
“Fear Has No Place...”: The Youth
Movement for Fearlessness
in Need of Critique



R. Michael Fisher

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In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute

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In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute
188 Whitestone Cr., N. E., Calgary, AB
T1Y 1S7

Contact author(s):

r.michaelfisher52@gmail.com

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“Fear Has No Place...”: The Youth Movement for Fearlessness in Need of Critique

- R. Michael Fisher,¹ Ph.D.

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Abstract

This paper reviews some of the contextual history behind the emergence of the current (primarily) youth movement in the USA that is on a mission to reduce and/or eliminate gun violence in schools and communities. The author takes a unique perspective on this movement framing it within an incessant drive within American culture for the past several decades whereby citizens (and their populist rhetoric) have emerged to try to ensure their safety and security under a generic call of living without risk and without fear. This has to be critiqued as a discourse with ideological agendas that are less than useful in terms of the author’s perspective toward establishing a culture of fearlessness (healing culture) as an alternative to a culture of fear (coping culture). The author offers several recommendations for this current youth movement and one of its pervasive positions (slogans): “Fear has no place...”.

The 2018 Youth Movement: Background Historical Context

Although the United States has had an increasing run of terrorizing mass murder gun attacks in and outside of schools for the past few years, it seems that a breaking point amongst the public and especially among school students came about in the spring of 2018.

¹ Fisher is co-founder of In Search of Fearlessness Project (1989-) and Research Institute (1991-). He is also founder of the Center for Spiritual Inquiry & Integral Education (<http://csiie.org>) and is Department Head at CSIIE of Integral & 'Fear' Studies. He is an independent scholar, public intellectual and pedagogue, author, consultant, researcher, coach, artist and Principal of his own company (<http://loveandfearsolutions.com>). Currently, he is developing The Fearology Institute to teach courses. He can be reached at: r.michaelfisher52@gmail.com

The triggering event for the movement/protests emerged soon after the Stoneman Douglas High School mass shooting on Feb. 14.²

With assistance from anti-gun and anti-violence and peace groups of many kinds, high schools students coalesced rapidly to go to the streets with their messages about gun control in America. They want to feel safe in their schools. They've been traumatized and seen too much death and suffering. They are afraid to go to school under threat of attacks. With various hashtags (e.g., #Never Again) and slogans, one of the most poignant to this paper is the prominent sign seen at the student protests: **“Fear Has No Place in Schools.”**

Although the massive mobilization of youth today on this issue is impressive by any standards, I will argue in this paper this is a very unfortunate, albeit, understandable, emergent slogan and desire, which will not lead to the emancipatory solution that youth likely really want deeper below the surface. I will argue that it is a unique political discourse not derived from youth, but from a *conformist school cultural discourse* that has been around for some 25 years or so and has been (mostly) irresponsibly spread by (mostly) an adult population of community citizens, parents and teachers etc.

Today's youth have picked-up on this school cultural discourse, perhaps unknowingly and without a critique or understanding of its history and implications for a very “conservative” American cultural political agenda. I wish to provide more historical and contextual knowledge about this discourse, and its embedded relationship with the “culture of fear” dynamic (especially, in America). Perhaps, today's youth movement leaders and activists will integrate this knowledge with their mission to make it more expansive as a critique of American culture, politics and carry a substantive “vision” for a new society. This lack of vision seems characteristic of much of the current youth movement so far, albeit, it is only in its very earliest stages.

Although I am not an American historian, it is evident to me that the generic *anti-gun movement* today is one of the sorted types

² See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stoneman_Douglas_High_School_shooting

of “New Social Movements”³ that has blossomed since the 1960s youth protests in North America and Europe. Unlike the earlier youth mass protests, the current one is very specific and catalyzed by concrete incidents of trauma—that is, mass shootings in schools (and, other public places). I call it “domestic terrorism” (i.e., fearism-t⁴) of another kind, beyond the dramatic international types of overt political and/or religious terrorism⁵ as the latter is typically defined by mainstream institutions.

In many ways, one could argue that the current youth movement is relatively non-political and non-ideological compared to the 1960s movements with their inspirations in Marxist, socialist, communist, free-love and other ideals. It is largely a psychological movement. The current youth protests are more about the issue of their safety in schools (and communities). They are inspired in other words, by “we are very afraid.” And thus, their popularized slogandia, including t-shirts, mugs, etc. is “Fear has no place...” in our schools, and what seems to be implied a much larger positioning that fear has no place in society. This needs to be looked at much closer with a critical lens. At this point, no one else has raised this concern that I have in this paper.

