

Last week's horrible news from Aurora, Colorado has everyone talking about whether or not we need to do something to prevent these senseless shootings from happening again. Some suggest we need better gun legislation.

1.Lock up the guns! There is a lot of talk about gun legislation every time there is a tragic shooting. Would stricter gun laws have prevented this catastrophic loss of life? My answer, maybe. I find it alarming that this guy could buy 6,000 rounds of ammunition and all sorts of military gear without anyone raising an eyebrow. Crazy people and felons should not be allowed to buy guns. But then, how do you determine who is crazy? James Holmes seemed to show little or no sign of being mentally ill before the terrible shooting at the movie theater. Furthermore: people who are crazy, or criminal, find their guns on the black market, or steal them...so, stricter gun laws are not a guarantee we would keep guns in the right hands and out of the wrong hands.

2.Others say lock up the mentally ill. Should, or could we keep crazy people locked up? We used to retain a much larger percentage of mentally ill people in our state hospitals. Today, with deep and ominous budget cuts, it is highly unlikely that we will ever vote to keep a high percentage of mentally ill people in hospitals. Besides, mental illness is much more common than we might suppose; the vast majority of mentally ill people do not commit violent crimes and are not a threat to do something like this Joker-clone in Aurora.

3.I would say, we should encourage reverence for life. The pillar that supports the Western ideal of human rights is an assumption that undergirds it: respect for life. Some cultures revere human life; others do not. I think ours generally does revere life and values each individual person. However, there are dark elements of disgust and contempt for life that are coming through many elements of our culture and especially in the entertainment industry. The Dark Knight trilogy has come a long way from the original Batman that was full of POW, smack, and Holy Cow, Batman! The newer Batman movies are increasingly dark and sinister; the arch sinister character, Joker was especially so. His ability to take human life with impunity makes him not only clever, but a murderer. It is little wonder that the actor Heath Ledger before he overdosed, had been complaining about the troublesome role of playing the Joker in the previous Dark Knight movie.

I find it haunting that after murdering twelve and injuring 58 others at a movie theater James Holmes boasted to the police, that he was channeling *Batman's* arch nemesis. "He said he was the Joker, enemy of Batman!"

I suggest that moviemakers should think twice about peddling entertainment that exhibits such calloused disregard for life! When we flash these diabolical characters on the big screen in living color, who are murderers: heartless, ruthless and cruel, is there great surprise that unstable people who are inclined towards evil replicate their cruelty?

Jokers are supposed to tell stories that make people laugh; could anything be less funny than the mayhem at Theater #9 last week in Aurora?

This has been Dan Price for Community Comment.

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