Rev's Reflections

Here We Go Again

Just a couple hours after it happened, a reporter on NPR described the scene after the shooting in Minneapolis. The reporter used "they" in reference to the perpetrator, who was known to already have died.

At that point, I didn't know that their name was Robin, or that five years ago it was changed from Robert, along with the sex marker on their driver's license. But I knew what would be coming. Amidst all the "thoughts and prayers," the deaths of two children and injuries of 18 others would be used to vilify all Trans folks. Despite the facts and the evidence.

The Violence Project (which has a very narrow definition of "mass shooting") reports that 98% of shootings since 1966 have been committed by men who do not identify as trans. Meanwhile, the Gun Violence Archive (with a much broader definition of the term) reports that the same group committed 99% of all mass shootings since 2020, when Robin changed their name. Even the US Secret Service reports that since 2020, 96% of gun-wielding attackers have been male.

As far as I can tell, out of the thousands of mass shootings in the last couple decades, only three perpetrators have been Trans. Three. Out of literally thousands.

And yet, as far as the president and all of his conservative media buddies are concerned, Trans people are the problem, fitting neatly into their false narrative that "mental illness" is at the root of mass shootings. In that narrative, to be Trans is to be mentally ill, and guns are the things that keep the rest of "us" safe from "them."

At the beginning of this year, before the inauguration even happened, it was clear which two groups would be blamed for every problem — real or perceived — in America: immigrants and Trans folks.

This is one of those times when I have to remind myself to breathe. And to remember that the best thing I or any of us can do — the most immediately useful thing — is to check in with Trans friends and family to make sure they're okay and remind them that there are people alongside them.

What I know is this: everyone is hurting. Everyone is afraid. And every single shooter in every single event has — in a way — been a victim, too. Because happy, healthy people whose needs are being met don't go on shooting sprees.

We need to do better. Starting by not blaming the most vulnerable among us for the actions of others.

In Peace,
Rev Denis