

EDUCATION REPORTER

NUMBER 387

THE NEWSPAPER OF EDUCATION RIGHTS

APRIL 2018

A Preventable Tragedy in Parkland, Florida

When the murderous student showed up at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on Valentine's Day of 2018, he meant to kill as many people as he could. Was this an unexpected outburst by a person not known to be unstable and dangerous? No, it was not.

The 19-year-old who killed 17 and left others physically wounded and psychologically damaged had been called to the attention of law enforcement and school authorities many times. Accounts vary but *USA Today* reports that "Broward County deputies received at least 18 calls warning them about [the killer] from 2008 through 2017." *Time* magazine reported, "The FBI confirmed agents were warned five months ago about a YouTube comment that may have come from [the killer]." That comment said, "I'm going to be a professional school shooter." (2-18-18)

The killer is a former student who was expelled last year for disciplinary reasons and began attending "an adult correctional school." He used an Uber driver to get to the school that afternoon and brought with him a black duffel bag and backpack in which he carried an AR-15 rifle, ammunition, a gas mask, and smoke grenades. After the shooting, he left the school hidden in plain sight among other students, went to a Walmart, ordered a soda at a Subway sandwich shop, and then went into a McDonald's. Police soon found and arrested him, at which time he admitted committing the murders.

In 2008, when the killer was ten, Broward County law endorsement received their first call about him for an altercation with another child. In 2012, his now-deceased mother called police after he "hit her with a plastic hose from the vacuum cleaner." One year later, police were called again when "he threw her

against the wall because she took away his Xbox game system." After another incident involving an Xbox, a Henderson Behavioral Health counselor who assessed the teen determined that "involuntary commitment wasn't warranted." (*USA Today*, 2-23-18)

School-to-Prison Pipeline

Teachers unions, politicians, and others have been talking about what they call the "school-to-prison pipeline" for many years. Their premise is that students, especially students of color, are treated too harshly at schools when they misbehave. Suspensions, expulsions, and encounters with law enforcement and the judicial system, the theory maintains, send those students on a downward spiral that ends with their incarceration.

Activists' chosen solution is to downplay misbehavior, handle problem students at school, and not to involve law enforcement, even when situations might warrant it. This has allowed some schools and students to get out of control, as has been evidenced by teachers being attacked and more fighting, bullying, and the like on campuses.

According to Breitbart news, "The Broward County school district's adoption of a school discipline policy that was praised by the Obama administration for seeking to reduce the reported number of school suspensions, expulsions, and arrests may have played a role in the fact that [the killer] remained under the radar until his shooting rampage in Parkland, Florida, on February 14." This is called the PROMISE program, the acronym for Preventing Recidivism through Oppor-

tunities, Mentoring, Interventions, Support & Education.

Manhattan Institute senior fellow Max Eden says Broward County schools "decided to reduce police involvement by not bringing in cops to arrest kids for a whole range of serious offenses, and then, as you would expect, the arrests go down when you stop arresting." (Breitbart.com, 2-26-18)



Real Clear Investigations reports, "In 2013, ... the Broward County school system rewrote its discipline policy to make it much more difficult for administrators to suspend or expel problem students, or for campus police to arrest them for misdemeanors — including some of the crimes [the killer] allegedly committed in the years and months leading up to the deadly Feb. 14 shooting at his Fort Lauderdale-area school." The report says, "Broward school Superintendent Robert W. Runcie — a Chicagoan and Harvard graduate with close ties to President Obama and his Education Department — signed an agreement with the county sheriff and other local jurisdictions to trade cops for counseling." (RealClearInvestigations.com, 3-1-18)

Local Failures

Many mistakes were made on the day the Parkland children and teachers died at school. The Broward County

