

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Clueless on climate change

Regarding "City unveils its "road map" to take on climate change" (June 2): It is distressing to read in 2022 that we have a city councillor so ill-informed about the science of climate change that he said "We've heard bold statements that it will cost us lot more if we do nothing, but I've never heard the science behind that." I recommend that Coun. Lloyd Ferguson (and all of his colleagues) read the IPCC report — Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability — Summary for policy makers. This was written by a large group of the world's top climate scientists.

He will find it describes an extensive catalogue of the damage forecast from climate change if action is not taken. It also gives future adaptation options and what is needed to enable climate-resilient development. This may enable him to make better decisions when council is presented with climate mitigation and adaptation plans.

*Dave Carson, Dundas*

## Police chief Doug Ford

Apparently Hamilton has a new chief of police and it's not Chief Bergen. At the Tory campaign photo-op at the Hamilton Cargojet hangar last Thursday night, a Canadian citizen with a legitimate invitation to the event was arrested for trespassing and escorted from the property. Subsequently, Hamilton police issued a false statement to the public claiming the lawyer/political cartoonist was part of the protest blocking traffic prior to the event. Maybe Doug Ford could do both "chief" jobs and save Hamilton taxpayers some money!

*Michael Salata, Hamilton*

## Why we need grades in school

Regarding "Grades kill curiosity ..." (May 27): There has to be a form of assessment and evaluation to show understanding, development, and knowledge. Teachers, students, and parents need to be aware that learning is taking place, as well as ways they can improve. Replacing grades with conversations with students and parents is unrealistic and would be impossible to schedule. Indeed, hiding grades until the end of term is also ludicrous. We need to be aware of progress or lack of progress to strategize and improve. Parents and educators work with children to develop curiosity, love of reading and lifelong learning. It is a continuum.

*Jan Peirson-Reid, Carlisle*

## Teachers who love teaching

If curiosity were the only motivation for learning in this technologically driven age, we could do away with schools and teachers. If ungrading were the answer to intellectual development, we could save educators much stress in dealing with helicopter parents. But then, what would we have?

No one can dispute the fact that teaching to a test, except, of course, when dealing with basic numeric and linguistic skills is ineffective.

What we need is teachers who use their skills to make learning challenging as well as enjoyable, who present content that provides opportunity to learn how to learn, who provide an environment where contradiction, questioning and scrutinizing are encouraged. We need teachers who use grades to assess their own effectiveness.

*Henrietta Washik, Stoney Creek*

## Driving a 'lethal weapon'

In the late '40s, when my dad was teaching me to drive, we were stopped at the corner of Longwood Road and Main Street West, at the stop light, and my father said to me, "Remember, you are driving a lethal weapon." I have never forgotten that, and have passed that phrase on to my children as they, in their turn, were learning to drive.

*Joan McCauley, Hamilton*

## Shaming is counterproductive

There will be more pushback against Hamilton city council's discussion to allow two or even three units in and around single-family houses.

Already, in our Mountain neighbourhood, it is very easy to spot the rental houses: neglected front and back yards, strewn with debris and broken-down furniture discards. Many of those houses were purchased by companies and the owners are the very definition of absentee landlords.

If you think that extra units will be rented by lovely quiet grandmas, think again. What you'll get is noise, ruined lawns, falling-down outdoor structures and street parking making snow clearing impossible. Turning bungalows into rooming houses is not the solution. And trying to shame existing working-class owners with accusations of elitism and NIMBYism is counterproductive.

*M.M. Bédard, Hamilton*

## True north strong and free

As a born and raised Canadian, I was stunned at a recent Remembrance Day service at the cenotaph in Stoney Creek when in closing the organizers sang "God Save The Queen" and the crowd joined in. I hope the monarchy worshippers among us, hopeless as they may be, remember that in Canada we believe in "the true north, strong and free." We've made big strides cutting our ties with the most useless family in the world, including getting our own anthem, which I hope was playing loud and clear for the world to hear.

*Stanley Klimowicz, Stoney Creek*



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO

On Aug. 1, 1966, smoke rises from the sniper's rifle as he fires from the tower of the University of Texas. Charles Whitman fatally shot 16 people that day. Craig Wallace wonders what's changed since.

# Meaningful action, not rhetoric needed

CRAIG WALLACE

On Aug. 1, 1966, former marine Charles Whitman barricaded himself in the clock tower of the University of Texas and opened fire. Ninety-six minutes later he was killed by police, but not until he had fatally shot 16 people and wounded 31 others.

Since that time, the number of mass shootings in the United States has continued to climb. From an average of one incident per year in the 1970s (according to the Congressional Research Service) to 214 such incidents already in 2022, the death toll continues to climb, with no end in sight.

What has been the common reaction from "pro-gun" conservative politicians and organizations such as the National Rifle Association after most if not all these incidents? They raise two main arguments.

The first one is "the best defence to a bad guy with a gun, is a good guy with a gun." We have seen how well that works in reality. To be fair, there have been some incidents when this was partially true.

In the Whitman shooting, in Austin, Texas, police put out a desperate call for civilians with telescopic-sighted hunting rifles. This was an era before police tactical teams ex-

isted and officers were equipped with only revolvers and shotguns. The police on the scene were completely outgunned. A number of civilians responded and with their powerful hunting rifles, they began a heavy and accurate counter fire forcing Whitman to take cover. This slowed Whitman's rate of fire and police officers finally broke down the barricaded door and killed him.

