

Opinion

El Paso Times

EL PASO TIMES EDITORIAL BOARD

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EDITORIAL

This is not who we are, El Paso

Who are we?

We ask because of what happened in our community Saturday, where 20 people were killed — and, hours later, in Dayton, Ohio, where nine were killed.

We ask because the mayor of El Paso, Dee Margo, said: This is not who we are. (We're paraphrasing.) He said it with conviction. And he's right.

WHO IS EL PASO?

El Paso is a peaceful, neighborly city. El Pasoans live their lives harmoniously, interdependent with the residents of our sister city Juarez, the city on the other side of the border. It's how El Paso and Juarez have been for 350 years, Margo said.

We averages fewer homicides in a year than happened Saturday — if you need statistics to show you who El Paso is and isn't.

More to the point, the gunman didn't come from El Paso, or from the other side of the border. He came all the way from Allen, Texas, 659.2 miles to the east-northeast via interstate, according to Google Maps.

What happened Saturday is as unlike El Paso as what happened inside a church at Sutherland Springs, Texas — 26 people shot dead — was unlike that church congregation, and what happened at a school in Santa Fe, Texas, 10 people killed, was unlike that group of students and faculty.

The killers in those other two shootings had a direct connection to their targets. The El Paso killer has no known connection to us — proving Margo's point that this is not who El Paso is. It's somebody else. Somebody full of hate — hate that was encouraged. Hate that has no place in El Paso.

We are a safe city and an example of how relations between two countries should be. We step up to protect immigrant children.

Now, we are in shock. We hvae lost mothers and fathers, tios y tias, abuelos y abuelas, people who mattered. But, according to Margo, this tragic, avoidable loss will not define us. It's not who we are.

Who are we? As Texans, we're a people who have endured three horrific mass killings in less than two years. In defining who we are, we must ask and answer for ourselves:

- What could we have done differently?
- What are we willing to do now to stop this madness?
- What will our leaders do and what will we demand of them?

We can start by asking Gov. Greg Abbott who he is, who he'd like to be and how he'd like to be remembered. He has been governor during all of these shootings. Is that how he wants to be remembered?

Abbott, to his credit, steps up during crises, going to disaster scenes sometimes when they still aren't safe. He shows compassion, but struggles to acknowledge gun-violence is hurting our state.

Abbott is the governor who went to a shooting range to sign a bill lowering the fee for concealed carry permits. During this stunt, he shot a few rounds and said he'd save the bullet-riddled target as a message to news reporters. What will Abbott do, in the aftermath of El Paso, to make us forget he is that guy?

Will he blame mental illness — the increasingly popular scapegoat of cowards who don't want to admit there are too many guns and too much hate, and are unwilling to do something about it?

Who's Gov. Greg Abbott? A religious man. He said he and his wife are praying for us and he asked the rest of Texas to do the same. We have no reason to doubt that he has been praying and believes in the power of prayer. But we've heard this all before, and the result seems to be one more mass shooting after another.

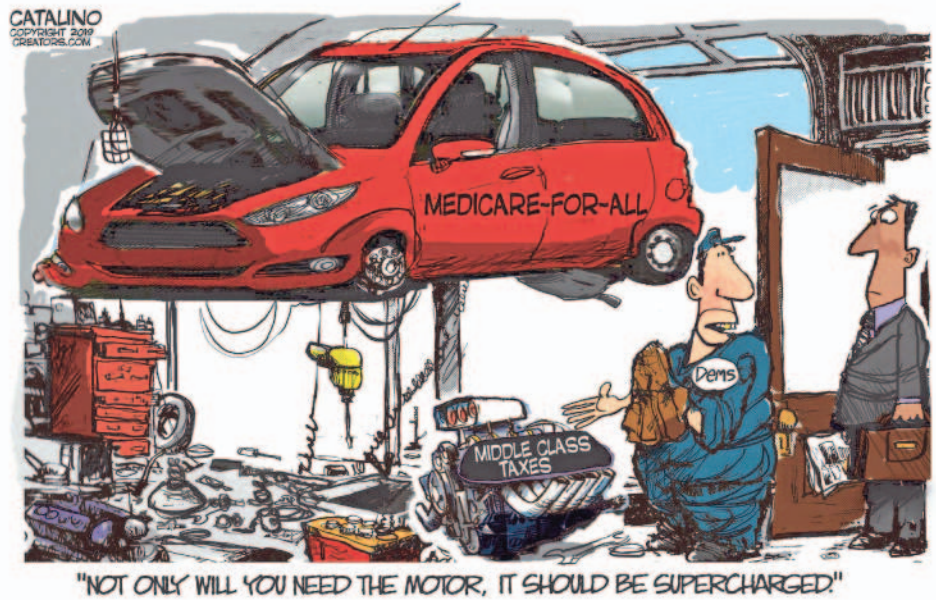
WHY THE FOCUS ON ABBOTT?

Why not on President Donald Trump, who spreads hate, which is the cause of these mass shootings? Or Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick, who targeted Black Lives Matter after the Dallas police shootings and is blaming video games for the El Paso shooting? Asked and answered. Abbott gives us reasons to have higher expectations.

It still doesn't answer the question: Who are we? Who do we want to be?

We all should want to be more like El Paso, as fine an example of peace and harmony as there is — a peace and harmony that it took an outsider to disrupt. And we must find effective solutions that will prevent similar tragedies. That's who we need to be.

CARTOONIST'S TAKE



How to assist victims of shooting

Your Turn

Sarah Ann Dueñas and Maria Cortes Gonzalez
Guest columnists

Many in El Paso poured out support Saturday and Sunday seeking out ways to help following a deadly shooting at the Cielo Vista Walmart.

