

U. S. pols have lost sight of need to address gun pollution (19, 01, 13)

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January 20 and 21 are important days in the United States, the former, Inauguration Day, and the latter, Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The Romans introduced January into their calendar and named it after Janus, the god with two faces which allowed him to look backwards into the old year and forwards into the new one at the same time.



If we look forwards and backwards in the U.S., we see a gun-centric culture clearly out of control, a Revolutionary-War-old ethic that has resulted in yet another mass murder, this time of elementary schoolchildren, resulting in an unfeeling response by the National Rifle Association lobby group that suggests that the answer is to arm teachers in the classroom. Sure enough, gun sales boomed as always after the recent massacre in Newtown.

How would you like to be a grandparent in the U.S. where more citizens have been killed by guns than soldiers lost in wars? Louis Braille's birthday is celebrated in January. He was three years old when an accident caused him to lose his sight. American politicians have collectively lost sight of a need to address gun pollution.

Have you been to the movies lately? At Niagara Square, after watching several preview trailers of American films that involved rampant shooting, usually with high-powered, automatic guns, Miriam and I then watched Tom Cruise blow away everybody that got in his way in "Jack Reacher," his latest flick. Jack Reacher's weapon of choice is similar to the .223-caliber Bushmaster rifle, used in the Newtown killing. This rifle fires one bullet for every pull of the trigger, and the unusually high speed of its round is designed to produce significant internal damage. Authorities say that the 20-year-old shooter, Adam Lanza, fired repeatedly in a deadly spree. The children's injuries ranged from at least two to 11 bullet wounds apiece. Lanza also had two pistols, a Glock and a Sig Sauer.

Martin Luther King Day honours an American clergyman, activist, and prominent leader in the African-American Civil Rights Movement best known for his role in the advancement of civil rights using nonviolent civil disobedience and his "I Have a Dream" speech. King received the Nobel Peace Prize for combating racial inequality through nonviolence. He was assassinated with a Remington 30-06 rifle on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee. Jack Kennedy and brother Bobby suffered similar fates.

President Barak Obama's inauguration signifies that African-Americans have come a long way in the U.S., but his leadership in any significant gun control measures will face the same kind of enthusiasm north of the border for the gun registry that Conservatives axed despite pleas by police who wished to maintain it.

As a Canadian snowbird seeking warmer climes in the U.S., one might be cognizant that there are a lot of people out there with easy access to guns. One might also tend to avoid any behavior that might tick off a gun-toting American who has just had a quarrel with a spouse. Dare we wear Blue Jay caps now that it appears certain that we have yet another World Series in the bag?

In the U.S., presidents and civic leaders historically have often been shot and killed. Even president Ronald Reagan, the darling of conservative Republicans, was shot at and his press secretary, James Brady, was hit in the head. And, of course, the quintessential peacenik, John Lennon, with his "Give Peace a Chance" 1969 single that became an anthem of the American anti-war movement, was himself murdered with a handgun in New York City.



A few years back, Miriam and I visited American friends living in Blacksburg, Virginia. They took us on a tour of Virginia Tech where another massacre took place with college kids. It was eerie.

Now, Americans face like Janus, the fact that guns are killing their best hopes for the future. And parents of a 6-year-old boy are

fighting their first-grader's suspension from a Montgomery County public school for pointing his finger like a gun and saying, "pow."