



Clubhouse International

Creating Community: Changing the World of Mental Health

A statement from Joel Corcoran, Executive Director of Clubhouse International about President Trump's recent uninformed and damaging comments about mass shootings and a relationship to mental illness.

For more than twenty-five years Clubhouse International has been successfully working to insist that our world change its response to people living with mental illness. We know - and we strive to help others understand - that people living with mental illness are capable of living, working, socializing and making significant contributions to our communities, just like those without a mental illness.

In recent years celebrities and world leaders have begun speaking about their own illnesses and struggles, which is helping to reduce stigma and misinformation. Global advocates are beginning to unify and create real momentum for action, to address the global humanitarian crisis of under-resourced mental health systems in our communities. International bodies such as the United Nations, the World Health Organization, the World Bank, the World Economic Forum and others, are beginning to prioritize the work of doing more for people with mental illness.

In this progressive environment it is shocking and disappointing to have heard the President of the United States make uninformed and inaccurate statements linking recent mass shootings to mental illness. Blaming people with mental illness for this country's problems with gun violence has no factual basis. Scientific evidence shows that having a mental illness is not a predictor of gun violence. Having access to a gun, hate, intolerance and ignorance is a predictor. Countries outside the United States have the same rates of prevalence for mental illnesses but none have even close to the same rate of mass shootings. Mental illness is not the cause of our mass shootings problem.

Anyone that has ever paid attention to the issue of violence and mental illness knows that people with mental illness are far more likely to be the victim of violence than the perpetrator.

The United States, like most countries, has serious problems with poorly funded mental healthcare. The prevalence of serious mental illness is far greater than the resources we dedicate to address it. We clearly need more healthcare and support services for people living with mental illness in order to reduce the individual, social and economic burden of these diseases. Returning to a system of unnecessarily locking up our family members and neighbors in asylums is an ineffective and inhumane solution. Suggesting this, as President Trump has done, indicates a serious lack of education on the issue and a profound disregard for the lives of others.

It is time for all of our leaders, and especially our President, to become informed about the truth about mental illness and mental health; and it is time for our leaders - and our President - to demonstrate a genuine belief in the value of human life.

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