

Shotguns often become hand spades, and a weapon like the AR-15 that was used in recent mass shootings has a thicker barrel that suits an afterlife as a mattock.

{Ed. Note: an old article but still applies as Canada works on getting automatic weapons out of our communities}

By: Julia Travers: June 2018

Blacksmiths in Colorado use their anvils to turn guns into gardening tools, reshaping America's gun culture one strike of the hammer at a time.

This is the work of the "Swords to Plows" initiative of the non-profit RAWTools. Gun owners from around the country send RAWTools their disassembled weapons for transformation. Most guns can be made into several tools, such as hoes and pickaxes. Shotguns often become hand spades, and a weapon like the AR-15 that was used in recent mass shootings has a thicker barrel that suits an afterlife as a mattock.

RAWTools' first donated gun was an AK-47 from a retired public defender. Since then, it has reshaped more than 200 weapons so far, with more in progress. The tools they create are typically returned to the donor, given to community gardens, or sold to raise money for programming.

RAWTools founder and Executive Director Mike Martin was inspired to learn blacksmithing and start the non-profit after the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre in Newtown, Connecticut. By late May 2018, 23 school shootings in the U.S. have involved injury or death this year.

This summer, RAWTools and the Newtown Foundation, an organization formed after the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting to focus on post-gun violence healing, will carry out an extensive version of weapons transformation. In cooperation with the New Haven Police Department in Connecticut, weapons from a gun buyback program will be taken apart by a local metal sculptor. Volunteer inmates from the New Haven Correctional Center will do the blacksmithing to create the tools, which will be used by students at local high schools to plant gardens. The harvests will be donated to soup kitchen and shelters.

"The entire process will essentially transform weapons of death into implements of life," Newtown Foundation Communications Director Steve Yanovsky said.

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(From last column) **Shotguns**

Martin is a former Mennonite pastor. "Swords to Plows" is a reference to the biblical quote, "They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks ... nor will they train for war anymore."

He works with his dad and three other blacksmiths locally in Colorado Springs, as well as in traveling programs. RAWTools also promotes community dialogue around gun violence and leads peacemaking workshops. It partners with churches, community groups, and organizations like the Newtown Foundation and the Children's Defense Fund.

During the group's community demos and workshops, participants can try their hand at forging the metal. Cherie Ryans is one of numerous mothers who lost a child to gun violence and has taken a turn at the RAWTools forge.

Martin said that between each swing of the hammer to the iron she said: "This bang is bang for bang my bang son."

"I was holding the hot metal as she did it. Everyone was in tears, and it was all I could do to hold the metal safely," Martin said.

More than 300 million guns are loose in America—the equivalent of about one gun per person. About 96 people are killed by guns in America every day.

The type of gun surrender program that RAWTools is reimagining has been going on in the U.S. since the 90s in the form of police-run buybacks. Weapons can be turned in anonymously to police, no questions asked. To encourage participation, police often give out gift cards in return.

A 1994 study evaluating a Seattle buyback, which the National Rifle Association references, concluded that while buybacks are broadly supported by communities, their effect on decreasing violent crime and reducing firearm mortality is unknown. The non-profit GUNXGUN, which mobilizes community-funded buybacks, states the infrequent and isolated nature of U.S. buyback programs makes it hard to analyze their effectiveness. But, it points out that after a 1996 mass shooting in Australia, an extensive buyback program coupled with stricter gun regulations led to a significant reduction in firearm deaths.

Getting firearms out of circulation is only one of many potential ways to reduce gun violence. Along with changing guns into peaceful instruments, RAWTools runs workshops on intentional conflict resolution. Martin says these range from "serious to silly" and integrate dramatic arts, role-playing, and direct instruction.

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(From page 1) **Shotguns**

RAWTools artist-in-residence Mary Sprunger-Froese leads many of these multi-age programs, which might include rapping, personal storytelling, skits, and other ways to train in de-escalation and peacemaking. So far she has taught an adult bystander intervention class and led a theater and nonviolent tools workshop for middle schoolers.

Martin envisions a nationwide RAWTools network, and said it's happening already.

Volunteers across the country have helped gun donors disable guns for the forge, and churches have opened their parking lots for tents and anvils. Blacksmiths throughout the U.S. have signed on, and Martin says he needs "more people to help make tools, especially if they come from guns in their region."

RAWTools is piloting a regional chapter in Toledo, Ohio. This summer, it will host youth workshops involving making tools from guns, creative expression and conflict mediation.

"There's something beautiful and good about participants forging something that destroyed our community in some way into something that will bring beauty and life to our community," says Pastor Joel Shenk, who is leading the project.

