

# Violence, prejudice leads to growing cynicism

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I don't think I have ever felt so cynical and disheartened about our country – indeed, our world – as I do now.

Every time some violent action causes mass casualties, I think “OK, maybe this is the one that changes things, changes people.” But it doesn't. All it seems to do is lead to another, and another, and another. Each of them, in their own way, more horrific than the last one.

What kind of society goes on this way? I can't think it's a successful one. Look at what we are taught about how the Romans acted, with fierce coliseum battles to the death, where spectators voted up or down with their thumbs to decide if someone should die. I can't say that's what lead their society to crumble, but I'm pretty sure it wasn't something that brought people together.

I've written here before about being a big believer in *Star Trek* creator Gene Roddenberry's futuristic vision of people getting along, working side by side to help make humanity better and not seeing someone's skin color as a reason to treat them as inferior. Granted, there were episodes and movies that showed even under Roddenberry's perhaps hope-to-be-utopian society, prejudices and violence happened. But the shows and movies still left me feeling hopeful and positive, a hallmark of good science fiction.

In the real world, though, it seems to be harder and harder to find instances of people reaching out across racial or economic lines to help one another. I know they exist and they are sometimes spotlighted by the media, but when something happens with mass loss of life, it seems to trump anything positive. Maybe I

need to pay closer attention.



I ask myself if our society glorifies violence, from TV shows and movies to video games to some sports. I am a big pro football fan, a sport some consider the most violent of all. I grew up watching cop shows and Clint Eastwood's *Dirty Harry* movies that had more than their share of shooting and killing. I haven't seen that make me want to get a gun and take someone's life, or pick someone up and throw them to the ground, though.

The tone and sometimes substance of this year's presidential race is far too insensitive, inconsiderate and even outright hateful. If that's done to reach out to those in our country who think similar, I shudder to think where we're headed.

I know, everyone and everyone's life and circumstances are different and I don't understand what it's like to be in someone else's shoes. True enough. But I like to think, while I'm far from perfect, I'm more accepting of others and their differences than those who decide to take a life or the lives of many others just because they don't like someone's religious views or the color of their skin.



I want to take an optimistic outlook toward the future, but it seems I do so less and less frequently. I remind myself that most people don't act out violently in this way, that there are others who accept and tolerate differences. God bless them.

It's just a huge shame – and really our own failing – that they are forgotten and their beliefs and actions so often overshadowed by those with negative and violent beliefs and acts.