

himself. Mosaic law is the foundation for law in America, and it is traceable. The Greek philosophers and the leaders in Greece would talk about the rule of law. They would be sometimes teased and ridiculed by some of their competitors. They would say: "That is not your thoughts. You borrowed that from Moses. That is Mosaic law. I can hear it in your voice. I know that is where it came from."

Mosaic law was traced to Greece and Rome, and from Rome then on to Western Europe where the Romans occupied much of that all the way to England and beyond. That is where the rule of law came from.

One of the pillars of American exceptionalism is the rule of law. If you would pull that out of the equation of the history of the United States of America, you would end up with an entirely different country, an entirely different culture, and an entirely different structure here.

We respect the law. We don't have police officers that pull us over because they need money for their children and accept a bribe because they said that you were speeding. If any of that happens, we look at their badge number, and that officer is soon out of a job. We clean our society up of those kinds of things. But that is not the case in Third World countries. They know what *mordida* means south of the border. That happens in country after country. But here, we respect the law.

We have open meetings laws where the function of government is out in the open so the public can be in and participate. That is rooted clear back in the Greek city-states.

I recall going into the National Archives to take a look and stand and gaze at the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, where you can get your hand within 8 inches of that parchment where they pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor. As I waited to step before the Declaration, there was a display of the artifacts from the Greek city-states where they would gather together all of the eligible-age men—at that time it was only men, but, of course, now, today, we fixed that—but as they would gather them together, they would all have a voice.

They had a situation where there would be what they would call demagogues. The Greek demagogues would be those who were so skillful in their oratorical skills that they could wind up the emotions of the other Greeks and sometimes get them to stampede in the wrong direction. If they consistently stampeded their fellow citizens in an ill-logical direction, eventually they would say—I don't know what the name would be of the Greek individual, but maybe it would be like: Demetrius is causing too much trouble for us, we are going to have to blackball him.

So if the demagogue was too effective and caused too much damage to the public policy, then they would go through, there would be one door there

that you would vote in, and the next door would be the discard door. Each voter, each citizen, would get a white and a black marble. They would cast their ballot, blackball that Greek demagogue and banish him from the city-state.

There is much that is rooted as part of this country that is rooted back in this era. We need to teach it and we need to have respect for each other.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

THE TERROR

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. CHENEY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. FORTENBERRY) for 30 minutes.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Madam Speaker, last week, as we are all too aware, a gunman opened fire on Members of Congress and staff assistants as they were practicing for the annual bipartisan baseball game to raise money for a Washington-based charity. Among those who were injured is my dear friend and colleague, Congressman STEVE SCALISE, the House majority whip.

As news of this event came in right before our weekly Nebraska breakfast, a 74-year tradition—by the way, a bipartisan tradition in which the entire Nebraska delegation gets together on a weekly basis and invites anyone from our home State to gather with us. As that was about to occur, I heard the news of the shootings. I felt bewildered, shocked, and numb.

As further reports came in from my colleagues throughout the morning, I heard that STEVE was playing second base at the time of his shooting. He crawled from the infield, leaving a trail of blood.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't a movie. These are not distant figures. These are our friends and our colleagues, people who work right here in this institution. Representative SCALISE and I frequently interact on the nuances of policy, and sometimes differences of policy. No matter what our disagreements—and believe me, there are hard differences even on one side of the political aisle. No matter what the differences might be, STEVE always has worked with me in a cordial, professional, constructive, and, perhaps most importantly, gentlemanly manner. That is just who he is. So regardless of what anyone may think of his policies, of his political point of view, Congress, or the GOP, he did not deserve to be shot.

As noted by Senator RAND PAUL, who was also at the practice, were it not for the courageous Capitol Hill Police officers who accompanied Representative SCALISE to events, this would have been a massacre. Were it not for the first responders from the Alexandria Police Department and Fire and Rescue, many of those injured, for them it could have been much, much worse.

My heart goes out to STEVE SCALISE and the others who were injured in this tragic event.

