

## Bad day in Blacksburg at Virginia Tech

by Cal\_Thomas

It wasn't my first thought on hearing of the massacre at Virginia Tech. Initially, there was just shock and outrage, followed by the self-examination all of us do after a tragedy, as we ask ourselves if we might have done more to prevent such a senseless loss of life. The thought that came to me was not whether stronger gun laws might have deterred the shooter. It wasn't about better ways to alert students through e-mail or text-messages, as worthy an idea as that may be. The thought was: What if just one student in either of the buildings where 23-year-old Cho Seung-Hui conducted his one-man massacre was, himself (or herself), armed and trained in how to use a weapon in self defense? Would that - more than any other suggestion or strategy - have made a difference? The shooter had to know that the likelihood of him being confronted with force was very small. But suppose he had known that some students or faculty would be armed? Would that knowledge have deterred him from carrying out his evil deeds? Sounds crazy, you say? Am I advocating that everyone be armed and our college campuses be turned into potential shooting galleries? No. In this instance, one armed student, or professor, or campus police officer stationed in the building might have been enough. Self-defense is an ancient tradition, but these students never had a chance to defend themselves. They were easy targets for a deranged man who then turned his gun on himself. Wouldn't it have been preferable if someone had stopped him before he could murder anyone? This is the flip side of the gun control argument. Deterrence and self-defense can work better than fruitless attempts at pre-empting evil intent. Let's say that stronger gun laws had made it more difficult for the shooter to purchase a gun. Instead, he might have easily acquired a bomb and blown himself and the others up, as is frequently done in the Middle East. Would there then have been calls for more bomb control? Laws don't deter people with criminal intent; otherwise our prisons would be empty. A criminal is one who violates the law. How does the gun control lobby propose to make lawbreakers into law-abiders? If lawbreakers are not deterred from criminal pursuits by laws currently in place, why should more laws deter them? Our problem is that we try to control evil from without when, in fact, it resides within us. Having abandoned the teaching of right and wrong and accountability for one's actions for fear of offending a person's sensibilities, we have unilaterally disarmed ourselves against evil. We don't need more gun control. We need more self-control. What is it that has made life so cheap? Why do juveniles kill for a pair of shoes or a leather jacket? How can we turn our backs on the tens of millions of abortions that have been performed legally in America in the last 30 years? Did we think there would be no consequences when life is treated so cheaply? Easy divorce, spousal abuse, drugs, and a media that celebrates crime for profit lower our resistance level. TV crime shows are increasingly graphic in their depictions of brutality. Blood and gore flow regularly into millions of living rooms and we are not satiated. The cumulative effect of such things cannot be good for our consciences, or our morals, what's left of them. I saw a promo for NBC's "Law and Order," which advertised the number of psychopaths they have featured on the long-running series. Nice. Look at who is promoted in popular culture: Don Imus; Anna Nicole Smith and the debate over who fathered her child; various celebrities sleeping with other celebrities, marrying and divorcing fellow celebrities; celebrities in rehab; celebrities and their next picture. Were someone to suddenly announce a cure for cancer, to be noticed, he or she would have to compete with the cultural swill. Inevitably, evil finds ways to break through and nothing can prevent it, but we might have a better chance against evil and the people it controls if more of us were trained in how to fight back, just in case the police are not close, as was the unfortunate case in Blacksburg, Va. (c) 2007 Tribune Media Services, Inc.