



October 4, 2017

In It Together

Our nation is once again coming to grips with the tragedy of a mass shooting, this time by a lone gunman in Las Vegas who at the time of this writing left 58 people dead and another 500 people wounded from gunshots to stampede injuries during 10 minutes of almost continuous gunfire in the deadliest mass shooting in modern US history.

But the truth is that it has become an almost routine occurrence for America to experience mass shootings, defined as an incident where 4 or more people are shot in a single incident. In just the last four years in the United States, there have been 1,516 mass shootings in 1,735 days – almost one a day. No other developed nation comes close to the rate of gun violence in America.

And on the streets of Chicago, the carnage continues, with 57 deaths that were ruled homicides last month (September 2017), with 488 shooting deaths this year ruled homicides, according to data kept by the Chicago Sun-Times.

What is the cause of this violence? Contemplative Richard Rohr believes that, “The root of violence is *the illusion of separation*—from God, from Being itself, from being one with everyone and everything. When you don’t know you are connected and one, you will invariably resort to some form of violence to get the dignity and power you lack.”

Thomas Merton writes, “Non-violence implies a kind of bravery far different from violence.” Rohr goes on to write, “Our dualistic minds see evil as black and white and that the only solution is to eliminate evil. Nonviolence, on the other hand, comes from an awareness that I am also the enemy and my response is part of the whole moral equation. I cannot destroy the other without destroying myself. I must embrace my enemy just as much as I must welcome my own shadow. Both acts take real and lasting courage.”

But, just as we must look in the mirror at ourselves to combat violence, we also have to work on practical solutions to make it easier for people to do the right thing and not resort to the violence of killing another person. And it makes sense that we need to advocate for certain policies to end gun violence in America.

However, the reality is that privilege is standing in the way of ending gun violence in America. In every city and in black communities across the country, gun violence occurs every day. The ongoing gun violence is a constant cry for help every time an inner city child is gunned down. I hope that the tragedy

in Las Vegas will bring all communities together because gun violence is an American problem, not just an urban problem. If there is one issue for which America should come together in unity, it is a plan to end gun violence in America. Next week we will examine some of our options for what such a plan would look like.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'LSK', with a stylized flourish at the end.

La Shawn K. Ford
State Representative-Eighth District