
Common Council President

15th District Alderman



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City of Milwaukee Common Council

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An Open Letter Regarding Weekend Violence

My dear fellow Milwaukeeans,

Over the weekend of February 9, our city suffered a rash of gun violence. From Friday evening to early Saturday morning, a staggering total of twelve individuals were shot and wounded. These victims are our friends, neighbors and family members. Each one is a human being with value beyond measure. And yet, those who did the shooting considered their lives worthless. They saw them as less than garbage. Not only were the victims devalued by these senseless actions, but so were the shooters and our entire community.

I do believe there are far too many handguns in the possession of criminally minded individuals. And I agree with my fellow elected officials and community leaders who want legislation passed that would track the transfer of guns, in order to keep them out of the hands of those who intend harm. But we must not be afraid to deal with the root causes of this violence. There are deeper societal issues that must be addressed. Too many of our residents lack basic conflict resolution skills, and that must change. Today.

It is never acceptable to reach for a gun as a way to solve an argument. This weekend, one individual was shot over a spilled drink. Rational human beings do not behave in this manner, and it is the responsibility of every parent, pastor and politician – every person – to ensure that the message is loud and clear. If you are angry, or even enraged, reaching for a gun will only make your situation worse. Walk away. Take a deep breath. Count to ten. Go outside and scream if you have to. Talk to a trusted friend or family member. But never ever use a gun to try to solve an argument.

We are not animals. We have the ability to reason, contemplate and thoughtfully consider our situation. Animals can only react to violence on impulse, but we have the intellectual and emotional capacity to make wise decisions. When we use violence to “win” an argument, we are choosing to be animalistic in nature. Not human.

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Open Letter/ADD ONE

As a community, we must never become complacent about this. We must wake up to the intrinsic and awesome worth of every individual. We must realize that this kind of violence hurts everyone – victim, perpetrator, family member, neighborhood, even the entire city.

The only true answer to violence, beyond more prisons and more police, is true compassion by everyday citizens. Where is our love and care for our fellow man? Where is our love for self, even? Dr. King once said, “The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy.” He added that “hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.”

Let us the people of Milwaukee heed Dr. King’s words. Let us learn to love one another. Let us envision and work toward a safer, more prosperous Milwaukee. Together we can do it. But it does not start only with our police officers and elected officials. It starts with you. It starts with all of us.

Sincerely,

Willie L. Hines Jr.

Common Council President and Alderman for the 15th District