

Lessons from Christchurch to Portland

MYVIEW

By Lew Church

The mass murder of parishioners at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, is both a tragedy for victims and their families who were mercilessly attacked by the self-avowed "white power" shooter, and demonstrates the need to fight white supremacist terrorism globally.

We need effective gun control laws from Salem to Washington, D.C., to Christchurch, half a world away.

What then must we do? This requires asking fundamental questions.

First, are elders and seniors who are regular churchgoers -- from Charleston's African American church to Pittsburgh's Tree of Life Synagogue, and now to the two

mosques in Christchurch -- "inviting soft targets" for those men who have a cache of assault rifles, high-caliber magazines and white supremacy ideology?

Elders and seniors who are churchgoers appear to be both "soft targets" and folks who believe in hopeful values like community, volunteering and love.

Second, some national commentators insist a fair-to-middling "solution" is twofold: better mental health practices and services, and more regulation of hate speech on the internet's so-called "dark web." Good ideas, but good ideas that miss the point.

As soon as 50 people were killed at two Christchurch mosques, Jacinda Ardern, New

Zealand prime minister, was adamant that what her country needs -- and will legalize now -- are stringent, specific gun control laws.

In Salem and in Washington, D.C., what we need is a ban on assault weapons and on high-capacity magazines. If we think about the mechanics of active shooter mass murders (the Las Vegas massacre, the Pulse nightclub massacre in Florida, Parkland, Sandy Hook, Columbine ... along with the church, mosque and synagogue shootings) none of these events could have been accomplished with a knife, a bow and arrow, or simple hand-to-hand combat.

There is no "rational" reason for people to have AR-15 assault rifles or high-capacity magazines. These are military weapons, unsuitable for rabbit hunting, boar hunting, any sort of "recreational" hunting, or for home protection.

Yet, Donald Trump's single largest corporate donation in

the 2016 campaign was \$30 million from Oliver North's NRA, the National Rifle Association. Trump's real "wall" isn't about the border with Mexico.

Trump's real wall is to block effective gun control in Congress. Among industrialized countries, only Estados Unidos has this preventable problem of mass shootings, time and time again.

Here in Oregon, our state Legislature has bills before it now to ban assault weapons and ban high-capacity magazines. With a supermajority by Oregon Democrats, both proposals may finally pass. The NRA, of course, has a history of challenging in the courts such new laws.

Congress, as we know, is another kettle of fish. Congress will near-unanimously pass anti-hate resolutions, but not pass sensible gun safety laws. The Brady Campaign, Moms Demand Action, Gabi and Mark Giffords, Sandy Hook Promise and their allies so far have not

devised a strategy to counter NRA dominance. New Zealand, under prime minister Jacinda Ardern, is now taking this important step.

The future is at stake for elders and seniors here in the Northwest and globally. Elder churchgoers need to pray and practice their faith in safety, and not be viewed as "collateral damage" through the lens of Second Amendment idolatry.

For the future, for young and old alike, our public spaces need to be safe for use by folks in our communities. Too often, the "future" is cut short by men with guns. Public officials and leaders -- from John Kennedy to Martin Luther King Jr., from Abraham Lincoln to Mahatma Gandhi to Harvey Milk -- have been assassinated via gun violence.

Amen.

Lew Church is coordinator of the Portland Gray Panthers and can be reached at POB40011@juno.com or 503-222-2974.



CHURCH

{ INSIGHT }

**PORTLAND CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNICATION REQUEST
Wednesday Council Meeting 9:30 AM**

Council Meeting Date: 6-12-19

Today's Date 4-9-19

Name Lew Church

Address P.O. Box 40011, Portland, Oregon 97240

Telephone 503-222-2974 Email POB40011@juno.com

Reason for the request:

PORTLAND GRAY PANTHERS

Lew Church
(signed)

- Give your request in writing to the Council Clerk's office to schedule a date for your Communication. Use this form or email the information to the Council Clerk at the email address below.
- You will be placed on the Wednesday official Council Agenda as a "Communication." Communications are the first item on the Agenda and are taken at 9:30 a.m. A total of five Communications may be scheduled. Individuals must schedule their own Communication.
- You will have 3 minutes to speak and may also submit written testimony before or at the meeting. Communications allow the Council to hear issues that interest our citizens, but do not allow an opportunity for dialogue.

Thank you for being an active participant in your City government.

Contact Information:

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Portland, OR 97204-1900
(503) 823-4086

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Karla.Moore-Love@portlandoregon.gov

Sue Parsons, Assistant Council Clerk
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(503) 823-4085

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Request of Lew Church to address Council regarding Portland Gray Panthers
(Communication)

JUN 12 2019

PLACED ON FILE

Filed JUN 04 2019
MARY HULL CABALLERO
Auditor of the City of Portland

By *Mary Hull Caballero*
Deputy

COMMISSIONERS VOTED AS FOLLOWS:		
	YEAS	NAYS
1. Fritz		
2. Fish		
3. Hardesty		
4. Eudaly		
Wheeler		