



Carmage Walls
Commentary Prize

2019 Entry Form

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Greenwood's scourge belongs to all of Greenwood

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Please give a brief explanation of issues discussed and the results achieved. (This space will expand as you type in your comments.) A spate of shootings in our community caused us to devote time and space to a series of stories exploring our city's gun violence, with each story under the moniker "Greenwood's Scourge: What's the cause? What's the cure?" In introducing the series, we published both a front-page and editorial page editorial on the topic.

OUR VIEW

Greenwood's scourge belongs to all of Greenwood

It was anything but a normal Saturday night at Greenwood Mall when shots rang out. A little girl getting her first ear piercings was suddenly hustled off to a side room in a store as other shoppers ran to seek shelter before being evacuated from the mall.

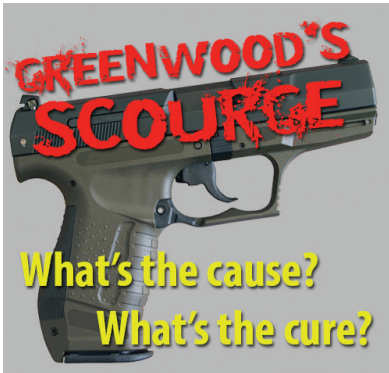
Shootings and shooting deaths have seemingly become commonplace in Greenwood these days. And now they seem to have spilled into more public areas where, frankly, one might least expect them.

But whether on a random street, in a mall or into a specifically targeted house or automobile, these shootings are shaking the whole community. As they should, because these are not really isolated events.

Sure, maybe you are fortunate enough to live on a street that has yet to experience drive-by or targeted shootings, but as Saturday's case proves, it can happen anywhere.

We believe the entire community must face up to and own the problem that has come to Greenwood. The killings and shootings are not an "us" and "them" problem. The issue is not rooted in any one demographic of Greenwood's population. Pointing fingers and making broad generalizations do nothing to solve the problem because the problem is owned by our whole community.

We at the Index-Journal do not pretend to have any or all the answers. No one holds



those cards. Not law enforcement, not our clergy, not our elected officials, not even those who have, thankfully, given of their time to attend forums on this particular topic. Were it that simple, that easy we'd have long ago solved the issue of gun violence in our community.

While no one person or

group of people holds the answers, it is vital that the community pool its resources in search of a solution or, at the very least, a partial solution to curb the gun violence.

Toward that end, the newspaper is, beginning this week, delving deeper into Greenwood's gun violence. We will be talking with law enforcement, clergy, elected and appointed officials, business leaders and owners and others. We plan to provide a map that shows where these shootings have taken place, and we plan to update it as more occur — and they will. And we seek your help. You, the public, our readers, can play a role by telling us how you or an organization you are involved with

is attempting to address gun violence. You can also play a role by helping law enforcement, and we'll tell you how you can without fear of retribution.

Stories on the topic will be identified with a logo "Greenwood's Scourge — What's the cause? What's the cure?"

Please, try to be a part of the discussion, but not with what amounts to meaningless broad-brush commentary and generalizations on our website. This is not a time for Greenwood to be divided; rather, it is a time for Greenwood to convene as one community and be resolute in building Greenwood up, not tearing it down.

We invite you to be part of the solution.

Police ask public to ease off social media claims

By ADAM BENSON
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A Monday night arrest by Greenwood police at the Bypass 25 Walmart is part of what has become a growing problem in the tense hours since a shooting at the Greenwood Mall.

Almost at the moment officers were apprehending a person in connection with outstanding crimes, bystanders took to Facebook, commenting on how police thwarted a potential active shooter.

"It seems like we've got a lot of people out there who wish they had your jobs," Greenwood police Public Information Officer Jonathan Link told the Index-Journal.

Those social media posts were far from what actually happened, according to a statement issued by city police through their own Facebook page:

"There was NO THREAT of a shooting at Wal-Mart this evening. Officers received a call of a wanted person being in the store. Because of the subject's past history of violence and firearms, officers pulled their long guns out in case the suspect was armed and decided to use a weapon. The suspect was apprehended without incident," the post said. "We are still working on some things, so we are not releasing the suspect's name at this time, but we will post more information later. Again, the public is not in any danger. Please keep checking our page for real news concerning any incidents."

Link said bad information about other events in the city — either completely false or greatly exaggerated — has been trickling out more steadily since shots were fired inside the mall.

Link said police are aware that people are on edge, but urged them not to make situations more dangerous by spreading fake news.

