



Written by [Joe Gaines](#) on February 10, 2015

U.S.: Violence Against Churches More Prevalent Than School Violence

On March 2, 1996, Carl Chinn was working as a facilities manager at the newly built headquarters of Dr. James Dobson's Focus on the Family in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The last thing on his mind that day was a deranged individual coming into the headquarters and taking hostages at gunpoint, while threatening to blow up the building with a bomb that was strapped to his chest.



Chinn was right in the middle of that incident from beginning to end, which fortunately ended peacefully when the suspect surrendered to police more than four hours later.

Speaking at the Spokane Sheepdog Seminar January 31, 2015, at Real Life Church, Greenacres, Washington, Chinn also related that he had the misfortune to be working on December 9, 2007, at New Life Church in Colorado Springs when another deranged man entered that facility, killing two and injuring three before being wounded by an armed member of the congregation. The suspect then committed suicide.

Chinn is one of a trio of lecturers from Sheepdog Seminars who travel around the country conducting seminars addressing the issue of violence on church or faith-based properties. The objective of these seminars is to raise awareness about security issues, impart facts versus myth and rhetoric, and provide practical tools and resources that attendees can return to their churches with to help improve their safety. Their website is [here](#).

Carl Chinn has seen his share of violence in church, and ever since the 1996 incident has been researching and keeping track of church violence in America. He now travels around the country speaking on church security issues. According to Chinn's research, over 900 violent incidents have occurred in American churches, 12 of them being mass murders, since 1963 (there were no records of mass murder in churches prior to 1963), and over 540 people have been killed on church or faith-based property since 1999. According to Chinn's figures, there is more violence in our nation's churches than in our nation's schools.

Churches are not limited to shooting incidents, according to Jimmy Meeks, a 30-plus-year police officer, preacher, and regular Sheepdog Seminar speaker, who also studies such incidents. According to Meeks, "During a three year period over the past decade, there was an average of twenty-three sex crimes committed on Protestant church or faith-based property every day of every week." "There were more sex crimes in sixty days than there have been shootings in fifteen years."

Meeks said, "Fifty percent of these sex crimes are being committed by a volunteer, and thirty percent by church staff. Who are we hiring to work at our churches?" He added that in order for these sex crimes to take place, the "crime triangle" must be complete. The triangle is made up of three elements: desire, the ability to commit the crime, and opportunity. Meeks said, "The only one of the three that an organization can effectively address is opportunity. Remove the opportunity." Meeks recommended



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better background investigations on potential volunteers and staff, as well as organizing events and activities that will not afford a person the opportunity to commit the crime.

Meeks also related what appears to be a new threat. According to him, via open source U.S. intelligence, al-Qaeda and ISIS are monitoring American church websites for church function dates and particularly church pilgrimage activities.

Carl Chinn and Jimmy Meeks set the stage for Lt. Col. Dave Grossman (ret.), who is the main speaker of the Sheepdog Seminars, which attracted well over 300 attendees from area law-enforcement agencies, churches, and other organizations, as well as attendees from as far away as California and Alaska.

Lt. Col. Grossman is an internationally recognized scholar, author, soldier, and speaker, and is one of the world's foremost experts on human aggression and the roots of violence and violent crime. He is a former West Point psychology professor, professor of Military Science, Army Ranger, and is on the road over 300 days a year teaching and training elite military units and law-enforcement officers around the world.

Grossman made some interesting correlations: Over the last 50 years, there has not been a single child killed by fire in an American school, yet a large percentage of a school's construction costs goes to satisfying fire codes, and for a good reason. Conversely, during the 1997-1998 school year, there were 57 kids killed, and during the 2006-2007 school year there were 63 kids killed in American schools, yet there is little money at all spent on school security features. Grossman said, "Our enemy is denial. Denial is a big, white, fluffy blanket we pull up over our eyes and pretend the bad men will never come. Denial equals negligence."

According to Grossman, school killings are a rather recent phenomenon. His research concluded that there were no recorded double homicides by a juvenile in a school until the 1970s, worldwide.

He gave several opinions as to the increase in school (and church) violence in recent history. He said, "In all of the research I have conducted on school shootings, the only commonality between the perpetrators is violent TV, movies and video games." He said that in healthy play activities, as soon as a child is injured, the play stops, but in our current culture, that no longer holds true. "In video games, the player is rewarded with points for hurting or killing others in the game, and takes pleasure and reward from human death and suffering." Grossman said, "These games, just like some types of police and military training, can create a programmed response." According to him, the video game *Grand Theft Auto 5* made more money than the entire worldwide music industry earned the same year. He noted, "The game programs kids to kill cops".

Grossman also noted the sensationalizing of school violence by the news media as a contributing factor to violence in our schools and churches. In television and movies Grossman said, "The anti-hero is made the hero." He used the *Dark Knight* movie as an example. In both the Aurora, Colorado, theater murders in 2012, and the murder of two daycare workers and 12 children at a daycare center in Belgium in 2009, the perpetrators were both costumed as "The Joker" character from the movie, and the Belgium killer even went so far as to use a line from the movie during his attack. The Belgium attack was also carried out on the first anniversary of the death of "The Joker" actor, Heath Ledger.

"And our televisions are full of anti-heroes made out to be heroes with shows like *Dexter*, *Sons of Anarchy*, and *Breaking Bad*," said Grossman.

The purpose of the Sheepdog Seminars is to make law-enforcement officers, religious organizations, and others aware of a more than common problem in our country in order to help them to take steps to



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reduce this violence. All three speakers indicated that the trends look like they will not only continue, but will increase, as that is what history has shown thus far. Add in the potential for terror attacks in our schools and churches by foreign extremists, as they have done all over the world, and the need for awareness and better security in these institutions goes without saying.

Joe Gaines is a retired sergeant with 25 years of police experience, certified police firearms, force options and EVOC (Emergency Vehicle Operators Course) instructor, with 30 years of competitive shooting experience in pistol and multi-gun disciplines.



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