Sheriff is under fire for flawed policies enacted prior to the event and for a protocol of action, or inaction, on the day of the killings. In fact, law enforcement officers are so unhappy with his performance that in April, "the Broward Sheriff's Office Deputies Association announced it has 'no confidence' in Broward County Sheriff Scott Israel and is going to ask Florida Governor Rick Scott to remove him from office over his handling of the Parkland shooting." (Breitbart.com, 4-26-18)

The *Miami Herald* reported on February 23:

[The killer] threatened classmates, posted photos of himself holding guns, made violent statements online, and was repeatedly described to authorities as a potential 'school shooter.' His troubling behavior gave law enforcement plenty of opportunities to investigate and arrest him — and even take away his guns — long before he shot up Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland last week, according to interviews with former South Florida prosecutors and legal experts.

Broward County law enforcement received a tip in February 2016 that the teen "planned to shoot up the school"; a tip supported by an Instagram photo showing him with a gun. The deputy who responded failed to turn this information over to the intelligence unit or the detective bureau, either of which would have assigned a detective to investigate. The information was instead, as mandated by the PROMISE program, only given to the Stoneman Douglas High School resource officer.

If a detective had been assigned, "[the killer] could have been arrested — (See *Tragedy*, page 4)

Read-Aloud Books for Elementary School Children

Most parents know how important it is to read aloud to pre-readers, but some stop the practice once children can read by themselves. Sometimes this is because they're stumped by what books to choose that might hold both the child's and the parent's interest.

Reading books aloud together contributes to a positive family dynamic, which leads to robust discussions and activates lines of communication.

Sometimes it's fun to read a book together and then see the movie. Other times that's a bad idea. This is the case with the recently released *A Wrinkle in Time*, the film adaptation of Madeleine L'Engle's 1962 literary classic. Major stars were hired and big bucks were spent but the Christian beauty included by the

author was stripped from the product. The result is a mess, and it isn't only Christians who are disappointed. By removing God from the Newbery Award winning story, the work was effectively gutted. The movie fell far below the Disney corporation's expected box office earnings. Skip the movie; enjoy the book.

Following is a list of books that will engage both adults and children. They would likely be deemed appropriate for most households but some parents might prefer to pre-read to make certain of that. Some books are left off this list because the payoff doesn't warrant the stress or drama involved. One such work is *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson. There are lessons to be learned and

insights to be gained from this book but the ending is simply too tragic and jolting for most children.

The books are presented in alphabetical order. All are suitable for boys or



girls, although some might be preferred by one sex or the other. All are excellent and come parent-and-child recommended.

Alice in Wonderland, Lewis Carroll

A Little Princess, Frances Hodgson Burnett

A Wrinkle in Time, Madeleine L'Engle

Five Children and It, E. Nesbit

From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler, E. L. Konigsburg

Harriet the Spy, Louise Fitzhugh

Just So Stories, Rudyard Kipling

Mary Poppins, P. L. Travers

Peter Pan, J. M. Barrie

Pinocchio, Carlo Collodi

Pollyanna, Eleanor H. Porter

Redwall, Brian Jacques

Sarah, Plain and Tall, Patricia MacLachlan

The Indian in the Cupboard, Lynne Reid Banks

The Mouse and the Motorcycle, Beverly Cleary

The Phantom Tollbooth, Norton Juster

The Wind in the Willows, Kenneth Grahame

EDUCATION BRIEFS

A recent poll revealed that two-thirds of millennials could not correctly identify Auschwitz nor did they have knowledge about the Holocaust. Among the millennials polled, 66% “could not come up with a correct response identifying [Auschwitz] as a concentration camp or extermination camp.” Also, “22% of millennials in the poll said they haven’t heard of the Holocaust or are not sure whether they’ve heard of it — twice the percentage of U.S. adults as a whole who said the same.” According to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, between 1940 and 1945, over a million of the six million Jews and others exterminated by Nazis were killed at Auschwitz concentration camp in German-occupied Poland. (*Washington Post*, 4-12-17)

On April 26, a student activist named Lauren who is a survivor of the February shooting in Parkland, Florida wrote on Twitter, “I’m tired of people saying, ‘The only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.’” Her tweet continued, “Fighting fire with fire never got anything done. It just burned everything down. It is the same reason why we must never fight hate with hate. Only love can drive out hate.” This led many to wonder if this student has studied World War II, or any history. Another student named Kyle, who seems to be the sole defender of the Second Amendment among outspoken Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School students, had this Twitter response on April 30th: “Okay, so if someone comes at you with a gun, make sure you offer them a hug. Let me know how it goes!”