"In the midst of us trying to put information out, you've got every Tom, Dick and Harry messaging the police department. I understand people are on edge, but at the same time we don't need to be losing our heads over it."



ADAM BENSON | INDEX-JOURNAL

Greenwood police responded to the 300 Bypass 25 Walmart on Monday, which led to a raft of false claims on social media about what actually happened.

'Sooner rather than later'



ADAM BENSON | INDEX-JOURNAL

Jack Logan, founder of "Put Down the Guns Now Young People," speaks to reporters Monday afternoon in front of the Greenwood Police Department.

Police: Progress being made in mall shooting investigation

By ADAM BENSON
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As Greenwood police on Monday continued to investigate a weekend shooting at the Greenwood Mall, authorities had no new information to offer, but seemed optimistic about the investigation.

"They're making progress. The investigation appears to be going well," Greenwood Police spokesman Jonathan Link said, saying it could be concluded "sooner rather than later."

Police spent hours on scene Saturday, clearing the site at 11 p.m. — more than four hours after the first officers arrived, according to an incident report released to the Index-Journal on Monday.

That document also provided a glimpse into just what happened during the chaos. "Officers entered the mall and began searching for possible injured persons and/or suspects. A perimeter was secured and patrons were escorted from barricaded positions out of the mall, once cleared," the report said.

Police said witnesses reported a foot chase through the mall before shots rang out. Nobody was injured.

Augusta, Georgia-based Hull Property Group, which manages the Greenwood Mall, issued a statement



ALEKS GILBERT | INDEX-JOURNAL

Emergency personnel respond to the Greenwood Mall after a shooting Saturday night.

on Monday.

"We believe this is a random incident. The individuals involved were engaged in an isolated dispute which we believe occurred prior to entering the mall. The safety and security of our patrons is of the utmost importance to us," said Coles Hull Doyle, the company's marketing director. "We have security at the property, and they were onsite at the time of the incident."

Doyle said Hull Property Group will work closely with local law enforcement.

"We will continue to work with the city to ensure law and order is maintained at all times, not only at our property but throughout the Highway 72 Bypass corridor, as this is an important retail destination for the community," the statement said.

Saturday's gun fire was the latest in a series of firearms related violence to have stricken Greenwood over the

past several weeks — acts that have left two dead in separate shootings. On July 15, 23-year-old Quatavious Freeman was gunned down along Sumter Street. And on July 26, Tadarrius Robinson, 18, was fatally shot on Wheatfield Drive in the county.

In the early hours Monday, a unit in the Lakeview Apartment complex off Center Street was struck by bullets, though no injuries were reported.

Greenwood County leaders have spent the past several weeks searching for answers on how to combat the rising problem of gun violence, with County Council member Edith Childs spearheading a number of community forums.

Standing in front of the Greenwood Police Department Monday, activist Jack Logan, founder of "Put Down the Guns Now Young People," added his voice to those calling for reform. Logan was recently named

a 2018 Project ChildSafe "summer champion" for his work.

Logan said he spoke with 8th Circuit Solicitor David Stumbo and Greenwood Police Chief Gerald Brooks, and plans to campaign against changing South Carolina's so-called "85 percent law" for those convicted of violent offenses. That measure makes it mandatory for inmates to serve at least that much of their sentence before being eligible for parole, but a pending sentencing reform bill would reduce it to 65 percent.

"If you pull a trigger, we're going to be asking for the maximum sentence that charge has. Gun violence has got to come to an end, and we want every prosecutor in the state of South Carolina to do what the people voted for them to do: Represent the victims in the courtroom," he said. "No more plea bargaining. If you do the crime, you're going to do the time."

Logan said the outburst of violence over the weekend in such a public venue should serve as a catalyst for swift action.

"Greenwood has had too many shootings. There are too many violent crimes not only in Greenwood, but across the state of South Carolina. I say to the people in Greenwood who see these crimes, and are not reporting it to the police or testifying in court, they're just as guilty as the rest," he said. "Those who lose their sons, fathers or daughters are in pain, and people have got to learn to stand up and do what is right."

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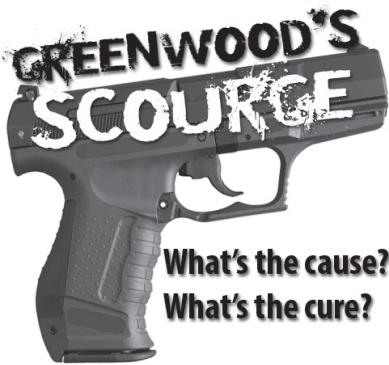
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OUR VIEW



It takes community to solve community problems

There have been far too many shooting deaths and seemingly random shootings taking place in and around the city of Greenwood, and something must be done. But doing something is not the responsibility of any one segment of Greenwood's population. It's not up to law enforcement or city and county councils to remedy.