However, my words cannot stop here. For years now, across multiple administrations and across party lines, we have seen accelerating political rancor in our country that goes way beyond normal partisan politics. It is hard to get your mind around some of the stuff that people write. It is awful. It goes beyond just pointed language. It is now so frequent, so violent, and so directly threatening that security personnel are working overtime to keep up with it.

Madam Speaker, you know this. Many good men and women of differing political perspectives work in the United States Congress. These are people who have accomplished important things in their own home communities and decided that their heart was calling them to serve in a broader capacity.

□ 1800

I fully recognize that Washington, D.C., can seem elitist and aloof, but as you know, Madam Speaker, Members of Congress are real people, with real families, from real places across our land. Sure, there may be a disproportionate share of lawyers in the institution, but there are also nurses, social workers, doctors, teachers, and small-business owners.

In fact, one of the doctors, Representative BRAD WENSTRUP, a friend of mine, happened to be at the baseball practice. He is an Iraq veteran and surgeon. He attended to STEVE SCALISE's gunshot wound, thankfully.

Above all, all of these persons are Americans. Nevertheless, there is a limit to what the human person, even a paid public servant, can absorb. We can take the violent words, but when it spills into violent action, it is too much. This country cannot continue to rip itself apart like this.

Madam Speaker, there is one additional difficulty here that needs to be unpacked. There is a real risk and vulnerability in what I call regularizing this response, in making it like a "new normal."

In fact, within only a few hours of the shootings, certain national media had begun to routinize the tragedy, as they returned to obsessing on the latest crisis du jour in Washington, as if nothing fundamentally destructive to all that we hold dear as Americans had just occurred. And why not? As the media tells us, the assassin was a "troubled man," a "lone wolf," with a "history of violence" and "easy access to guns," who was likely "mentally ill." Nothing unique to see here.

Madam Speaker, these were not our thoughts after the assassination attempt on Ronald Reagan or the shooting of Democratic Arizona Congresswoman Gabby Giffords of Arizona. When President Kennedy was shot, I am told, it was as if the entire world came to a halt.

If we are now going to move beyond words and normalize the violent targeting of people just because they

choose public service, hold views that are different from our own, or speak in a style that is not to our liking, there is no country.

I find it particularly jarring that the widely praised theatrical assassination of President Trump at a rendition of Julius Caesar in New York City's Central Park—underwritten, by the way, by The New York Times—continues to go on.

Madam Speaker, violence is violence. When it is here and it is political, of course, it is particularly jarring.

Tragically, we also may be growing used to the idea of terror abroad. Although its root causes are different than those of domestic political attacks here on our own shores, the same thing is at stake: the very principles of civilization itself.

Madam Speaker, let me digress for a moment, because this is particularly notable.

After 9/11, crime all but vanished from the streets of New York City. In other words, the shock and the horror caused a community to rally together above any social discord in a spirit of true unity. We glimpsed that same spirit of solidarity as a nation when Obama bin Laden was finally confronted.

Just recently, a day after the terror attacks that rocked London a few weeks ago, Richard Angell, a patron in a restaurant that had been evacuated during the jihadist rampage, calmly returned to pay his bill. In explaining his generosity, Angell told a reporter, "These people shouldn't win."

The night before, several bartenders had risked their lives to defend patrons in that particular establishment with bottles, chairs, tables, anything they could find, as the terrorists tried to hack away their customers with large knives. More lives would have been lost were it not for their bravery.

Only a few weeks before that, at a concert attended mostly by young girls, a homeless man, Stephen Jones, who slept most nights near the stadium, helped several victims of that bombing to safety, even pulling nails from the faces of young children.

The resolve and courage in the face of barbaric violence harkens back to the passengers of United Flight 93 who sacrificed their own lives on 9/11 in order to take down a plane headed straight for Washington, D.C., probably for the White House.

While we appropriately recognize those who act with courage, the constant repetition of these scenes appear to be resulting, sadly, in what I call "terror fatigue." We go about the same tired ritual: the requisite shock and horror; the 24-hour media coverage of victims, heroes, and families; and the inevitable autopsy of what went wrong. By this exercise, I am afraid we further enable what Hannah Arendt once famously wrote, "the banality of evil."