The above-mentioned Lauren and her brother David are writing a book about their experiences, titled *#Never Again: A New Generation Draws the Line*. The Zionist Organization of America has called on the anti-gun activists to change the name because it “trivializes the Holocaust” and offends its “survivors, Jews, and all human rights-loving people.”

Education Reporter (ISSN 0887-0608) is published monthly by Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund with editorial offices at 7800 Bonhomme Ave., St. Louis, MO 63105, (314) 721-1213, fax (314) 721-3373. Editor: Virginia Barth. The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the persons quoted and should not be attributed to Eagle Forum Education & Legal Defense Fund. Annual subscription \$25. Back issues available @ \$2. Periodicals postage paid at Alton, Illinois.

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Reliable Colleges: Less ‘Unsettling’

In a December 30, 2017 *New York Times* article, columnist Frank Bruni called the contempt with which many Americans regard colleges and universities “unsettling” and “dangerous.” He said, “... college itself is regarded with skepticism by many Americans and outright contempt by no small number of them.” Bruni laments that college has become “a polarizing question mark.” But his analysis pretty much misses the mark as far as why people are skeptical.

Teresa Mull responds that the skepticism about the current state of higher education is richly deserved. In an opinion piece, Mull, who is a research fellow in education policy at The Heartland Institute, says, “This widespread attitude is not unfounded.” She continues, “It’s completely justified and should serve as a wake-up call to colleges to change course.” Mull calls attention to “the progressive elitists who have infiltrated many institutions,” their assault on free speech, and the high sticker price that has “launched millions of young people into unnecessary, debilitating debt.”

Mull says, “College curricula have digressed into unabashed brainwashing seminars.” She says, “College has morphed into simply another means by which progressive zealots can spread their beliefs and exert their radical influence.” She says that employers “want to hire people who are competent, reliable, and trainable, not necessarily pre-programmed with the ‘skills’ Bruni insists come with a college degree.” (*PJStar.com*, 1-18-18)

A College Education is Still Valuable

Many would agree that higher education can lead to advantages but there are problems with the manner in which education is being delivered and the climate on many college campuses. So, choosing the right school has become more important than ever.

Parents and potential collegians are thinking hard when making decisions about higher education. Many are look-

ing for schools that uphold the values taught by the Ten Commandments and that continue to teach classes that include an appreciation of Western Civilization.

Hillsdale College in Michigan is one of a few American colleges that do not take federal funds in order to avoid the crushing regulations that come along with accepting that cash.

Founded in 1844, the school’s 400 acres are home to 75 buildings. There are eleven single-sex residence halls and several fraternities and sororities.

Hillsdale is an independent, non-sectarian, four-year, liberal arts college that in the past three years has had a 94% freshman retention rate.

Residents of Michigan make up just over one-third of the almost 1,500 undergraduates, while 65% of students are from other states and another 1% are international students.

Hillsdale College is a leader in online courses, with their most popular and free “Constitution 101” having educated more than 800,000 people worldwide. The twelve-lesson course “explains the principles underlying the American founding as set forth in the Declaration of Independence and secured by the Constitution.”

About the chapel currently being constructed at the center of the campus, Hillsdale’s website says, “Christ Chapel will stand as an affirmation of Hillsdale’s Christian roots and identity, serve as a reminder that civil and religious liberty are inseparable, and provide a much-needed place of worship for all Hillsdale College students, regardless of denomination.”

