



When Will the Madness Stop?

*An Editorial by Edward L. Wheeler, President
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So many people are killed that most people are no longer shocked by the news of the violent death of another human being. While that should never be the case, especially for those who claim to be Christian, there are times when the circumstances associated with the death of people we do not know shakes us from our complacency. The past week has been one of those times.

In the span of a few days, media attention on four salient instances of gratuitous gun violence has rocked our nation: Two bright young television station video journalists were gunned down during a live broadcast; a young college athlete known for his pleasant disposition was shot to death in the student union on a college campus; a uniformed police officer was brutally murdered while refueling his police cruiser at a gas station; and as recently as yesterday, another police officer lost his life as a result of gun violence.

All of these deaths have left the victims' family and friends, as well as the viewing audience, bewildered by the shock and awe. Now, a fiancé mourns the love of his life; parents grieve the untimely death of their children; a family that sent a son to college to prepare for a full life must plan a funeral; and two wives must raise their children by themselves.

These deaths will once again raise questions about this nation's fascination with guns and there will be concerns about the adequacy of gun laws. There will be eloquent statements made on both sides of the issue, but nothing anyone says will change the fact that four people were killed these past few days, their lives taken inexplicably.

Because of media attention, the senseless murders of five human beings will once again ignite the conversation about mental health care (or the lack thereof), gun violence and gun control in the richest nation on Earth. Questions will be raised about anger in the workplace, rage in communities and violence on school campuses. Answers will be bandied about on how to control or fix it. But all too often, these dialogues offer only the first sparks of consolation to the bereaved. But, they will not assuage the grief of loved ones whose lives have been forever altered.

When will the madness stop? When will communities stop being torn asunder by the violence that we witness all too often? There are no easy answers, but perhaps there are some steps we can take. Maybe

the madness can be curtailed when we realize that we cannot afford to ignore or become complacent with the violent death of any human being, for to accept and ignore that death is to diminish our own humanity.

A step in the right direction to stop this madness might be to recognize how destructive uncontrollable anger and hate can be, and to make a conscious decision to banish these emotions when interacting with one another.

Perhaps another step could be for each of us to recognize that we do not have to agree on issues, but we dare not devalue the humanity of those with whom we disagree.

What we must not do – if we are going to stop the madness – is try to justify murder and savagery by blaming it on a reaction to “The Charleston Massacre” or other racial and/or homophobic harassment. The madness will not stop if we accept the excuse that the killing of police officers is an acceptable response to Ferguson and North Charleston and other places too numerous to name. The madness will not stop as long as young Black men do not hesitate to kill other young Black men. Period.

However, the madness will not be stopped as long as elected officials choose to focus more on the hashtag “Black lives Matter” – the phrase – rather than addressing the real issues causing the madness Black people live with daily.

Every life does matter, but in America where Black lives from slavery to the present have not mattered, the phrase “Black lives Matter” is an important statement that does not diminish the value of the life of anyone else.

Outside of what’s been publicized in the media, it’s impossible to know exactly how many lives were snuffed out by violence in just this past week alone, but the senseless killings of the five human beings that were the subjects of media coverage grieve me. Too many innocent lives continue to be ended by violence. Even as the gun debate continues and mental health issues are discussed, the madness needs to stop.