We firmly believe the solution to curbing gun violence lies within the entire community — so much so that we were compelled to publish an editorial on today's front page. If you missed it, please take the time to read and act upon it.

So often — and thankfully so — this space is used to point to many positive aspects of what makes the Greenwood community special. We do have much to celebrate with respect to the growth and diverse opportunities Greenwood offers its residents.

"Greenwood Grows Greater" was once heralded atop the Grier building in what was then downtown. It's a phrase we and others have brought back. Why? Because, overall, it's absolutely true.

However, we cannot grow greater if we do not come together to address the rash of gun violence that seems to be plaguing our community. We hope that through an ongoing series of stories — Greenwood's Scourge — What's the cause? What's the cure" — the community can and will move beyond wringing its collective hands and work together.

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All the president's lies

"He's been lying all week, he's been lying for years. ... I don't see how he has any credibility."

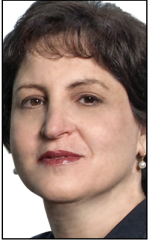
Exactly. Rudy Giuliani, the president's current lawyer, was talking about Michael Cohen, the president's former lawyer. But if Cohen is so sleazy, and I don't disagree, why did Donald Trump keep the self-described fixer around for so long?

As recently as April, Trump was calling Cohen a "good man." As recently as May, Giuliani called Cohen "an honest, honorable lawyer." Cohen's character didn't change. The damage he could inflict on Trump did.

And here's the bigger problem with Giuliani's argument against Cohen: It applies to his own client. Trump lies — constantly, flagrantly, provably. You might think that a smart lawyer, capable of seeing around a looming corner, would think twice before labeling someone else a "pathological liar."

Especially since Trump's lies include the very subject on which Giuliani now claims that Cohen's alleged account should be discounted and Trump's credited. If Cohen tells you the sky is blue, check the color. In a swearing contest between Cohen and Trump about the Trump Tower meeting, Cohen's word alone isn't reliable. Still, if there are motives to lie on both sides, whose is bigger? I'd wager the one whose presidency may hinge on the outcome.

And the one who has the longer track record of prevarication on this topic.



RUTH MARCUS
WASHINGTON POST COLUMNIST

Trump is implicated in — he is the architect of — the original lie, about the contents of the Trump Tower meeting with a Russian lawyer. It was adoption, sure! Trump and his lackeys then lied about the lie, denying Trump's involvement in writing the initial misleading statement about it.

"I do want to be clear that the president was not involved in the drafting of the statement," Trump lawyer Jay Sekulow said last July. That untruth was quickly overtaken by misleading spin from White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders: "The president weighed in, as any father would." Any father with zero fealty to the truth. Any father with political — and perhaps criminal — exposure of his own.

It is no stretch, then, to imagine Trump lying about whether he knew in advance about the meeting he then lied about. In fact, that would be perfectly in character. Sometimes it is hard to understand why Trump bothers to lie, when the truth is so provable and obvious. But often Trump's lies simply reflect the primitive instinct of the cornered toddler with chocolate smeared on his face, insisting that he had not just raided the cookie jar.

Deny first, with accompanying, if not convincing indignance. Deal with the consequences later. As Giuliani said of Cohen, "If his back is up against the wall, he'll lie like crazy. Because he's lied all his life."

We saw this on display with Trump's handling of the Cohen-facilitated payments to porn actress Stormy Daniels. Asked in April about whether he was aware of the \$130,000 to ensure Daniels' silence, Trump denied any knowledge. "You'll have to ask Michael Cohen. Michael is my attorney." The next month

found Giuliani and Trump himself acknowledging that Trump had reimbursed Cohen for the payment he had just denied knowing about.

Now comes Trump, on Twitter, doubling down on his denials about the Trump Tower meeting. "I did NOT know of the meeting with my son, Don jr. Sounds to me like someone is trying to make up stories in order to get himself out of an unrelated jam (Taxi cabs maybe?)"

Maybe. A smart prosecutor will seek corroborating witnesses — Cohen reportedly says they exist — and other indicia of truthfulness. In this case, what were the blocked numbers to which Donald Trump Jr. placed calls at key moments before and after the meeting? What motivated Trump to announce plans, the very day on which the meeting was arranged, for a "major speech," never given, about "all of the things that have taken place with the Clintons"?