New Mexicans to Prevent Gun Violence in Santa Fe, which previously collaborated with RAWTools, has now started their own creative gun transformation program. They invite community members to use the metal and the plastic from relinquished guns to make tools, sculptures, and jewellery.

Elsewhere in the U.S., a group called Lead to Life changes guns into shovels for tree plantings at sites affected by violence in Atlanta and Oakland, also citing the "swords to plowshares" tradition as an inspiration. So does Mexican artist Pedro Reyes, who also turned guns into shovels.

For Martin, transforming weapons at the forge and teaching nonviolence are important because guns in America are "elevated to such a level that they are viewed as an ultimate problem-solver." He said, "Guns drain so much of our imagination to explore other ways to engage with conflict or confrontation. They are a tool to use power over others for the sake of the individual and not the community. This is what motivates me to do the work of RAWTools."

A military veteran named James gave his guns to RAWTools after studying Christian scripture supporting pacifism. He wrote that he could no longer justify owning the guns because there was "no way to guarantee they would never be used to take a life."

Another participant, who chose to remain anonymous, wrote: "I'm a teacher. After Parkland, I can't own a gun anymore. How do I get it to you?"



Letter of Protest: We firmly protest against President Putin's repeated nuclear threats September 22, 2022

From: Japan Council against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (Gensuikyo)

In a televised address to the Russian people on September 21, you threatened the member states of NATO with the use of nuclear weapons, saying, "When the territorial integrity of our country is threatened, we will use all the means at our disposal? This is not a bluff. We categorically protest against your repeated nuclear threat."

As the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki clearly showed, the use of nuclear weapons would only bring about mass destruction and catastrophic humanitarian consequences. Nuclear weapons are weapons of evil, designed only for annihilation, which will not allow humans to die as human beings or live as human beings. Either their possession or use is totally unacceptable.

Your statement poses a serious challenge to peace and survival of human race. It brutally ignores the UN Charter, the rule of peace based on it, as well as the international agreements on the elimination of nuclear weapons

The invasion against a sovereign state and the expansion of territory is a clear violation of the UN Charter. You should stop aggression against Ukraine and immediately withdraw all the Russian troops.

As a peace movement of the A-bombed country, we strongly protest your statement, and urge you to observe the UN Charter and the principle of peaceful settlement of conflicts, and to work for a total elimination of nuclear weapons in a sincere manner.

Japan Council against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (Gensuikyo)

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Our Mission

The Boundary Peace Initiative represents people of diverse backgrounds officially brought together in 2002 because of our mutual concern for the rise in world conflict. Our mandate is to participate in multilateral non-violent conflict resolution in support of global human rights, ecological and environmental sustainability and international law through education, sharing of information, dialogue and activism locally and globally. We encourage and seek your participation in our mutual work for true peace based on social justice, equality, accountability, integrity, honour, respect, etc in order to build a better world today and future generations.

BPI web site: www.boundarypeaceinitiative.org

For info contact Laura at (250) 444-0524 or (250) 442-0434 or email: L4peace@telus.net.

UN International Days

- Oct. 2: International Day of Non-violence
- Oct. 3: World Habitat Day
- Oct. 11: International Day of the Girl Child
- Oct. 13: International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction
- Oct. 15: International Day of Rural Women
- Oct. 16: World Food Day
- Oct. 17: International Day for the Elimination of Poverty
- Oct. 24-30: Disarmament Week
- Oct. 24: United Nations Day
- Oct. 24: World Development Information Day
- Oct. 27: UNESCO—World Day for Audiovisual Heritage
- Oct. 31: World Cities Day

The Children

By: Dennis Thome as composed at Truth & Reconciliation Day, Sept. 30, 2022 @ Grand Forks, B.C.

The children
Earth spirits upon the wind
Bringers of joy unfolding
They have no race
No clan
No fears
No bigotry
They deserve the past truthfully
Earn the present with their presence
Are all our future together
Playing among our adult ways
As Learners
Adventurers
Absorb every word
Every action we take
True wealth they be
Cherish them
Protect them
For every child does matter
No matter who they be

UN chief calls for an end to ‘nuclear blackmail’ and risk of ‘humanitarian Armageddon’: Sept. 26, 2022

Peace and Security

In an era of “nuclear blackmail”, UN Secretary-General António Guterres on Monday urged countries to step back from the threat of potential global catastrophe and recommit to peace.

The UN chief was speaking at an event to commemorate the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, held as the annual debate in the General Assembly Hall draws to a close.