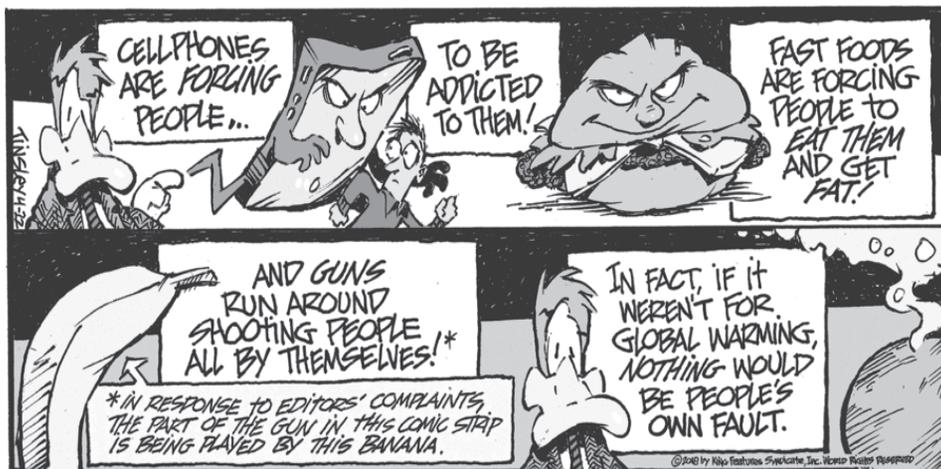
In the Heart of Nashville, Lipscomb University was founded in 1891 and enrolls more than 4,500 students. The residential campus is located in the Green Hills area of Nashville. Students can earn a bachelor’s degree in 176 fields of undergraduate study.

Lipscomb University was named to the Kiplinger Personal Finance list of

(See *Reliable Colleges*, page 4)



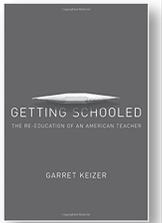
MALLARD FILLMORE / by Bruce Tinsley



Book of the Month



Getting Schooled: The Reeducation of an American Teacher, Garret Keizer, Metropolitan Books, 2014, \$27



This book tells the story of a former teacher who returns to teaching at a high school in Vermont. In the intervening 14 years after leaving teaching, Keizer was a successful author and columnist with his work published in *Harper’s Magazine*, *Mother Jones*, *The New Yorker*, and more. That list would indicate the author isn’t a conservative, but one thing uniting many conservatives with their liberal counterparts is the sense that something is amiss at schools.

Keizer notes the changes that occurred since he quit, and he doesn’t find many of them to be positive. First published in 2014, the paperback edition of his book was released in 2015.

On his return to instructing students, Keizer found that he spent much time filling out required forms. The No Child Left Behind law and other “reforms” allegedly meant to improve education actually proved to be obstacles to education.

Keizer also found changes among the teens he was charged with educating, although his book does show he had admiration and even love for his students. While he remained dedicated to his job, he notes that changes in family structure and the attitudes of students have had a negative impact on education.

The author distributed a checklist to students to help them write a research paper, on which plagiarism was defined and prohibited. He says, “The same internet that put the text at their fingertips makes it easy for me to locate the lifted phrases.” Some students didn’t even attempt to paraphrase and instead “copied verbatim from their sources.”

He marked a passage of one student’s draft as plagiarized. He later spoke to her privately, asking her about the checklist she’d signed and whether she understood that she’d agreed not to steal the work of others. Her response to his question about why she didn’t bother to see him about the problem was, “I guess I didn’t have time.” Keizer says, “I simply cannot comprehend why anyone would be so careless of her own welfare.”

Those who don’t appreciate how difficult it is to teach would do well to read this book. The idea that it is easy to instruct high-school age kids or that “lucky” teachers have summers off are misunderstanding the challenges of the job. It should be noted that Keizer found teaching highly challenging in Vermont; not to diminish his experience, but those who teach in big city schools face even greater obstacles.