What would it mean if Trump knew about and approved of the meeting with a "Russian government attorney," as Natalia Veselnitskaya was described? It would show that Trump, like his son ("If it's what you say I love it"), was eager to obtain dirt on an opponent being peddled by a foreign agent. "Most people would have taken that meeting," the president said last year. "It's very standard."

The dangled dirt was not forthcoming. That doesn't excuse a presidential candidate for seeking to procure it. Nor does it excuse a president for lying to the country for months about his role in this sordid transaction.

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Trump is using tariffs to advance a radical free-trade agenda

Give President Trump credit. When he chastised NATO allies over their failure to spend adequately on our common defense, his critics said he was endangering the Atlantic alliance. Instead, his tough stance persuaded allies to spend billions more on defense, strengthening NATO instead.

Now, Trump is doing the same on trade. At the Group of Seven summit in Quebec, Trump was roundly criticized for publicly berating allies over their trade practices and provoking a needless trade war. Well, once again, it appears Trump is being proved right. On Wednesday, he and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker announced a cease-fire in their trade war and promised to seek the complete elimination of most trade barriers between the United States and the European Union. "We agreed today ... to work together toward zero tariffs, zero non-tariff barriers, and zero subsidies on non-auto industrial goods," declared the two leaders in a joint statement.

Zero tariffs. Wednesday's breakthrough with the European Union shows that, contrary to what his critics allege, Trump is not a protectionist; rather, he is using tariffs as a tool to advance a radical free-trade agenda.

In a little-noticed interview with Fox News's Maria Bartiromo earlier this month, Trump revealed that during the G-7 summit he made a sweeping pro-

posal. "I said, 'I have an idea, everybody. I'll guarantee you we'll do it immediately. Nobody pay any more tax, everybody take down your barriers. No barriers, no tax. Everybody, are you all set?' ... You know what happened? Everybody said, 'Uh, can we get onto another subject?'" Trump offered to eliminate all trade barriers — and his supposedly pro-free-trade allies passed. Right before his meeting with Juncker last week, he repeated the offer, tweeting, "The European Union is coming to Washington tomorrow to negotiate a deal on Trade. I have an idea for them. Both the U.S. and the E.U. drop all Tariffs, Barriers and Subsidies!"

Trump knows that most of our trading partners don't really want free trade; they want managed trade, where they can get access to U.S. markets while protecting certain industries from U.S. competition. Trump's strategy to get them to drop these protectionist barriers is to impose crushing tariffs. At a rally earlier this week, Trump explained his strategy for getting to zero tariffs. "You know, other countries have tariffs on us. So, when I say, 'Well, I'm going to put tariffs on them,' they all start screaming, 'He's using tariffs,'" Trump said. "I said [to the European Union], 'You have to change.' They didn't want to change. I said, 'Okay. Good. We're going to tariff your cars.' ... They said, 'When can we show up? When can we be there?' [Laughter.] 'Would tomorrow be okay?' Oh, folks, stick with us. Stick with us."

Now Trump's hard-line trade strategy is being vindicated. Not only is the E.U. negotiating zero tariffs, but also it agreed to immediately buy more American soy-

beans — which helps Trump in his trade battle with China. After Trump imposed tariffs on \$34 billion worth of Chinese goods, China responded with retaliatory tariffs on U.S. products, including soybeans. Beijing knows that China is the single largest importer of U.S. soybeans, and that about 96 percent of U.S. soybeans are grown in 18 states — all but two of which voted for Trump in 2016. Their tariffs left soybean farmers none too happy with Trump and gave a political boost to vulnerable Senate Democrats in soy-producing farm states such as Heidi Heitkamp, N.D., Joe Donnelly, Ind., and Claire McCaskill, Mo.

Now, Trump has enlisted the European Union to help U.S. soybean farmers to counteract the repercussions of Chinese tariffs, in addition to the \$12 billion in aid he has promised for U.S. farmers. That's three-dimensional trade chess.

Earlier last week, Trump tweeted, "Tariffs are the greatest! Either a country which has treated the United States unfairly on Trade negotiates a fair deal, or it gets hit with Tariffs. It's as simple as that." Well, maybe it is and maybe it isn't. Trump is a long way from a final deal. And in trade, nothing is agreed to until everything is agreed to. But this is a surprisingly positive first step. If Trump succeeds in using trade wars to bring down European and Chinese trade barriers, he may end up being one of the greatest free-trade presidents in history.

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