



Invest in youth; it's a real solution to ending violence



EVELYN MYRIE

We have witnessed escalating gun and gang violence over the past few weeks in Hamilton.

In November, a group of youths, and, allegedly, one adult, attacked a high-school basketball team in the school gym, with clubs, knives and a machete. Last month, club-goers had to dodge bullets in a Gertrude Street bar when a gun battle erupted between what appear to be rival gangs.

And all Canadians are in shock over the Boxing Day shootout in Toronto that left a 15-year-old student dead and six others wounded. An innocent young woman was callously gunned down in crossfire between young men who have lost a sense of community connection and value of humanity.

The community is frustrated and wants to find answers to a gun problem that is like a cancer in our society.

The answers to these heinous gun crimes are not easy to find. The quick fixes being uttered by politicians are no solution to the growing social decay that is evident in our society.

There are those who would lay the blame at the feet of single mothers who they claim fail to inculcate good morals in their children, and of absent fathers who are nowhere to be found.

The political parties each offer their own solutions, ranging from more punishment to more social programs. Not even the so-called experts have definitive answers to help quell what appears to be a Wild West mentality permeating our urban landscape.

Many are looking to the black community to take care of "its own" because the majority of perpetrators and victims of gun and gang violence are black males. This sentiment was echoed by a senior Hamilton police officer, who in a recent interview with *The Spectator*, said black community leaders must become involved in the solution. Unfortunately, these comments only serve to further stereotype members of the black community who

have been strong opponents of violence and crime in its various forms.

I cannot recall another case in recent times when racial/ethnic communities have been called on to help find solutions to crimes committed by someone from their own ethnic group. Who do the police call on when the Hell Angels, a predominately white criminal organization, commit a crime?

Those who are looking for quick-fix answers to a multi-faceted problem will be disappointed because there are none. As a community, it is in our best interest to work together to help find ways to stop the escalating gun violence. Finger-pointing and blaming the black community will not help create a safer community for all.

We don't have all the answers but it is a well documented fact that there is a correlation between crime and poverty. We cannot ignore this fact if we are committed to finding meaningful solutions to crime.

Ryerson professor Wendy Cukier, co-author of the *Global Gun Epidemic*, agrees that the root causes of violence include a wide range of social, economic, community and psychological dimensions that must

be examined if we are to find solutions to gun violence.

We must look at the problem as a disease and focus on understanding and addressing the factors which contribute to violence in order to develop appropriate prevention strategies.

Sandra Carnegie Douglas, president of the Jamaica Canadian Association — who with 28 community groups in Toronto met with the prime minister to discuss the problem — urges the community to look at a broad range of innovative programs to address violence and crime such as court diversion programs and job opportunities.

The struggle to end gun violence ought not to become a black community fight. It's a community issue that requires our collective response.

Those who commit crimes should be punished. But if we want longer-term solutions, the answers will not be found solely in handing out harsher sentences, but also by investing in our future — investing in young people so they reach their full potential.

Freelance columnist Evelyn Myrie is a social development consultant.

Optimism in the chorus of this 'Little List'



JOAN LITTLE

In the operetta *The Mikado*, Ko-Ko, the Lord High Executioner of Titipu, creates a list of potential victims. With apologies to Gilbert and Sullivan, here's my annual looking-back-at-last-year "Little List."

As someday it may happen
That some victims must be found,
I've got a little list,
I've got a little list,
Of things we've seen in Burlington
and other places 'round,
That never would be missed -
They never would be missed

Tsunamis, Earthquakes, Hurricanes
Despair beyond belief
Hopelessness and helplessness
For millions, naught but grief.
Toronto swingers' clubs now thrive,
And handguns, thugs and
crime
While a Plan B for their garbage
Still awaits a future time.
In Burlington a narrowed Lakeshore
Still gets all bogged down
But geez, they want to build a
Widened road to Waterdown!

CHORUS
These problems which exist
Should all be on the list
Of things we'd never miss
If politicians would persist.

'06 will see elections
For feds, and councils too.
Now donations head the list
Of *faux pas* not to miss
Joanna Chapman's lawsuit win
Makes candidates review
Their developers' big gifts
With financial analysts.

