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## **GUNS AND VIOLENCE: MORE THAN A RULES AND REGULATIONS PROBLEM!**



By Stephen L. Bakke  November 14, 2017

Our nation is struggling with finding solutions to problems of violence – in particular violent episodes in which guns are used to take multiple lives. I've commented on this problem before, always trying to be the wise pundit who makes measured statements about not jumping into the wrong solutions too quickly.

As I've written before, we should do the obvious things. First let's acknowledge that our Founders' opinions about firearms reflected a presumption of order and competence achieved through rules, regulations, and wise but limited firearm controls. Then we must understand what regulations currently exist and determine if can they be effective if enforced. If not, toss them out. We must emphasize enforcement, which is one huge deficit in our existing system of controls. Mental illness is a cause of violence and should be a huge priority for separate study and unique solutions. Safety training and storage/security standards will play a role.

After a deliberate evaluation, only then should we consider additional control enhancements that will work. And remember, let's not keep trying solutions that don't work – feel-good solutions that are merely ineffective emotional sedatives.

We'll be better off for doing those things. But we should be honest with ourselves by also including some less tangible causes of societal problems, violence, and gun deaths. We should dare to deal with questions like these:

- An orderly culture requires some level of philosophical consistency and moral and ethical absolutes. Has the concept of moral absolutes been set aside in favor of unlimited tolerance and making personal decisions about right and wrong?
- Have we “fuzzied” the edges between morality and immorality?
- Apparently, the old-fashioned theory of human “free will” has disappeared. Going hand-in-hand with free will is individual accountability. Is accountability disappearing, with the concept of victimization gradually taking its place?

If I dig deeper into those items, and also extend the list even further, I can offer more examples of causes for the evolution (or “devolution”) of our society. I fear we don't examine these more controversial ideas because doing so might foster accusations of being politically incorrect – or perhaps we would be found to contradict some “model” for crime prevention developed by a professor of criminal psychology somewhere. Following are some things to think about.

How did we get here, and what has contributed to this national propensity for violence? Mental illness is a serious issue, but anger and hatred can come out of a perfectly sane mind. Here are questions that deserve at least some examination as to their impact on hatred, racism and similar emotions directly, and of the impact on violence indirectly:

- Have government programs institutionalized “urban poverty plantations” as a breeding ground for hatred, racism, class warfare and ultimately, violence?
- Has de-emphasis on a traditional family structure led to changes in attitudes affecting violence?
- How valid is the claim that morality has been lost, or at least redefined in our society, and could this have led to incremental disregard for the lives of others? Has this contributed to an inclination for more violent behavior.
- Has any change or reduction in moral absolutes led to an expansion of acceptable activities, and ultimately, is violent behavior more easily forgiven, or rationalized, by society?
- Has there been a change in the definition of life and the sanctity thereof, and if so, has this had a tendency to cheapen how that life is valued by some.

I don't know if my suggestions will travel very far, but I believe they are worthy of consideration.