

Finally, A Different Sound!



By Darryl Scott, Founder of Rachel's Challenge

With a heavy heart I write this article just three days after another terrible school shooting - - this time just two miles from the Rachel's Challenge offices.

By now, most people have heard of the heroic efforts of Kendrick Castillo, the 18-year-old, lone fatality in the shooting. Kendrick made the decision to do something to stop others from dying, and he did. He did so at the cost of his own life. His choice probably saved the lives of many others at STEM School of Highlands Ranch.

His father, John Castillo, had talked with Kendrick about school shootings just weeks before losing his only child. He told Kendrick, "You don't need to be a hero". His son replied, "Dad, but you raised me that way and that's what I would do" - - and he did! So, I salute John Castillo and his wife for raising such a fine young man and I especially salute his son, Kendrick for dying a hero's death - - saving others.

But I also want to pay tribute to another set of heroes at STEM School, Joshua Jones and Brendan Bialy. These two young men followed Kendrick's lead and helped tackle the shooter before he could wound or kill others. Joshua was shot twice during the attack and is now at home recovering. So, my hat goes off to those two as well.

And finally, I want to honor and applaud a group of students who may be the pioneers for a new voice and a new direction concerning the cause of school shootings. They are STEM students who walked out of what was supposed to be an event honoring Kendrick and the wounded students but was turning into another political rally about gun control.

These students had deeper insight and wisdom than many adults and most politicians. They left the room chanting, "Mental health", labeling the deeper issue that has been underscored and often ignored in the thundering noise of "gun control".

We have heard this mantra for 20 years now. From the day my daughter was murdered at Columbine it has been the one issue that rises up, far above all others. Before you judge or criticize me, please listen to what I am saying!

I am for anything, including gun control, that will stop the violence in our schools! But this is not a one-issue deal. Behind every bullet is a boy with behavioral issues stemming from a belief system. Until we are willing to look deeper than the bullet, we will continue to see school shootings take place.

The time has come for the mantra started by the STEM students in Highlands Ranch to become the new voice of urgency. After 20 years the old mantra isn't working! Dealing with the basic needs of the human heart will prevent violence. When students feel connected - - when they have a sense of security, identity, and belonging - - they will not be slowly pressured to the point of exploding.

Mental health, connections, and social-emotional learning are the deeper issues that deal with the behavior of the boy, not just the bullet in the gun. The bullet will never go into the gun if the boy is mentally stable and adjusted. We need more than "hardening the target." We need to soften the tension through inspiration, teaching, and training that will defuse the problem before it escalates beyond control!

Programs like the Jesse Lewis Choose Love Foundation, WhyTry, and yes, Rachel's Challenge provide the solutions that have been ignored far too long. We at Rachel's Challenge have prevented 7 of these schools shootings that we are aware of as well of hundreds of suicides.

WhyTry offers solutions for hard to reach kids and Choose Love offers free downloadable training to any parent or teacher of any grade level.

There is a new sound - - a new mantra! May we heed the call and look deeper than we ever have before, because the answers lie there. Beyond the bullet - - beyond the boy - - is always the behavior sparked by the belief. Deal with the heart and mind first and the violence will cease.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel Scott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized 'D' at the beginning.