Judge Gomery's report release
(The first one done of two)
Panned Guité and some others
and had Chrétien yelling "sue!"
With only half the story out
(God help they'd want it all)
The Opposition pulled the plug
But who will take the fall?
In Burlington ward boundaries
change
For this new year's campaign.
I'm hearing that some serious folk
Will challenge the old names.

CHORUS
Council salaries now eclipse
\$80 thou, plus perquisites
So getting on the ballot list
Is a chance not to be missed.

Our Waterfront is taking shape
But costing wasn't right
So budgets make the list
Of things that must be fixed
In spite of new "intensive" growth
We still face high tax hikes
So will councillors persist,
Keep adding to the list?

But some good things did grace '05
A new Escarpment plan,
The purchase of a site to house
Performing Arts for fans.
A Wal-Mart store is now on hold
For Fairview, next to GO,
Thanks God! Can't you just picture
How the traffic there would
slow?
OMB reforms will save us
Time and great expense
Make developers file plans
That make good planning
sense.

CHORUS
So we are optimists
That the problems will be fixed
And that new year '06
Will top our all-time list.

Freelance columnist Joan Little is a former Burlington alderman and Halton councillor.

A face only a mother could love?

Nowadays you just gotta love the skin you're in no matter what it's made of



THOMAS FROESE

SAO PAULO, BRAZIL

So it's a new year, time for everyone to eat less, exercise more and finally start yoga. I've decided that a better way to a new me, however, is to visit a plastic surgeon and get a new face.

My current face was never really big with the girls. But now my two-year-old daughter is pointing toward my nose and a fresh zit and asking, "What's that on your face, Daddy?"

Now, faces are interesting things. Too pretty and you can't trust friends. Too ugly and you can't find work. Faces need to be just right like Mama Bear's bed. And thanks to modern face technology from France and a glut of plastic on the world market from Pamela Anderson's last mammoplasty, that's now possible.

Cheaper plastic surgery is driving supply, while longer lifespans push demand. This is so mod. In Rome, with all those parties and wars, folks died shortly past grade school.

In the plague-filled Middle Ages, things weren't much better. But now, thanks to inventions like hand soap and bran flakes, we can keep chugging until the queen writes to say we're 100.

A new face will become just another way to keep up. Yeah, baby.

My pick from the pool of options is the brand-Euro metro face. It's square-jawed and hard-powered, but still sensitive. For me, born in Berlin, it's perfect. Strangers around the civilized world, and even in New York City, have already told me years ago that I resemble former German tennis star Boris Becker.

Of course, a new face needs a new name. Stay true to yourself here. For example, I can use Boris. Or Thommy, my designer name from kindergarten. Or Jak, for JAK, not to mimic the mystique



DWIGHT BULL, SPECIAL TO THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

A man from Yemen, among the world's poorest countries, shows his weathered face. It's the type of face that has character, but that's not as important as getting a new image for the year, says columnist Froese.

of JFK, but an acronym for my Arab pen name Jamil Abdul Karim. I won't use Mr. Chamberlain, my wife's maiden name. Strangers phoning our Hamilton home call me this and it kind of bothers me. Unless it's the bank.

To find that special face and name, you'll want to travel. Or if you already have them, travel to show them off. I suggest Brazil, a place already well known for its perfectly shaped butts. They're called, and I'm not making this up, bum-bums. A Mecca of cosmetic surgery, Brazil also has 700,000 Avon ladies, an Amazon force larger than its army, placing Brazil second in world Avon sales behind only the much larger and richer United States.

Yes, Brazilians take faces seriously. So I've been in their voluptuous country, through Miami in a kind of vanity warmup, to speak at a university about things like truth in journalism. But, between you and me, now I'll visit a plastic surgeon in the bush who'll call my daughter to say he's fixed everything.

Now, there are dangers to this. First, be careful where you show off your new look. Visiting the wrong places, like really dirt-poor parts of the world, is like tossing your pearls into the latrine. In my experience, lacking basic skin-care, many folks in developing countries simply don't un-

derstand things like image.

You know whom I mean: people with weathered, leathery skin, looking twice as old as they are, having faces with character, if not integrity.

Facial creases and folds are OK, I guess, if they hide zits. But if you're really serious about a new you, don't get confused with the pursuit of something as out-of-fashion and tenuous as character.

The other thing is, whatever you do, be careful at airports. I'm already envisioning security at my return flight to Canada.

