

## **Causes and Conditions**

Shaku Arthur Kaufmann  
August 2019

Some might expect a message about the horrendous shootings recently in El Paso, Texas and Dayton, Ohio. To say that these shooting are all too common nowadays is an understatement. Yet we must realize that even in the very worst of these events, there are causes and conditions at work. Many of which we never know about.

Regarding the El Paso shooting we find that the shooter left a white nationalist manifesto on the internet expressing this person's political position, his fears and his judgements on other races other than his own. Probably mostly his fears hidden by his rage, I should think. I think I mentioned anger or rage is a cover up for fear. This was an angry person, a person who was drastically afraid of losing something even if it is the illusion of racial nationalism. The perceived power of racial nationalism has always existed in this country, and although it is usually associated with white nationalism, it is not the soul offender. Prejudice has no particular race. You can find it anywhere, among any people.

There isn't any one particular cause or condition that manifests prejudice. I can be manifested by people who see themselves as having no power over their lives, that something is working against them hence, they look for a scapegoat. In this case it was Mexican and South American immigrants

The scapegoat is a target, someone to blame, the bad guy, and the cause of suffering, a political party or a race of people. We saw Hitler produce his scapegoat by blaming the Jews for all of Germany's post WW 1's problems. Tell a big enough lie, long enough and eventually it will be believed. This was demonstrated by the Nazi regime before and during WW II and it cost the Jews millions of lives.

Nationalism, prejudice, supremacy, extremism and hate are things that are taught. They do not just magically appear. That is why the role of a parent is so vitally important. While children are growing they are like sponges, they take in everything. Even when you think that they are not paying attention at all.

I am reminded of a story I heard about a family that took the husbands aged father into their home. When the family, which consisted of mother, father and young son, sat down to a meal, the aged father, suffering the maladies of old age, had difficulties in some areas like handling his utensils while eating a meal. He tried his best but his hands had grown shaky and he unintentionally spilled some of his food or drops his spoon or slurps his soup. The parents tried to understand his situation but the more it happened the more they were irritated they became until they stopped using a table cloth.

They gave the old man a sippy cup to drink from. After a while, they would not let the old man eat off of their fine china for fear he would break a piece and gave him a wooden bowl

and some plastic utensils and paper towels instead of cloth napkins. After a year, the old father passed away and things got back to normal.

It was about a week after the old man had died that the husband found his son in the garage where he kept his tools and there was his young son chopping away at a block of wood. The father thought that strange behavior as the boy had never shown any interest in carpentry, but there he was using a screw driver to dig out the center of the block of wood, and not making too much progress. Upon seeing this, the father stopped and asked him "What are you making son?" thinking to give his son a helping hand. The boy looked up innocently and said, "Well, I am trying to make a bowl for you and mommy for when you get as old as grandpa was." This story really shocked me when I first heard it. It certainly rings true though. Since extreme behaviors like hate, prejudice, even road rage or white nationalism are attitudes that are taught, we must reflect, "What have we been teaching our children, what are my children teaching their children?"

That is why I hold the parents role as teachers of prime importance. Think about it, if the parents do not teach their children good values and reflect them in their daily lives, *SOMEBODY* is going to teach them and that could end up in horrific consequences. Not having been born here, I feel privileged to be able to live in what I feel is a unique society, and this society is based on Hawaiian and other cultures values.

At the recent protests regarding the proposed new telescope for Mauna Kea I was really impressed with how it was carried out. Yes, there might have been some anger, certainly frustration on the protesters part, but it did not result in violence on either side. The authorities were instructed to remove the protesters who were mostly Kupuna at the Mauna Kea site, did so in a gentle and respectful manner carrying the Kupuna to the waiting vans. There were tears on both sides. I was so moved by the manner in which the protests were carried out by all the protestors on all the islands. I felt proud and grateful.

What I came away with after viewing those protests was the thought, and this was stated over and over, the protests were not necessarily about the telescope itself, but about the Hawaiian people having a say or a voice in how the aina, which they held sacred, is to be used? I do not know if I am correct in this view but it is how I feel.

Most people who live off the land usually have a special relationship to it. They realize how important it is. So called modern man, for the most part, does not have that relationship and that's a shame.

Looking at the reality of our existence, everything we have, with the exception of a few moon rocks, comes from this island, this island earth. We should have a profound respect and gratitude for our homelands. Think about that.

We all want something done about these shootings. We have to find out the causes and conditions surrounding those events and deal with them seriously, before they happen. Some think it is all about mental illness, but sadly, that only accounts for a small percentage of the

shooters. Most shooters are sane, they know what they are doing and why, even though it might not seem so.

One cause that can be cited is the availability of military assault weapons which were produced for one reason, and one reason only, to kill an enemy in war time. Now, they are being used to kill our fellow citizens in the streets of our cities. The El Paso shooting was carried out with the use of the most popular military assault weapon in the world, the Russian AK 47 automatic machine gun available at your local gun shop with a slew of other military assault weapons and ammunition.

Until we address the inequalities in our societies, the double standards, the social injustices and things like bullying (cause for the Columbine shooting) and mental illness, are dealt with seriously, these tragedies will continue.

Until we strived to make our professed values as a country real, true and dependable, these tragedies will continue.

As Shin Buddhist we have a unique perspective on our existence since we are the object of non-discriminating wisdom/compassion of Buddha, Enlightenment. We are accepted just as we are which humbles us and awakens us to gratitude.

Buddha is not god

He does not create, he does not destroy

Buddha does not judge, he does not reward,

He does not punish

Buddha simply offers Enlightenment.

Namoamidabutsu