The “Without Fear” New Social Movement

These contemporary youth, like all generations of youth, are part of a historical school culture and community discourse. This particular one that is characterized around a declarative motivation that *we are very afraid* of being gunned down and/or assaulted, and has at least been circulating persistently with “powerful” impacts in America for several decades since the American government’s 1950s-60s “War on Crime.”⁶ That particular historical trajectory, from the earlier Red Scare (fear of communism) to Crime Scare (fear of criminals) and all its problematic ideological, racial and

³ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_social_movements

⁴ See Fisher, R. M., & Subba, D. (2016). *Terrorism: A guide to fearful times based on a philosophy of fearism*. Technical Paper No. 57. Carbondale, IL: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute. See also Chapter 5 “Rethinking Terrorism” in Fisher, R. M., Subba, D., & Kumar, B. M. (in press). *Fear, law and criminology: Critical issues in applying the philosophy of fearism*. Australia: Xlibris.

⁵ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Terrorism>

⁶ See e.g., Lyndon B. Johnson’s declaration, <http://time.com/3746059/war-on-crime-history/>

discriminatory rhetoric is undeniable in shaping the American psyche—and, that cultural psyche across generations.

America is traumatized by many things, going right back to slavery and colonialism (i.e., genocide of pre-settler native Americans) at the origins of its national identity. My point is not to make a historical argument about these larger waves of scares (including the Cold War) but to point out they have accumulative effects. Again, that's another argument for another place to make about America and the generic culture of trauma (i.e., “post-traumatic culture”⁷) it is part of and continues to reproduce. The point is that the conformist school culture discourse I'll describe below is part-n-parcel of a larger set of problems with fear and its major shaping role in American history and culture.⁸ This is the contextual backdrop that needs to be included in our fearanalysis⁹ of the current youth movement and issues of anti-guns vs. pro-guns.

Soon after the first mass marches of some million youth in the streets, and walking out of schools, I was struck with the analogy of what their movement was about at a deeper level below the issue of gun violence and safety in schools. In an initial blog I made the connection: Youth's “March For Our Lives” is a March for “With-

⁷ E.g., see Farrell, K. (1998). *Post-traumatic culture: Injury and interpretation in the nineties*. Baltimore, MA: John Hopkins University Press. Felman (1992, p. 1) called it a “post-traumatic century” based on World Wars and their negative long-lasting impacts. See Felman, S. (1992). Education and crisis, or the vicissitudes of teaching. In S. Felman & D. Laub (Eds.), *Testimony: Crises of witnessing in literature, psychoanalysis, and history* (1-56). New York: Routledge. These are arguably part-n-parcel of the “culture of fear” (see later on).

⁸ For a good contextual history of America and fear see Stearns, P. N. (2006). *American fear: The causes and consequences of high anxiety*. New York: Routledge.

⁹ Although this is the perspective and methodology I am using implicitly, there is not a need to explicate this further here, other than to say I first started using the term in 2001 in my dissertation comprehensive exam paper, where I argued we need a transdisciplinary approach to study fear (‘fear’) as in “fearanalysis” (see Fisher, 2001, p. 2); but you can read more about it in several of my other writings (e.g., Fisher, R. M. (2012). *Fearanalysis: A first guidebook*. Carbondale, IL: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute. Fearanalysis is one of the sub-branches of the *philosophy of fearism*, of which I utilize along with the *philosophy of fearlessness* for my critical analysis; see Fisher, R. M., and Subba, D. (2016). *Philosophy of fearism: A first East-West dialogue*. Australia: Xlibris; see Fisher, R. M. (2010). *The world's fearlessness teachings: A critical integral approach to fear management/education for the 21st century*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

out Fear.”¹⁰ I further wrote blogs developing the challenging philosophical and values positions that today’s youth are presenting to adults (especially, including adultism¹¹ as oppression of youth)¹² and on the beginning thoughts to the problem of some of the popularized and commercialized rhetoric of youth in this movement.¹³ I was convinced that a case could be made that this was one of the branches of the overall global historical Fearlessness Movement.¹⁴

I was and still am reluctant to criticize these youth. I wish to criticize the discourse(s) used, not people. I think their movement is inspiring and critically important. However, as a fearologist¹⁵ I cannot stand by in silence or be pc because I emotionally want to support this youth movement. It took a lot of years for youth to hit the streets like this. I don’t want to discourage them in anyway. Anyways, I am open to being criticized for my fearanalysis by youth and anyone else. I’m looking for more collaborative and creative interventions in the movement to move it towards authentic fearlessness. The following analysis is one part of that emancipatory offering.