FOCUS: We Can't Make Schools Safe Unless We Get Government Out

'The guns and school violence conversation needs to happen at the local level to have any chance of effectively keeping kids safe in school.'

by **D.C. McAllister**

Originally published by The Federalist (TheFederalist.com) on March 2, 2018. Reprinted with permission.

If we want to do something about school safety in America, we need to get government out of it. No more new gun control laws from Washington. No more speeches from D.C. politicians. No more executive orders. No more legislation. No more bipartisan meetings about banning assault weapons, creating lists of the "mentally ill," or abandoning due process. It's time for government to do what it's supposed to do in a situation like this — nothing.

This doesn't mean nothing will be done. It just won't be done by legislators. The only answer to the mob cry, "Just do something!" is to turn it back around on every individual who makes up the mob and say, "You do something."

Why? Because you live in a free and profoundly diverse republic where it is your responsibility to participate in your local communities to come up with solutions that affect your family, your children, and your neighbors.

It's not the job of politicians in Washington, D.C. to do anything but get out of your way. At a time like this, the federal government needs to leave the hard task of finding answers to school safety to the people who personally know the specific needs of each school — that's not the president, the blowhards in the press, teenagers on parade in the national media, lobby groups, or any politician

virtue-signaling from the capitol.

The only thing the government can do, and this goes for both federal and state, is to remove all laws that keep people from freely acting in their own self-interest. This means allowing every adult citizen, in all areas, to exercise his or her right to bear arms in a hostile and threatening world.

Gun-free zones are the most dangerous areas for gun violence in the nation. They're a signpost to every psychopathic or traumatized killer that this is where sitting ducks are waiting to be picked off.

How did this happen? Government did something. It intervened by creating spaces that make our children less safe, not more. Now it's time for government to step back, lift the restraints it has put on Americans, and let federalism and local governance function the way they were intended by our founders.

Our Towns and Schools Are Not All the Same

What does this look like practically? It means school safety measures for every school will not come from the top. They will be found at the bottom, on the local level, in every school and every district. Lawmakers in Washington don't know the situation at your particular school. They don't know your teachers, students, environment, or community make-up. You do.

A small public school nestled in the rolling hills of western North Carolina where families are mostly intact, resources are abundant, and everyone intimately knows one another won't have the same needs as a sprawling, highly

diverse, economically challenged school in an urban area. When these disparate communities meet on their own, they'll likely come up with completely different ideas for how to handle school safety.

To impose the same regulations and expectations on all 98,000 public schools across our country will be an abysmal failure. This is not a time for a one-size-fits-all strategy formulated by distant lawmakers. It's time for individuals and communities to stop relying on government and to act for themselves—if only they're given the freedom to do so.

Questions Schools Need to Ask Their Communities

Each school needs to evaluate its own needs and call community meetings to discuss solutions. How big is the school? What will it take to protect the



children with efficient response times? How many teachers have concealed-carry training? How many are willing to get that training?

How much money is available to hire the necessary resource officers if there aren't many teachers willing to carry a firearm? What resources are available from the police department and sheriff's office? Is there even any interest in having firearms in your school, or would you rather choose another route?

These are questions all schools need to be asking, and the answers will be different for each one. Some schools might find that they have people in their community who are highly trained in firearms and qualify to serve as "civilian patrol officers." They might want to hire several for a minimal fee to patrol the halls part-time. This will provide work opportunities for retired military personnel or anyone interested in self-defense, and individuals will be participating in protecting their own community and the children they know personally.

Other schools might find they have no money for more patrols, but have so many teachers trained in concealed carry that they don't need any more help. Others might not trust the police or the teachers, so they seek help from community centers where they will find people trained in firearms who reflect the student population and make them feel safe. They might turn to these local groups for protection.

