

July 25, 2012

# Encourage all to nurture safer communities

**D**riving up to Denton on Friday afternoon I received a call from the Fox news station in Austin asking me whether the shooting in Aurora, Colo., was connected with "The Dark Knight Rises" Batman movie that was playing in the theater where James Holmes is suspected of killing 12 and wounding 59 people.

For more than two decades, I have studied how human beings respond to violent acts in different historical and cultural settings. On Saturday, Austin's CBS affiliate asked me how to talk to children about the Aurora shooting.

Like others before him, the Colorado suspect has stolen from us, young and old, the basic belief that we can go about our normal lives without being afraid. Driving from Denton to Austin on Interstate 35 the previous Sunday night in heavy traffic during torrential rains, I felt this social act of faith.

Driving an interstate highway under any conditions takes a village, citizens trusting other citizens to keep each other safe. Now we must use the same trust when we sit down together in a movie theater.

There are a lot of questions when innocent people are killed in what is normally a peaceful communal space. We have asked them since Charles Whitman went up the University of Texas Tower in August 1966.

Psychologists, sociologists, legal and law enforcement experts have examined the backgrounds and motivations of perpetrators, the triggers that prompt them to kill, the practical factors that enable them to do so.

If we all learned by heart the profiles that have been devised and applied them to every person we met, we would not identify every potential shooter.

Christopher J. Ferguson and two co-authors in the *Journal of Police Crisis Negotiations* in 2011 analyzed false stereotypes and sound identifiers, based on a definitive 2002 study of 37 school shootings and 41 attackers by the U.S. Secret Service. Their analysis showed:

- Fifteen percent of attackers showed interest in violent video games, about half in violent media in general.

- Twelve percent of the shooters "had no friends."

- One-third were socially isolated.

- Two out of three shooters, then, are well-socialized.

- Only one out of eight was a true loner.

- About nine out of 10 showed no more interest in violent video games and movies than ordinary teenagers or young adults.

- Many "attackers" are good and likable students.

Holmes, who was arrested at the scene of the theater shootings, was so described by class-

mates in high school, college and graduate school.

Student peers described Colton Tooley, the shooter at the University of Texas at Austin in September 2010 who killed no one but himself, as bright, polite and helpful. I spoke with some of his teachers. They were bewildered and truly sorrowful for him.

Better predictors are internal:

- Sixty-one percent of attackers suffered from depression.

- Seventy-eight percent contemplated or attempted suicide.

- Ninety-eight percent suffered a recent personal loss.

- Seven out of 10 felt they had been wronged.

- Very few of them had talked to a trained mental health counselor.

Did "The Dark Knight Rises" drive James Holmes to allegedly shoot random moviegoers?

Holmes dyed his hair and is reported to have said when arrested, "I am the Joker." He left Batman paraphernalia in his booby-trapped apartment.

He did not choose the Batman film at random. He planned his attack.

The movie was an element in whatever fantasy he was acting out. So was his SWAT-team garb.

The movie provided the occasion, but not the core motivation.

If we had made it harder to acquire the kinds of weapons and the 6,000 rounds of ammunition Holmes bought, fewer people would have been killed or wounded.

Holmes might have been delayed in taking action long enough for his personal psychological crisis to pass.

According to President Barack Obama, tragedies like these remind us that we are a family united in grief.

It would be better to unite in kindness before tragedy strikes, to care actively for one another in our homes, schools, churches, work places and other public spaces, to be aware of others who may need help, to de-stigmatize seeking mental health counseling.

Colton Tooley and James Holmes prove that "normal" people living alongside us can feel alone and troubled. They can use strange reasoning. Whitman killed the two women he loved most to spare them the shame he wanted to cause his father by killing a dozen people at random with a rifle.

Teach your children to love and care for their friends. Tell them that troubled people can sometimes think and do very bad things, but we can love and protect one another, including helping those who need help get help.

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David MacDougall/Associated Press

Kaltouma Abakar, from Sudan's Darfur province, sits on the floor of her living room during the iftar meal with her family Tuesday in Rovaniemi, Finland.

# Muslims in north debate fasting time

With Ramadan falling in summer, residents near Arctic could go 20 hours sans food

By David Mac Dougall

Associated Press

ROVANIEMI, FINLAND — How do you observe dawn-to-dusk fasting when there is neither dawn nor dusk?

It's a question facing a small but growing number of Muslims celebrating the holy month of Ramadan on the northern tip of Europe, where the sun barely dips below the horizon at this time of year.

In Rovaniemi, a northern Finland town that straddles the Arctic Circle, the sun rises around 3:20 a.m. and sets about 11:20 p.m. That means Muslims who observe Ramadan could go without food or drink for 20 hours.

"We have to use common sense," said Mahmoud Said, 27, who came to Finland from Kenya three years ago.

To Said, that means following the fasting hours of the nearest Muslim country: Turkey.

"It involves 14 or 15 hours of fasting, which is OK, it's not bad," said Said. He estimates there are a little over 100 Muslims in Rovaniemi, mainly from Iraq, Somalia and Afghanistan.

There is no unanimity on how to deal with the fasting issue, which is becoming more pressing as more Muslim immigrants find their way to areas near the Arctic.

In Alaska, the Islamic Community Center of Anchorage, "after consultation with scholars," advises Muslims to follow the fasting hours of Mecca, Islam's holiest city.

The Dublin-based European Council for Fatwa and Research, however, said that Muslims need to follow the local sunrise and sunset, even up north.

"The debate on how to do this in the north has been going on for a few years," said Omar Mustafa, chairman of the Islamic Association of Sweden. "We fast according to the sun. As long as it is possible to tell dusk from dawn. This applies to 90 percent of Sweden's Muslims."

The few Muslims who live so far north that they are awash in 24-hour daylight

See a video about the challenges faced by Muslims in Finland with this story online at [statesman.com](http://statesman.com).



should follow the daylight hours of the closest city in Sweden where you can tell dawn from dusk, he said.

Kaltouma Abakar and her family came to Finland from Sudan's Darfur region four years ago. She opts to observe the local sunrise and sunset times before breaking the fast.

"The time of Ramadan fasting is very long, and breaking the fast can be around 11:30 in the evening. The time you're supposed to eat your breakfast is 2 o'clock in the morning," the 31-year old said.

She said there is one positive aspect of observing long fasting hours in the Arctic during Ramadan: the cool temperatures: "Unlike Africa, here in Finland you don't get thirsty often."

By Larry M  
Associated

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## Public Hearing Drainage Fee Amendment

A public hearing is scheduled for

**August 23rd, 2012 at 4 pm**

Hall, 301 West Second Street, Au

The purpose of the hearing is proposed increase to the Drainage Fee part of the 2012-2013 Proposed Budget of the City of Austin's Watershed Protection Department.

The proposed increase for the Drainage Fee is to raise the residential rate to \$8.35 per dwelling unit per month from \$6.00 per dwelling unit per month. The proposed increase for the commercial rate will be \$206.33 per impervious acre per month from \$191.50. The proposed vertical drainage fee is one half of the residential rate per dwelling unit per month for structures five or more stories of dwelling units.

For additional information, please