First, let me declare that I am with these youth 100% in that their agenda is to reduce the amount of fear in society. Yes! The *excess fear* is totally unacceptable to me and has been since my own life-dedication to the Fearlessness Movement in 1989.¹⁶ As a

¹⁰ See <https://fearlessnessmovement.ning.com/blog/youth-s-march-for-our-lives-is-a-march-for-without-fear>

¹¹ *Adultism* is a hidden form of oppression usually not discussed, where it is assumed that adults have a superiority and enact it over non-adults in a systematic way no differently than sexism, classism, racism, etc. I have always linked fearism-adultism as the core oppressive system of all human beings, it underlies all other forms of oppression.

¹² See <https://fearlessnessmovement.ning.com/blog/an-interesting-dilemma-young-people-are-watching-adults>

¹³ See <https://fearlessnessmovement.ning.com/blog/fear-has-no-place-rhetoric-of-an-american-movement>

¹⁴ The Fearlessness Movement is defined implicitly in Fisher (2010) and explicitly in Fisher & Subba (2016, pp. 12-16); also in part see: <https://fearlessnessmovement.ning.com/blog/studying-the-diverse-fearlessness-movement-initiatives>

¹⁵ Although there is a longer complex definition of “fearology” and “fearologist” in most all my writings, the most basic is “*fearology*- the transdisciplinary study of the relationship of fear and life” (Fisher & Subba, 2016, p. 158).

¹⁶ In late 1989, I co-founded the In Search of Fearlessness Project to counter the ‘Fear’

professional liberation educator, I repeatedly have fought as an activist throughout my career for educational reform and transformation, with two of my favorite quotes that support a new vision being from the Western philosopher Bertrand Russell and the Eastern philosopher Vinobā Bhave a non-violence advocate and student of Mahatma Gandhi—both say that *fearlessness* is the highest virtue and principle for the foundations of education, nonviolence and renewal of society.¹⁷ I myself have long called for an initiative to develop the “path of fearlessness,”¹⁸ “fearless leadership,”¹⁹ “fearless standpoint” towards knowledge,²⁰ a “fearlessness paradigm,”²¹ an activism of “fearless engagement,”²² and a “fearless society.”²³ I have also written critiques of the mis-uses of the term “fearless” and “fearlessness” in branding and populist discourse in the last few decades.²⁴

Project(ion) that I saw was rapidly destroying life on this planet. In later years I called the 1989 ISOF Project one of the most recent forms of the global historical Fearlessness Movement.

¹⁷ Bertrand Russell wrote, “One generation...could transform the world by bringing into it a generation of fearless children....Education is the key to the new world” (cited in Fisher, 2010, p. 211); Bhave wrote, “...our whole education should be based on fearlessness, and so should the whole social and political structure....The goal of education must be freedom from fear....Until education is really based on fearlessness there is no hope of any [significant or transformative] change in society” (cited in Fisher, 2010, p. 221).

¹⁸ “Path of fearlessness” was my first conceptualization going back to 1989 because it represents a developmental perspective (influenced by the philosophy of Ken Wilber).

¹⁹ Fisher, R. M. (2003). *Fearless leadership in and out of the ‘Fear’ Matrix*. Unpublished dissertation. Vancouver, BC: The University of British Columbia.

²⁰ This is part of my long concern with creating a critical epistemology of fear (‘fear’). For e.g., see Fisher, R. M. (2008). *Fearless standpoint theory: Origins of FMS-9 in Ken Wilber’s work*. Technical Paper No. 31. Carbondale, IL: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.

²¹ Fisher, R. M. (1995/12). *An introduction to an epistemology of ‘fear’: A fearlessness paradigm*. Technical Paper No. 2. Calgary, AB: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute. See also Fisher, R. M. (2013). *Fearlessness paradigm meets Bracha Ettinger’s matrixial theory*. Technical Paper No. 46. Carbondale, IL: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.

²² Fisher, R. M. (2018). *Fearless engagement of Four Arrows: The true story of an Indigenous-based social transformer*. New York: Peter Lang.

²³ Fisher, R. M. (2000). *The movement towards a fearless society: A powerful contradiction to violence*. Technical Paper No. 10. Vancouver, BC: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute; and, Fisher, R. M. (2012). *Do we really want a fearless society?* Technical Paper No. 40. Carbondale, IL: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.