In 2019, an armed citizen killed a gunman in a Texas church who had begun firing. However, KXAN News in Austin, and the University of Texas, studied mass shootings in that state from 2000-2019. In 316 mass shootings only 10 times (or 3.16 per cent of the time) did armed citizens stop the gunman.

We hear calls for armed police and guards in schools and shopping areas. However when we look back, there was a police officer at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo., in 1999 who quickly engaged the two shooters with gunfire and could not stop them. There was a police officer at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida during a mass shooting in 2018 who is facing criminal charges as he refused to confront the gunman. In a mass shooting at a school in Texas in 2019, two armed police officers

present at the school failed to stop the gunman. Less than two weeks ago in neighbouring Buffalo, N.Y., a courageous armed security guard confronted a mass shooter and died in an exchange of gunfire. He failed to stop the shooting. At the more recent school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, 19 armed police officers failed to immediately engage the gunman and stop the massacre of students. This doesn't mean security won't help in such cases. But it clearly shows that it isn't the answer.

What is so disturbing here is so many conservative politicians and media personnel keep repeating these talking points almost by rote, even though they are proven to be wrong. As human beings we all have ingrained biases and opinions that may be difficult to disregard. However, we expect our elected leaders to make decisions based not on biases, but on objective evidence, logic and reason. Intelligent people, when provided with objective, scientific and/or peer reviewed data that contradicts their biases, are expected to disregard those biases. If they will not, that raises some disturbing concerns.

When leaders are aware of serious problems and refuse to confront them with meaningful action, they will be assumed to condone those very problems. The failure of conservatives to move beyond their rhetoric and take meaningful action to combat mass shootings opens them up to the same accusation.

CRAIG WALLACE IS A HAMILTON RESIDENT AND AUTHOR OF FIVE BOOKS.

# What, really, is in a name after all?

thespec



THOMAS FROESE  
OPINION

It was one of those funny things. My eldest was with me at a garage getting her car checked when she said, "Dad. Look!"

I turned to see a set of summer tires, ready for some stranger's car. "Gunter," the unknown owner's name, was written large on the four tires that were stacked like a question mark.

Funny, because we'd recently buried Dad Froese, my father, Gunter, in a Kitchener cemetery. It's not like Gunter ("Gunter" when Anglicized) is the name of every kid in the playground out there. It was like a fun public announcement. "Hey, look. Here are some 'Gunter' tires. Now get going. Drive. It's spring."

In good weather, driving time can be quiet time, when, if you're anything like me, you might escape the grind and, while en route somewhere, anywhere, listen to what may or may not be happening in your life. You might leave early to catch a sunrise, or even pray, although my father always said our real prayers are somehow spoken between our prayers.

This is it. A name can conjure all sorts of images. Names are like fac-

es. We're married to them. For better or worse, they're what we see every morning in the mirror. "Oh, it's you again." Hello. Anna. Mohammed. Maria. Jose. Yes, we're still together, stuck with our names like we're stuck with our tired eyes and crooked noses and receding hairlines.

Our names are the starting point in how the world sees us. My mother — her name was Hannelore — and my father didn't agree on everything, but before they went separate ways, they agreed that if their soon-to-be-born child was a boy, he'd be named Thomas.

So I'm named after history's best-known doubter. But the unsurprising truth is that a shot of healthy skepticism, especially in this line of work, isn't a bad thing. "Comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable," is that old newspaper adage. All the better if, while doing such comforting and afflicting, you're the namesake of someone discerning.

None of this came to mind when I was a boy bouncing around in the back of my father's old Pontiac Parisienne, a purple boat of a car. It was eventually replaced by a red Cutlass Supreme, a convertible that made these hair-in-the-wind days the best time of year.

At that time I wouldn't have cared to think about any name, be it John or David or Mary, among Canada's most common forenames. Or

Smith or Brown or Tremblay, among Canada's most popular surnames.

As a boy I also wouldn't bother to learn that Guenter apparently means "battler-warrior" (gosh, did you know my father?), or that Guenter is the world's 49,842nd most common name, or that Guenter as a surname is 325,054th for popularity worldwide. This, according to forebears.io, the world's largest database of names.

The point is, those "Gunter" tires? What are the odds?

Not to make more of names than we should. Look at otherwise nameless Tank Man. He's the courageous Chinese man who stood in front of — and stopped — that row of tanks in Tiananmen Square. One nameless man standing his ground, remembered especially this weekend because of China's violent crackdown on the Tiananmen protest, this day, June 4, in 1989.

Whatever name under the sun you may happen to have, it's not the worst thing to imagine that in the hereafter, like your other defining features, your name might be re-born and regifted to you in some unexpected way, a way that you'd never fathom. Who knows?

One thing I know is that pictures of cherubs and harps and fluffy clouds typically imagined for the afterlife are horribly uninspiring. It's better to go with hammers and saws to convey the building of the kingdom of heaven, that long tomorrow, in a more vivid and tangible, if not mysterious, way.

And those streets with no name? I'm thinking that some very cool wheels will still be needed for them. THOMAS FROESE WRITES ABOUT NEWS, TRAVEL AND LIFE. FIND HIM AT THOMASFROESE.COM.