"Yes, Mr. Froese? I see you're using your German passport today. Your nose is smaller than in this photo."

"Why, thank you. Oh, and please, call me Jak. I mean Thommy. No, no, Boris, please."

"Is this not your passport, sir?"

"Well, it's for the old me."

"Then it's not for the present you, the one wanting to board this plane?"

See the potential complications? But don't worry too much about this. The style of your response is more important than its substance. Just be cool. Relax. And show everyone that you love the skin you're in. Whatever it might be made of.

Thomas Froese appears every other Monday. E-mail 140765@sympatico.ca

If resolutions are just words, here are 10 to think about

COMPILED BY BERNARD BASKIN

Here are 10 words for the New Year.

SOLITUDE

Someone who does not reserve one hour every day for oneself is not human.

— Nachman of Bratslav

Being alone does not mean being lonely. It means cutting off the external, the superficial and the superfluous, and seeking instead the inner strength which one finds best in solitude. It enriches the spirit and ennobles the person, and one who denies himself its refuge is not living life to its fullest.

— Henry King

LAUGHTER

To laugh at ourselves we have to stand outside ourselves — and that is an immense benefit. Our puffed-up pride and touchy self-importance vanish: a clean and sweet humility begins to take possession of us. We are on the way to growing a soul.

— A. Powell Davies

A man without mirth is like a wagon without springs. He is jolted disagreeably by every pebble in the road.

— H. W. Beecher

TIME

Living one day at a time is the magic that lifts the crushing burden from our shoulders and divides our time into manageable portions. On God's clock

for human beings there is no yesterday, no tomorrow — only the great now.

— G. M. Mathews

Finish your day and be done with it. You have done what you could. Some blunders and absurdities no doubt crept in; forget them as soon as you can. Tomorrow is a new day; begin it well and serenely and with too high a spirit to be cumbered with your old nonsense. This day is all that is good and fair. It is too dear, with its hopes and invitations, to waste a moment on the yesterday.

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

HOPE

I avow my faith that we are marching toward better days. Humanity will not be cast down. We are going on — swinging bravely forwards along the grand high road — and already behind the distant mountains is the promise of the sun.

— Winston Churchill

If you have occasional spells of despondency and self-pity, if once in a while you begin to feel sorry for yourself, don't despair! The sun has a sinking spell every night, but it rises again all right the next morning.

— Richard C. Hertz

FRIENDSHIP

Friendship is like a treasury; you cannot take from it more that you put into it.

— Benjamin Mandelstamm

Friendship is like stone. A stone has no value, but by rubbing one stone against another, sparks of fire emerge.

— Hasidic Source

THOUGHT

A man's mind stretched by a new idea can never go back to its original dimensions.

— Oliver Wendell Holmes

A great many people think they are thinking when they are merely re-arranging their prejudices.

— William James

CHARACTER

Character is built out of circumstances — from exactly the same materials one person builds palaces while another builds hovels.

— G. H. Lewis

There is no illusion more fatal, no folly more profound, than a man's belief that he can kick and gouge and scheme his way to the top — and then afford the luxury of being a good person; for nothing is more certain than that we become what we do.

— Sydney J. Harris

CONTENTMENT

When Pyrrhus was about to sail for Italy, Cineas, a wise and good man, asked him what were his intentions and expectations. "To conquer Rome," said Pyrrhus.

"And after that?"

"We will subdue Carthage, Macedonia, all Africa and all Greece."

"And when we have conquered all we can, what shall we do?"

"Do? Why, then we will sit down and spend our time in peace and comfort."

"Ah, my Lord," said the wise Cineas. "what prevents our being in peace and comfort right now?"

— George L. Walton

HAPPINESS

Happiness sneaks in through a door you didn't know you left open.

— John Barrymore

If you ever find happiness by hunting for it, you will find it as the old man did his lost spectacles — on his nose all the time.

— Josh Billings

The secret to being miserable is to have enough leisure to bother about whether you are happy or not.

— G. B. Shaw

CARING

The person who has learned to be kind has mastered the most vital subject in life's curriculum. If he has learned how to bring a ray of light where there is darkness, a touch of softness where life has been hard, a word of cheer to lift drooping spirits — that person is best equipped to live life as it should be lived.

— Sidney Greenberg

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Articles welcome

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