“Nuclear weapons are **the most destructive power ever created**. They offer no security — just carnage and chaos. Their elimination would be the greatest gift we could bestow on future generations,” he said.

Disappointment and determination

The Secretary-General also spoke of his disappointment after countries failed to reach consensus at a conference last month to review the landmark Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the only binding commitment to the goal of disarmament by States which officially stockpile nuclear weapons.

Following four weeks of intense negotiations at UN Headquarters, delegations left without an outcome document because Russia objected to text about its control over Ukrainian nuclear facilities.

The UN chief pledged not to give up and urged countries “to use every avenue of **dialogue, diplomacy and negotiation** to ease tensions, reduce risk and eliminate the nuclear threat.”

New vision and commitment

Mr. Guterres underscored the need for a new vision for nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, pointing to his New Agenda for Peace. It calls for meaningful disarmament and developing a common understanding of the multiple threats facing the international community.

“We need to take into account **the evolving nuclear order**, including all types of nuclear weapons and their means of delivery. And we need to address the blurring lines between strategic and conventional weapons, and the nexus with new domains of cyber and outer space,” he said.

As the General Assembly debate ends, the Secretary-General called for countries to leave New York with a new commitment to work towards a peaceful future.

“Without eliminating nuclear weapons, there can be no peace. There can be no trust. And there can be no sustainable future,” he said.

Ukraine war raising risks

The President of the UN General Assembly, Csaba Kőrösi, was frank in his remarks, stating that the war in Ukraine has raised credible risks of global nuclear disaster.

“I am particularly appalled by the recurring, thinly veiled threats of nuclear strikes. Tactical strikes, it is often added, but we all know that such a conflict would **never stay at the tactical level**,” he said.

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WHAT'S UP?

Remember to vote in the B.C. municipal, regional district and school board elections. Advance polls are open from 8 am to 8 pm October 5th with October 15th being Election Day the polls will be open from 8 am to 8 pm. Check for your polling stations in your local media.

Upcoming in the Newsletter:

Report on International Day of Peace in Grand Forks
Report on Truth and Reconciliation Day events in Grand Forks

We are working on getting hard copy of this Newsletter out into the community and ask for your patience and understanding due to unforeseen delays.

Voice your opinion to the Prime Minister and all MPs. Free postage: {Name of MP}, Parliament Buildings, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6
Go to the Government of Canada website for MP contact information at <http://www.canada.gc.ca>

The BPI welcomes your input. Articles may not be common consensus of members. To submit articles contact Laura at **250-444-0524** or **250-442-0434** or email L4peace@telus.net.

The BPI is an affiliate of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Peace Pledge Union, Stop Ecocide Canada, Abolition 2000 & CNANW and works with local and global peace, social justice and environmental groups.

(From page 3) UN chief calls for an end

The nuclear threat on the Korean Peninsula also continues to pose an unacceptable risk to the region and to the world, he added.

“Meanwhile, arsenals across the world are filled with more than 13,000 warheads. Investments in these weapons continue to increase, while too many people struggle to buy food, educate their children, and keep warm.”

Return to disarmament

Mr. Kőrösi wondered how the world had arrived at this situation after **decades of efforts** to promote both nuclear disarmament and awareness about the existential threat that nuclear weapons pose to humanity.

More importantly, he wondered how this deadlock could be overcome, stressing that achieving a nuclear-free world is the UN’s top disarmament priority, now more than ever.

“As a global community, **we must find the courage to return to the path of disarmament**, for the sake of people and planet. To start, safeguarding the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty shall remain an iron principle for all future talks on disarmament and non-proliferation,” he said.

Mr. Kőrösi called for countries to renew their commitment to fully implement the treaty, comply with relevant Security Council resolutions, and “refrain from actions and rhetoric that destabilize international peace and security.”

Ratify test-ban treaty

He also addressed the status of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which opened for signature 25 years ago.

The CTBT has yet to enter into force because it must be signed and ratified by 44 specific nuclear technology holder countries, eight of which have yet to ratify it: China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Pakistan and the United States.

“I call on the remaining Annex 2 countries to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty without delay, allowing it to finally enter into force – as 174 Member States have already ratified it and now eight Member States are yet to do so,” he said.

End mistrust and confrontation

Meanwhile negotiations on a proposed Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty, which are long overdue, must begin immediately, he added.

“In this critical moment, let us reverse the trend of mistrust and confrontation, and instead focus on rational compromises and wise solutions,” said the General Assembly President.

“Let us honor this commemorative day with a renewed and genuine determination towards a world free of these weapons of the Apocalypse.”