Against this backdrop, I think it is important and useful to pull back and contemplate the fundamental error in

our analysis and approach. In the West, we have a blind spot. We want to believe that if we can only understand how a disordered person was raised, how his parents treated him, if he was an orphan or poor or misunderstood or abandoned or a victim of some real or imagined prejudice, then we can understand what makes him kill. Armed with this soft understanding, perhaps we can prevent further tragedy by ameliorating the conditions that we think gave rise to barbaric deeds.

In many discussions of unpredictable and random attacks on bystanders in Europe and America, we find a perverse unwillingness to accurately identify the true motivations of the perpetrators, lest we close the space to "cure them" of their zealotry.

In the current, highly polarized, oversensitized, and extremely volatile climate, it is risky to call a thing for what it is. Instead, again and again, we hear that these were just a few misguided individuals—another mental health problem, another aberration, another police problem; nothing to do with dark theology to notice here. Carry on. We must just accept this as a new normal.

What makes these particular vicious actors different? In a study, the Gallup organization basically finds that most people in the world want similar things. Most people in the world want a good job; to be able to take care of themselves; to be able to take care of their family; to be able to use the creative talents of their personhood, whether it be their intellect or their hands to make things for the benefit of others and, in turn, receive an income that they can support themselves with.

However, as one of my Muslim friends has noted, Petro-Islam has enabled and unleashed a narrow sect of men and women who often want for nothing. Several of the terrorists on 9/11 were young men of both wealth and privilege, with world-class educations. They weren't motivated by the allures of Western secular materialism. They used those values to hide in plain sight. Rather, they were in the grip of a dark, violent theology. They were willing to die for its inherent irrationality.

This cannot continue. Even the Saudis, who have lived for too long with the hyper hypocrisy of buying off Wahhabists while shopping in Paris, recognize this is an unsustainable trend.

Madam Speaker, when I was in college, I remember the day when Egyptian President Anwar Sadat was assassinated. It was a hard day for me. Shortly before, I had lived in that country on an exchange program. I received the bountiful gift of hospitality and an invaluable source of deep and reach cultural understanding.

Sadat died. Sadat gave his life because he made a reasoned choice to reach across the divide to find peace. In another courageous move, just a few years ago, in a little-known speech, the current Egyptian President, Abdel

Fattah el-Sisi, said: "Is it possible that 1.6 billion Muslims should want to kill the rest of the world's inhabitants—that is, 7 billion—so that they themselves may live? Impossible."

Quite a courageous statement.

At this moment, Madam Speaker, we are on the verge of wiping out ISIS militarily. But it is only the latest brand. We will only fully resolve the thinking that leads to the embrace of dark theology through a rebirth in reason, modeled through courageous leadership.

As we see in our battle against ISIS, when you call for evil to happen on social media, in Main Street media and in art, eventually someone in the real world takes it to heart. We must stop creating the rhetorical conditions and the media cover for this politically motivated violence or the grotesque twisting of mediums to encourage terror. There is no rationalization that can justify it. This is not about freedom of speech. It is about freedom from violence.

Ask yourself a question: Where would you like to live? Where people lie, steal, and kill? Or where people are good, trustworthy, and free?

Madam Speaker, I will close with this because it is a hint of good news.

Last week, the House of Representatives, in a private session, Democrats and Republicans, had a family meeting and, with due candor, spoke about the effect of escalating rhetoric and the responsibility each of us must take in owning our share of it.

Importantly, the bipartisan Congressional Baseball Game went on as planned last Thursday night. I took my younger staff. The game was energetic and patriotically bipartisan. Madam Speaker, as you are aware, my side lost, but I believe America won.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

ISSUES OF THE DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRBACHER) for 30 minutes.

Mr. ROHRBACHER. Madam Speaker, today a lot of people are looking at Washington more perplexed than ever, thinking that nothing is getting done here. It is easy for them to think that because, when they turn on their televisions or listen to their radios and listen to news commentators, all they seem to be talking about is some very obscure idea. But something that dominates all the communication, or a great deal of communication, is that Russia in some way altered the outcome of the last election, perhaps—what they have been telling us—the Russians hacked into the system. This is the image we are being given.

□ 1815

All those emails that came out during the election from the Democratic