You can see the many scenarios just in these few paragraphs, and why we should not be having a national discussion about school safety. If ever there were a time for localism to step up, it's now. We value our local shopping, our

local beer, our local farms — how about we value and participate in our local schools instead of entrusting our children to people who don't know them, and frankly, don't really care, unlike the people in their everyday lives?

Distant Technocrats Cannot Solve Our Problems For Us

America is simply too big and diverse to try to impose a common, collectivist solution on every individual or every local school. When we try to do this, it only makes people less dependent on one another within a given community and more dependent on a faraway bureaucracy riddled with corruption and abuse.

When we're free, we will find better, more effective solutions that benefit those we intimately know and love.

This suggestion will have its critics, of course. Arguments against local action are rooted in distrust of "the people" and fear of inequality of outcome — that every school will be different. Some schools might be better protected than others. Some might not choose to be protected at all. Some might choose to build a wall around school property.

This kind of inequality makes our nation's newly developed socialistic sensibilities cringe, but we need to be honest that inequality remains no matter how much government is in control, and there are solutions to minimize the differences.

Some of this disparity can be overcome at the next level of local governance — finding district-wide solutions so resources can be better shared. Another mechanism could come from the state level, where monies can be funneled into various schools according to need.

Whatever the scenario, it should still be up to the parents, teachers, and staff of a particular school to decide what it needs. The local community should be in charge, not Washington. Freedom, not equality, must be the goal. When we're free, we will find better, more effective solutions that benefit those we intimately know and love.

When we turn to Washington, we get neither equality nor freedom, and we certainly don't get security. Yet this is all we hear today. We demand that lawmakers do something, and if they don't they're going to be voted out of office. We're like children squabbling for scraps.

As Americans, we can and should be better than this. But to be better we need to start with taking responsibility for ourselves, our families, our communities, and our schools. If we do that, we'll be amazed by our potential to discover creative and diverse solutions to a problem that has shaken each of us to the core.

Denise C. McAllister is a journalist based in Charlotte, North Carolina, and a senior contributor to The Federalist.



Gulag High Schools

by **Denis Ian**

Versions of this article were published at DenisIanBlog.Wordpress.com on March 17, 2018 and January 3, 2017. Reprinted with permission.

There's a reason why the classic 1945 George Orwell novel *Animal Farm* endures.

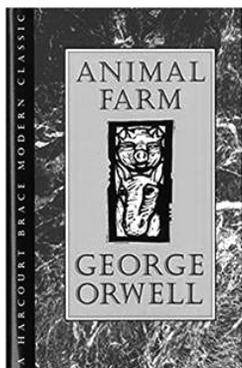
It seems that student walkouts are very excellent displays of teenage wisdom and activism — IF the cause meets certain liberal standards.

High school history teacher Julianne Benzel wondered out loud to her students during class "if protests of a different sort would receive the support of the school administration."

And she asked her suddenly wise and enlightened teenagers "if it was appropriate for the school to have been providing support for a politically motivated protest, and if such support would be there for other causes," such as opposition to abortion.

One of her students later said:

I feel like if we were to go to school and say something like 'I want to walk out maybe for abortion rights,' then they probably wouldn't let us because that's more of a conservative push. But [when] someone wants to say let's walk out for gun control then the school's going to go



with it because it's more of a popular view. (Sacramento.CBSlocal.com, 3-14-18)

Benzel teaches at a high school in the Rocklin School District, about 20 miles northeast of Sacramento, California.

Two students and a lone parent were "triggered" by the teacher's supposedly edgy bit of teaching. They

made a beeline to the principal.

Then Ms. Benzel was told to stay home. She was put on administrative leave. Benched. Smacked down. Professionally embarrassed.

This happened because she dared to apply the logic of the recent walkout to (See *Gulag High Schools*, page 4)

Gulag High Schools *(Continued from page 3)*

issues not-so-favored by the liberal posse that runs her school.

