

Noblesville School Shooting: Too Close To Home

By Shawnta S. Barnes – May 28, 2018



#EnoughIsEnough

On Friday, May 25, I was in the computer lab helping my 11th-grade students with their final project for my class, when I felt my cell phone vibrate in my pocket. I saw I had a text notification from my cousin in Mississippi. I found it odd that she would text me during the school day, so I checked the message which read, “Hi cousin!! Are you guys ok? Just seeing the breaking news on the school shooting in IN.” A chill ran through my body after reading this. If she sent me this text, this meant the school shooting was in Indy or close enough to me for her to be concerned.

I went to my laptop and did a quick Google search and learned the shooting happened in Hamilton county; my stomach dropped. My nieces attend school in this county. I immediately thought about texting my sister, but I decided to read a few articles for more information. I then discovered it was a middle school. A sigh of relief rushed through my body, and then guilt. Yes, my nieces were okay, but what about the students at the middle school? It was around 10 a.m. when I first learned the 23rd school shooting in the US in 2018 was in Indiana. At that time, the only information released was two

people were physically injured and the shooter had been apprehended. Although I was glad to learn no one died, I knew the mental trauma would be long lasting for students, staff, and families.

My students then discovered a school shooting took place and we talked about our immediate feelings. I don't believe my students were apathetic, but they weren't shocked. In fact, one student stated, "I guess it was going to happen here; I guess it was just our turn." This is the norm. This should not be normal. I shouldn't be waiting for a school shooting to happen at the school where I work or at my children's school. I shouldn't have to think about if I would be brave enough to save my students or if I would be a coward and hide in hopes of going home to my children at night. This keeps me up at night. If you decide to join the military, a firefighting unit, or the police department, you know that your profession could result in your death. When I entered college in 2001, it never crossed my mind that I would walk into my school one day and be shot down in my classroom.

How many kids have to die before we get serious about tightening up and changing our gun laws? Maybe the better question is, "Whose kid has to die before we get serious?" You would have thought one school shooting would have been more than enough. As I stated in my article, "Arm Me with Respect," I still believe arming teachers is not the solution. Adding more weapons to solve a problem with weapons makes no sense. I don't want there to be a 24th school shooting this year or have to make the choice between protecting my students or going home to my children. As stated in the poem "Trigger Warning" by four students, "Living in the US is writing a three-minute poem on the normalization of school shootings." When will this no longer be normal? When will #IfIDieInASchoolShooting not be trending? When will lawmakers hear the cries and rage of our student activists and change laws to protect them?

I am relieved that Noblesville West Middle School Science teacher Jason Seaman survived being shot during the most recent school shooting, but I don't want any teacher to be put in that situation again.