefore can contribute to a tendency for violence in some people. Logically, mental illness might contribute to some incidents of mass gun violence.

Radical firearms opponents have issued statements like this: "We need to find the real causes of gun violence and stop blaming it on mental illness." Some point to Winston Churchill's periodic depression as an argument against any form of mental illness contributing to mass killings. Sometimes they describe the murderous tyrant Joseph Stalin as merely evil, not mentally ill. They use examples like these to discourage examination of mental illness as a possible cause of violence.

Mass gun violence isn't merely due to availability of firearms, and it makes a difference who has those guns. There are many types of gun violence, and they may not all have the same list of causes. To find solutions, we must understand those causes.

If we dismiss mental illness as possibly contributing to violent tendencies, and if we dismiss the possibility that some examples of mental illness can lead to mass gun violence, we are being very foolish. Let's not be part of the problem.