So down the slippery slope she went — bewildered as to why such questions were so verboten ... so forbidden ... so taboo.

But everyone knows why. It's because she didn't toe the line, or fall in line. She didn't smother her intellect. Benzel says, "I didn't get any backlash from my students. All my students totally understood that there could not be a double standard."

If this is the "new" public education well, then something's wrong, Very wrong.

And we should all be very, very worried about this *Animal Farm* moment. Because we've seen this before, in days not so long ago. And, yes, it can happen here. Just ask Julianne Benzel. Or Snowball, the thinker in the *Animal Farm* story.

New School Commandments

Perhaps it's time for new commandments for our public schools. It is time to acknowledge the mistakes of the last decade ... and the need to return to time-tested educational practices that made this nation the envy of the world.

These should do nicely.

The Ten Commandments for Public Education

I. No school personnel have more regency over the education of a child than a mother or father.

II. Schools have no space for anyone unable to plug into their memory bank for recollections of their own childhood.

III. Schools should hold an educational exorcism ... and run out indoctrinating madness from every classroom.

IV. Restore classroom integrity and demand the return of the unbiased teacher.

V. Teachers have no right to organize any child in any mission on behalf of their ideology.

VI. There shall be no false testing gods.

VII. School leaders must adhere to a doctrine of common sense over all else.

VIII. Vow that there will be unserious joy in every day.

IX. Command that every adult commit to an oath that childhood will be honored and preserved.

X. Order that laughter and kindness hold as much importance as any learning objective.

These represent ideological freedom for lots of parents — and for their children. And these commandments promise a return to purposeful education unpoluted by biases and prejudices and misplaced emphases.

The jig's up for the social justice junkies, the politically correct shamers, and the ideologically intolerant.

It's time for teachers to teach.

Americans want their schools back.

Denis Ian is a retired secondary teacher from New York. He taught social studies for nearly 34 years in a well-respected public school district and was involved in numerous reforms and educational innovations during his career. He's now devoted to the anti-Common Core movement. His work has been published nationwide and also appears at his blog, DenisIanBlog.Wordpress.com.



Reliable Colleges *(Continued from page 2)*

100 best values in private universities.

Lipscomb students who choose to remain at the campus after attaining an undergraduate degree can choose from 25 masters programs, four education degrees, as well as three doctoral programs.

As a private Christian university associated with the Churches of Christ, Lipscomb recognizes that not every student will share that faith. Its website says, "But we also are dedicated to making sure every Lipscomb student who walks across the stage at graduation has also walked through an understanding of what faith commits us to do in our homes, communities, and around the globe."

Lipscomb participates in the Yellow Ribbon Program at the highest level, which means a full-tuition award for eligible military veterans and/or their

families who wish to earn an undergraduate degree. This is in conjunction with Federal military and veterans educational benefits. The undergraduate dollar amount is unlimited, as is the number of candidates accepted. That's the same for all Lipscomb graduate schools, including the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Bible/Ministry, Business, Computing/Technology, Education, Entertainment/Arts, Leadership, and Pharmacology/Health Sciences. Of course, Yellow Ribbon candidates must be qualified for admission. Some schools put caps on the allowable benefit, with some offering students just a few hundred dollars. As a point of comparison, nearby Vanderbilt University has a limit of \$6,000 a year except in its business and law graduate programs, for which the limit is \$10,000.

IN THEIR OWN (GOOD) WORDS

"All the adversity I've had in my life, all my troubles and obstacles, have strengthened me... You may not realize it when it happens, but a kick in the teeth may be the best thing in the world for you."

— Walt Disney
1901-1966

Tragedy *(Continued from page 1)*

maybe he would have been diverted to a mental-health court, but he would have been under some sort of supervision," according to John Priovolos, a former Miami prosecutor. Priovolos continues, "At the very least, the most capable intelligence detectives should have been monitoring him."

