

It Took 50 Lives for NZ, How Many Will It Take U.S To Make A Change?

BY VICTORIA TURCIOS

IT IS A PRIVILEGE, not a right to own a gun in New Zealand.” These were the words of the Police Minister Stuart Nash as the European country moved towards a full ban of military-style, semi-automatic weapons and assault rifles. The terrorist attacks that took place in New Zealand on March 15th, 2019 targeted two mosques of Christchurch and took the lives of fifty people, leaving at least fifty others wounded.

“The reality is after the 15th of March, our world changed forever, and so will our laws,” were the leading words of Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern as a historic tragedy turned into historic progress, with the gun laws passing 119-1 less than a month from the tragic attack. This overwhelming progress of events has many on our side of the pond wondering: Why did it only take fifty lives for the New Zealand government to make a change, while there have been numerous mass shootings in United States soil resulting in no major gun law reform?

In an interview with Ailsa Chang of NPR, and Adam Winkler, a UCLA law professor, Winkler provided insight on the failed attempt to instill background checking regulations by Barack Obama after the Newtown shooting. He emphasizes that it's not an issue of difficulty for us to make gun law changes, but rather, how influences such as the NRA sway voters and hold power over politicians. As a result of this, their influence and power as an institution only propagates. The NRA, along with the Second Amendment, have shaped American gun culture towards an absolutist approach to gun laws that according to Winkler, leaves little to no room for reform or compromises of any kind giving us no solution in sight.

“How can something have 90 percent support and yet not happen?” was Obama's question to the politicians who voted against his efforts in the Senate, after the Newtown shooting. This portrays one of the many reasons why America is not making moves towards gun control. Twenty children and six adults were the victims of the Newtown shooting in 2012, along with the shooter himself. According to data that continues to be updated by Vox, an online news outlet, we as a nation have let 2,007 mass shootings happen since then, despite the overwhelming agreement that we wouldn't let this happen again.

In 2019 alone, the total number of incidents due to gun violence is 14,190, according to the Gun Violence Archives. These have resulted in 3,795 deaths and 6,833 injuries. Amongst these numbers, it is important to note that a total of 806 children and teenagers under the age of 17 have been injured or killed. The reality, although a bleak one, is that our politicians are not going to be the answer on this matter. We are not New Zealand, so comparison won't give us a solution. Rather than looking at our politicians, it's time we ask ourselves the hard questions, why is it that we are continuing to let this happen? †



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Ad CRUNCH 

Is Easter Over Commercialized? *Traditions past and present*

BY SKYE FULLER

With Spring making her triumphant debut, stores have shed their green shamrocks, and instead, don their pastel facades. Chocolate eggs, plastic grass, jellybeans, and bunny ears have once again made an appearance on the shelves of our local shops and mega-malls. This hop is especially evident in specialty candy stores, not unlike the one in which I work.

Since the company debuted in the early 1900s, many adults remember receiving the brand in their Easter baskets as children. Many of those adults want to continue the tradition with their own progeny, often spending hundreds of dollars to do so (gourmet chocolate is not an inexpensive commodity). This time of year, the small candy shop becomes a hubbub of activity, rivaled only by the business of the Christmas and Valentine's seasons. People come from all over the Midwest to buy our nostalgic chocolate-wares.

Nostalgia aside, why do people put such stock in spending money on Easter goods and goodies? From where does the tradition of these objects arise? According to an article by NBC news, the Easter Bunny arose from pre-Christian German tradition, and centers around the goddess of fertility and spring, Eostra. Naturally, because of her association with fertility, her symbol became the rabbit.

Similarly, eggs also have an ancient connection with the idea of life and birth. Additional sources point to the tradition of lent and the banishment of eggs from people's diets during that annual period, and the reinvigoration of the food source on Easter as a qualifying origin. Around the year 1680, writings appeared which described a bunny laying colored eggs, and in the 1700s these ideas would be brought to the Americas by German settlers. Eventually, the ideas would change and shift to encompass Easter baskets and chocolate as further staples of the holiday.

Historically, these symbols and goods have played a role in the celebration of Easter and other Springtime celebrations for hundreds of years. Despite not arising from strictly Christian roots, many Christians still engage with the Easter bunny and Easter egg narratives- giving them redefined roles in today's celebrations.

Industry has long since recognized that widely practiced celebrations are opportunities for lucrative business, and so, our local stores are once again tricked-out (or rather, "chicked-out") in pastels and bunnies. The hand-colored eggs that characterized the earlier Christian celebrations have been swapped for mass-produced hollow plastic vessels, something I feel is an apt metaphor for the current commercialization of the holiday.

Although fun, the goods that we buy are largely disposable and impersonal, and have little to do with the Easter holiday outside of more contemporary interpretation. However, they are not wholly abhorrent. The traditions and nostalgia surrounding these ideas and goods are something to be celebrated.

They connect us to our pasts in a very real and physical way.

My desire is that we return to the tradition of crafting more of these objects ourselves, and in doing so, creating experiences with one another, rather than hollow corporate profit. If you do decide to buy some chocolate this Easter (or at any point really), I would implore you to consider the spirit of the holiday and please buy fair-trade. †