Here is a list of ways to help, which will be updated as more information becomes available.

Donate blood at Vitalent Blood Services:

Blood donations are being accepted at Vitalent Blood Services at 424 S. Mesa Hills Drive and 133 N. Zaragoza Road in El Paso.

To make an appointment to donate blood go to bloodhero.com or call 877-258-4825.

How to make a financial donation to El Paso shooting victims:

Donations are being accepted by the El Paso Community Foundation for the victims of the shooting. EPCF will waive administrative and credit card fees for all donations. To donate: <https://epcf.org/victims>

The Paso del Norte Community Foundation has established the El Paso Victims Relief Fund to support the victims and families of the shooting. To donate: <http://bit.ly/EPVictimsReliefFund>

Lyft offers free rides to donate blood:

Lyft is offering free rides to those individuals donating at designated blood centers. The company is deploying its "Wheels For All program for local El Paso

residents."

"Lyft is heartbroken by the tragedy in El Paso today and we are committed to doing our part to help those in need. Our hearts go out to those impacted by this tragedy," Lyft released in a statement.

Use code [ELPRELIEF19](https://lyft.com/ELPRELIEF19), which is valid for two rides, up to \$15 each. More information: <https://lyft.com/2LYWTSy>

How to get crisis counseling help:

If you were near the shooting and need some comfort or counseling, you can call the Crisis Text Line, a free 24/7 support for those in crisis.

Text HOME to 741741 to be connected to a crisis counselor. Counselors who have completed 30 hours of training can help people of all ages who are in an emotional state that has left them unable to cope in a functional or productive way.

The Emergence Health Network will have on-call professionals available to those individuals in need of comfort or counseling. More information: <http://bit.ly/2Ki3v10>

■ Emergence Health Network Crisis Hotline: 915-779-1800

■ Toll Free Crisis Hotline: 1-877-562-6467

■ EHN Extended Observation Unit: 1601 E. Yandell Street, Suite B

Veterans Crisis Line

If concerned about a veteran or are a veteran in crisis, call the Veterans Crisis Line to reach responders with Department of Veterans Affairs, many of whom are veterans. 1-800-273-8255, then press 1.

Who will pay for Dems' fantasies?



Your Turn

Madeline Sanchez
Guest columnist

"The world is going to end in 12 years if we don't address climate change, and your biggest issue is how are we gonna pay for it?" This was the ludicrous response from AOC (Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez) when asked how we would pay for her Green New Deal.

Actually this is a rhetorical question, as we already know the answer. It will be us, the middle class American taxpayers. It will not be "the rich" as we are told anytime the Democrats think up some new scheme to seize our money.

The actual cost of the GND is hard to estimate but some put it at around \$93 trillion. According to a June 2016 article in Money Magazine, the total wealth of the US, at that time, was around \$88 trillion (the latest figure I could find). If those figures are correct, or even close, that is a shortfall of about \$5 trillion.

Most of us will never see a trillion dollars in our lifetime so it's hard to conceptualize such a large sum. Here are some numbers to help us visualize in physical cash:

■ If you spent \$1 million a day since Jesus was born, you would not have spent \$1 trillion by now, but only about \$700 billion.

■ For \$1 trillion dollars, you could buy a \$3 latte everyday for 900 million years.

■ One trillion \$1 bills laid end to end would measure about 96,906,565 miles, greater than the distance from the earth to the sun.

But AOC is not alone in her fantasy. The current crop of Democratic presidential hopefuls have their own wish list:

■ \$1 trillion to erase student debt and make college free has been proposed by Elizabeth Warren.

■ \$35 trillion over a 10-year period to provide

"Medicare for all" is favored by nearly all candidates. During a recent Democratic debate, the candidates were asked, by a show of hands, who would provide health care coverage to persons living in this country illegally. Every single candidate raised their hand without hesitation. There is currently no estimate available regarding this expenditure.

■ \$19 trillion to \$97 trillion for slavery reparations, depending on what study you are looking at and how it would be implemented, is favored by nearly all the candidates.

■ Pete Buttigieg has proposed "gay reparations" but there are no estimates of the cost of such a program. I can hardly wait to see who the next group will be to claim entitlement to reparations for real or perceived wrongs! How about people with low self-esteem? Or victims of someone saying mean things? Or people sent into a downward spiral after seeing a campaign sign for Trump?

The cost of the GND and other proposals by the Democrat candidates amounts to more than \$100 trillion. The current budget of \$4.7 trillion covers about 0.00047% of the cost. Mayor de Blasio says he will "tax the hell out of the rich." But there are not enough rich people in the country and there will be fewer if any of these proposals are implemented. And that does not take into account the increase in welfare, unemployment and food stamps as a result of job loss.

Compare this to the cost of building the border wall. Estimates for the completing the wall vary anywhere from \$8 billion to \$70 billion. Assuming the figure is \$70 billion, the cost of the wall comes out to about 1.5% of the total budget.

To paraphrase a quote by the late Senator Everett Dirksen, "A trillion here, a trillion there, pretty soon you're talking real money."

Madeline Sanchez is a nurse with over 30 years experience. She retired from the Air Force Reserve after 22 years, with the rank of major. She resides with her husband in La Mesa, NM.

CARTOONIST'S TAKE



How to have your say: The El Paso Times welcomes letters to the editor. Letters may be edited for brevity and clarity. Limit letters to 225 words. Allow 30 days between letters. Provide full name, address, ZIP code and day and evening phone numbers for verification. Aceptamos cartas en español.

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