



Carmage Walls
Commentary Prize

2018 Entry Form

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What is the subject/title of the entry?

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Is your newspaper under 50,000 circulation or above 50,000 circulation? Under 50,000

Please give a brief explanation of issues discussed and the results achieved. (This space will expand as you type in your comments.)

Feb. 17, 2018 – An emotional response the school shooting in Parkland, Florida – arguing for gun control measure in the deep red state of Alabama.

OPINION

COMMENTARY | BRANDON COX

It's time to do something

On Wednesday afternoon, 19-year-old Nikolas Cruz hailed an Uber for a ride. It was Valentine's Day and Cruz had a date, one he had been planning for some time. The driver picked Cruz up and delivered him to his destination – Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida.

The teenager walked through the halls of his former high school.

Two minutes after he entered the building, he drew his magazine-fed semi-automatic weapon and opened indiscriminate fire on his former schoolmates, killing 17 – 14 students, two teachers and one football coach – and wounding many more.



Brandon Cox
Publisher

I'm an avid hunter, I own firearms. I believe in our rights to reasonably protect ourselves. I also recognize that there is a real, devastating problem in America today.

However, I cannot rationalize why Congress continues to do nothing about the very real problem we face in America today.

Every clichéd argument that can be made has resurfaced in the last 72 hours.

"Guns don't kill people, people kill people."

Sure. But can't we at least make it more difficult for the tools of destruction to fall into the hands of monsters?

"If only the teachers had guns."

Our nation routinely fails to ensure that our teachers have enough books, pencils and calculators for their students. We sure can't find the funding for weapons and ammunition.

Furthermore, there was an armed officer on campus. He didn't have time to react. The amount of time that passed between the moment Cruz got out of the car and the moment 17 lives were lost? The whole episode lasted five minutes.

"It's a mental health problem, not a gun problem."

Both are problems. Why do we allow people with mental health issues to possess a firearm, much less a semi-automatic weapon that's not intended for game hunting?

I'm tired of reading the profiles of 14-year-olds whose lives were cut short. I'm fed up with watching helicopter footage of frantic and scared students filing out of a school building, arms held high, pleading for safety and crying as they step over the bodies of their peers.

I'm devastated that my seven-year-old will inevitably participate in "active shooter" survival drills in her elementary school career.

Six times I've written following events like this in my career. Sadly, I know it won't be the last.

We're not addressing the problem.

Instead, we're arguing over exactly how many school shootings there have been thus far in 2018. Some groups say 18, others say three. All the while, I remain perplexed that we might find any figure other than zero anything other than devastating.

I'm not advocating for a gun-grab or a weapons ban. I'm pleading for a concerted effort from all parties to understand our nation's affliction and to take reasonable action to make our children, everyone, safer.

The time to do something has long since passed. It's time to hold our elected leaders accountable.



YOUR VIEW

Reader says Nelson Elementary should be left as it is

Dear Editor:

As a city of Scottsboro property owner and grandfather of students within the city school system, I was very interested in the news that the new superintendent is considering changing the status of Nelson Elementary to a school for pre-K and kindergarten only.

I have worked all over the U.S. and visited many schools and have never observed the work ethic, pride shown in the school and positive attitudes instilled in the students toward leadership abilities and team work. This is all because of the amount of work put in by the leadership and staff, the students and the parents at Nelson Elementary.

You only have to walk the halls to see all the positive ideas and encouragement given by staff to the students. You attend a program and see the positive attitudes toward their school, city and country and toward learning and achievement. Principal Hancock and faculty are instilling leadership abilities in these young students that will carry them through their entire lives.

The staff, through their hard work and dedication to these students, has motivated them and their parents to be active and involved in their school.

Everyone is looking for standards to be set to help them achieve their goals. In my opinion, the school board should look at Principal Hancock and the teachers at Nelson Elementary as a model for how to set the standards needed to help the students at all levels of education within the Scottsboro City School system be successful.

It makes no sense to dismantle such a program of success and achievement. One only has to look at the current state of Alabama test scores of the city schools as proof of the accomplishments at Nelson. I would think you would want to build from that – not tear it down.

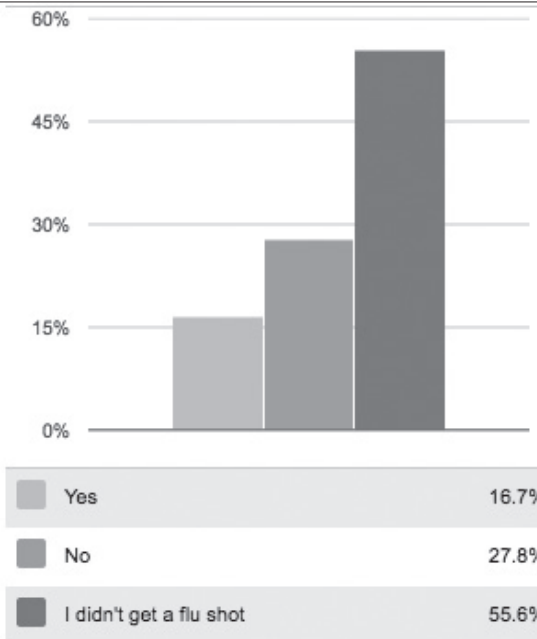
Working with troubled juveniles has proven to me that you need to keep certain age groups separated. It would be a huge mistake to put sixth-graders with upper classmen, and I am surprised that this would even be one of the options discussed.

Although I have heard it is being discussed, not for academic reasons, but for an athletic one. This is fine for those involved in school athletics, but it should be remembered that not every student is.

—James Cooke
Woodville

READER'S POLL

Did you get a flu shot and still catch the flu?



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TO VOTE

NOT REAL NEWS

A LOOK AT WHAT DIDN'T HAPPEN

A roundup of some of the most popular but completely untrue headlines of the week. None of these stories is legit, even though they were shared widely on social media. The Associated Press checked these out; here are the real facts:

NOT REAL:
BREAKING: Second Parkland Shooter in custody

THE FACTS:
Reports about a second shooter at a high school in Parkland, Florida, this week started with a tweet from an account falsely purporting to be former Fox News host Bill O'Reilly. The account was later suspended and police say that suspect Nikolas Cruz acted alone in the massacre that killed 17 people. Also, Florida elections officials refuted a report that Cruz was a Democrat, saying that he was not a registered voter. And some social media posts this week wrongly identified Cruz as a man seen wearing a T-shirt with Communist leaders' images. The man's attorney said his name is Marcel Fontaine and he "suffered a lot of harassment" over the misused photo.

NOT REAL:
BREAKING: 4 million Democrat votes were just declared fraudulent

THE FACTS:
A voting machine company didn't produce 4 million fraudulent Democratic votes; the company doesn't even exist. The story posted by the site thepoliticonews claimed that Novus Ordo Sectorum Inc., owned by the Obamas and other wealthy Democrats, made machines that disrupted elections in 11 states. The U.S. Election Assistance Commission says that no voting machine maker by that name exists. Novo Ordo Sectorum, Latin for "New Order of the Ages," appears on the \$1 bill on a seal frequently cited by conspiracy theorists as a sign the U.S. is taking over the world with an authoritarian government.

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YOUR VIEW

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