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## IN THE WAKE OF THE TEXAS SCHOOL SHOOTING

### Deliberate Indifference and a Decaying Democracy

By Parris J. Baker  
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America, we have a problem! On the 25th of May, NPR reported that 145 days (21 weeks) into 2022, the United States had suffered through 213 mass shootings. This rate averages slightly more than 10 mass shootings per week. Assault weapons, more often AR15s and various types of AKs, have been the weapons of choice; used in the seven deadliest mass shootings in the last decade[1].

On May 14, 2022, ten people were killed and three injured at a grocery store in Buffalo, New York. Ten days later, in Uvalde, Texas, 19 children and two adults were killed with a military assault weapon. America suffered a similar massacre a decade earlier at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, the deadliest school shooting in America's history.

Clearly, America has a problem! When public spaces, once perceived to be safe, such as movie theaters, churches, synagogues, outdoor festivals, grocery stores and elementary schools, have become the crime scenes of America's deadliest mass shootings. What is America's problem? Is it the constitutional interpretation of the Second Amendment and the citizen's legal right to bear arms? Or is the problem with state legislatures who institute more permissive gun laws by requiring fewer and less stringent background checks?

Hubert Humphrey, former Vice President of the United States once affirmed, "(T)he moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in

the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; those who are in the shadows of life; the sick, the needy and the handicapped[2].” Capitalism is devouring democracy and is central to the devolution of morality in America. I am not suggesting that we abandon capitalism. However, I am suggesting it is the cupidity of many capitalists that has transformed our children into commodities. The central debate is not the viability of the Second Amendment applied in a 21st century American society but the lives of our children and our citizenry.

The problem is how we as Americans value human life. What is the economic value of a child? This is an unthinkable and a repulsive question to entertain. Yet, many elected officials, individuals who were chosen to govern, protect, and serve, apply a custom of capitalism; laissez-faire economics where private wealthy owners and the laws of supply and demand determine policy and price. The exchange is human life, children and seniors, our most vulnerable citizens, for political and economic profit.

The essence of my argument is found in the Preamble of the Declaration of Independence: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. – That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. – That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness[3].

Currently, there are two bills, H.R. 8, the Bipartisan Background Checks Act of 2021 and H.R. 1446, the Enhanced Background Checks of 2021, proposed to increase gun control through expanded background checks that have been passed in the House, but have not received Senate approval. This refusal by the Senate goes against the grain of most Americans (approximately 90 percent) who, regardless of political affiliation, support stricter background checks. This demonstration of deliberate indifference is disturbing. More disturbing is a recent analysis by the Washington Post that reported the median age for school shooters is 16 years. Military assault weapons, designed to kill quickly and efficiently, are used more often by adolescents. The meaning of AR15 is a .223 caliber gas-operated semiautomatic rifle that is essentially a civilian version of the military’s M16.

The greater existential debate is the decay in democracy, the right for all Americans to pursue life, liberty, and happiness. For most survivors of mass shootings their daily pursuits are found in recurrent struggles to find meaning and understanding regarding the actions of demented individuals, armed with



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Parris J. Baker is an Associate Professor at Gannon University, where he is the Social Work, Mortuary Science and Gerontology Program Director. An alumnus of Gannon, Baker received his graduate degree from Case Western Reserve University, Jack, Joseph, & Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences and his doctorate from the University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work. Presently, Baker serves as the Senior Pastor of Believers International Worship Center, Inc. He is married and has five children.



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## References & Suggested Readings

1. <https://giffords.org/lawcenter/gun-laws/policy-areas/hardware-ammunition/assault-weapons/>
2. Hubert Humphrey, (November 1, 1977). Dedication of the Hubert Humphrey Building, Washington, D.C.
3. <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>

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