

## Participation in our lives needed

Written by Elizabeth Barrett  
Thursday, 17 January 2013 15:00 -

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“What really matters is that we should all of us realize that we are guilty of inhumanity. The horror of this realization should shake us out of our lethargy so that we can direct our hopes and our intentions to the coming of an era in which war will have no place.”—Albert Schweitzer, Nobel Peace Prize winner

Every time I read or hear about senseless killing in schools, malls or elsewhere, something stirs inside me.

Anger, sadness and more rise to my surface when people do terrible things to each other.

Stopping violence will take much more than stricter gun laws or changes in mental health laws.

What I believe is needed is a shift in our hearts.

If you too are still feeling the awfulness of what happened at Sandy Hook Elementary, there's hope that momentum for that shift will occur before we sink back into the ordinariness of our lives.

Shaking myself out of lethargy, as Schweitzer so eloquently states, means participating in my life.

And in the lives of others.

One story making the rounds is about a gentleman who paid for a financially strapped single

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mother and her daughter as they waited in line to buy a movie ticket.

Apparently it was a random act of kindness in honor of those killed at Sandy Hook Elementary. And it took but a few minutes of the man's life.

What if we were to multiply such random acts of goodness and act from our hearts rather than from our heads and stop scurrying through our self-centered lives, hoping that Congress, or someone else, will fix the ills of the country?

I know that I cannot, by myself, stop the violence and indifference that has permeated our world and I do know that we live in context and are part of a whole much bigger than ourselves.

Mentoring a child, scooping a neighbor's walk or being present to someone in pain are all ways in which we become participants, instead of onlookers, in spreading goodness.

Light overcomes darkness. And the more collective lights we can shine on others, instead of burying ourselves in the sands of our own lethargy and self centeredness, is what our nation and world cries out for, I believe.

If we learn anything from the tragedy in Connecticut or from the gang rape and death in India or from other terrible and violent acts, I pray we realize that the nearing of an era where war (and violence) have no place within our grasp is possible.

First, we must participate.