The killer was reported to authorities for threatening classmates. When his girlfriend broke up with him in 2016, he sent Instagram messages to her friends, blaming them for the breakup. One message said, "I'm going to get you and I'm going to kill you because you took this person away from me. I'm going to kill your family."

When his former girlfriend started dating another young man, the killer threatened that boy online with an accompanying photo of himself with "at least six weapons laid out on his bed." The threats were reported to the school.

Had the aggravated cyberstalking been properly investigated and prosecuted, the killer's weapons would have been confiscated. In fact, according to Miami defense attorney Richard Della Fera, just the accusation would have prompted the firearms surrender because "a condition of bond for felony stalking charges in Broward is the surrender of all firearms." Della Fera says, "If law enforcement saw the messages and could identify the person who was sending them, the ball got dropped when the investigation didn't go any further."

The FBI Was Warned

The FBI had at least two chances to investigate the killer.

On a YouTube channel in September of 2017, the killer commented "I'm going to be a professional school shooter." This comment is a threat that could be considered a felony according to "an official in the U.S. Attorney's Office in Miami." The YouTube comment was reported to the FBI but the organization failed to identify its author, although it could have easily done so because he used his real name to comment.

Federal agents also never followed up on a tip given to an FBI call center in January of 2018.

Guns Aren't the Problem

What is the root problem with young people who decide to kill? Societal changes and shifts in attitude may contribute to violent outbursts. As a nation, we removed God, the Ten Commandments, and moral Truth from schools, and to a certain degree from society as a whole. Then some look around in wonder, and ask, "How did some children go so far astray?"

Family breakdown, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual encounters before marriage, normalization of killing innocent babies in the womb, violent video games, and other changes have all contributed to a changed society.

Perhaps Walter Williams, the renowned author, columnist, and George Mason University John M. Olin Distinguished Professor of Economics, said it best:

Gun ownership is not our problem. Our problem is a widespread decline in moral values that has nothing to do with guns. That decline includes disrespect for those in authority, disrespect for oneself, little accountability for anti-social behavior, and a scuttling of religious teachings that reinforced moral values.

Let's examine some elements of this decline.

If any of our great-grandparents or even grandparents who passed away before 1960 were to return, they would not believe the kind of personal behavior all too common today. They wouldn't believe how youngsters can get away with cursing and assaulting teachers. They wouldn't believe some school districts, such as Philadelphia's, employ more than 400 school police officers. (DailySignal.com, 3-21-18)

Are School Shootings Rampant?

Some believe school shootings are rampant and that getting rid of guns will make students safer. There are several problems with the argument, but this is not to say that anything negates the devastating results of a school shooting or to imply that even *one* incident is ever acceptable. *All* schools should be safe places for all students and teachers.

Statistics show kids are much more likely to drown in a pool or die in a bicycle accident than be involved in gun violence at school. Is anyone trying to confiscate bikes or criminalize swimming pool ownership?

Statistics about school shootings are often inflated since anti-Second Amendment groups that collect such data include odd events that aren't actually "school shootings." Examples of these include things like a teacher firing his gun accidentally in his truck parked on campus or suicides that happen on campus; such incidents are included in statistics in order to sensationalize the "danger" that guns represent.

Schools have been made less safe by regulations designating them "gun-free zones." What better set-up could someone with murderous intent have than knowing no one will shoot back since they are required to be unarmed? The same has held true for movie theaters, restaurants, and other places where signs indicate no one else will be armed.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The aftermath of the Florida shooting leaves parents, students, schools, and legislators with lots to ponder. Why wasn't something done that might have made it impossible for this shooting to occur? It is apparent that the adults in charge very seriously neglected what was right, what common sense should have called for as well as laws already on the books, all of which would have made the Florida high school safe.

Many hope reason and truth will lead to good decision-making rather than a continuation of the flawed policies and societal demise that led to that terrible, tragic, bloody February day in Parkland, Florida.