²⁴ Fisher, R. M. (2015). *Educative criteria for using the terms “fearlessness” and “fearless.”* Technical Paper No. 55. Carbondale, IL: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute. And,

I repeat: I am very supportive of the current youth movement addressed in this paper. However, *how* one goes about strategically addressing the Fear Problem²⁵ (and violence and gun and war problem²⁶) in society needs careful attention. Bottomline, youth today are no longer accepting the ridiculously dangerous levels of fear that have invaded most everyone's life and have become 'normalized' to a large extent. The chronic systematic "pedagogy of fear" in contemporary society tells everyone, more or less to: "Be afraid, be very afraid."²⁷ These youth want a new 'normal' that is a lot less fear! They do not want to live in so much distress on a daily basis. If not that, they may even be more idealistic at times and say things more extreme regarding their desires. I listen carefully for these things.

The extreme desires take the form of rhetoric and slogans, typical of populist movements. Prior to the distinct "*Fear has no place...*" rhetoric (see also the imagery that goes with this slogan on the Internet these days²⁸) there is a discourse history in America that is fairly easy to track out. I began tracking it as part of my research in the early 1990s. In my comprehensive research paper for my dissertation, handed in to my committee one week before the 9/11 tragedy, I documented the "Without Fear" rhetoric and patterning and suggested it was already flawed in that it was pushing society to not improve "fear education/management" but to try to

Fisher, R. M. (2016). Problem of branding "fearlessness" in education and leadership. Technical Paper No. 59. Carbondale, IL: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.

²⁵ Using capitalization on *Fear Problem* constitutes a radical re-definition of what is typically called the problem(s) of fear in other discourses. My work is unique in defining the architecture of the Fear Problem—see any of my writing on fear and fearlessness to better understand what I mean. For a review, see Fisher & Subba (2016), "Is there a Fear Problem?" (pp. 16-17).

²⁶ For e.g., Dr. Ellen Taliaferro, co-founder of Physicians for a Violence Free Society, concluded after a long research study that "all sources of violence" are simply "fear." Anonymous (1997). Dr. Ellen Taliaferro's prescription to heal social ills. *Soka Gakkai International Quarterly Magazine* 7, 7.

²⁷ E.g., see Malin, B. (2000). Be afraid, be very afraid: The pedagogy of fear. *Bad Subjects*, May-June. Retrieved October 17, 2000 from <http://bad.eserver.org/issues/2000/50/malin.html>

²⁸ I have documented in a visual collage some of this imagery and discourse, go to <https://fearlessnessmovement.ning.com/photos/fear-has-no-place-1>

naively (and romantically) erase fear from society.²⁹ Such utopianism is a limited imaginary for good fear management/education today.

I concluded in my dissertation exam paper “that educators and teachers tend not to want to discuss *fear* with any depth or consistency. A change in attitude is required.”³⁰ Concomitantly, I also asserted that a “crisis in fear knowledge” was the core the Fear Problem being expressed in the “without fear” rhetoric and movement at the time. The early 1990s rhetoric showed up in publications in educational literature like “schools without fear,” and “fear-free school zones,” “life without fear,” “freedom from fear,” “education beyond fear,” and many pedagogical initiatives of teaching and learning some subject (e.g., math) “without fear.”³¹ I linked these with the American emergent youth extreme trend-wear of “No Fear!” in the late 1980s and into the early 1990s—which was heavily commercialized. However, I distinguished that the schools and learning without fear movement was more adult-centered and directly linked to calls for “safe communities,” “safe schools” and “peaceful school communities” and “safe learning climates” and finally “The Safe Schools Act of 1994.”

My theoretical interest in critiquing this phenomena in America took on many dimensions, but one of them was to interpret that the impulse of these movements and calls was a “pedagogy of fearlessness” emerging but it needed to be analyzed as to what was “healthy” in that movement and what wasn’t. I was asking also how do these movements, slogans, calls etc. lead to an authentic and systematic critical theory of fearlessness and fear? Point being, there was no such critical theory guiding any of the rhetoric and the without fear movement(s). Educators especially had a role to play in this, and were in my view not yet aware of the problem they were perpetuating. Of course, adults in the society as well, including leaders, politicians and those who draft the laws on safety and security also were not guided by any systematic theory or philoso-

²⁹ Fisher, R. M. (2001). Education “without fear,” or a proper ‘fear’ education? Unpublished paper.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 2.

³¹ Ibid., p. 6 these are all documented with references. Any such terms are still searchable on the Internet today.

phy. The driver of these movements and actions, I argued then and still do, was fear (‘fear’³²) itself.

The Fear Problem cannot be solved by fear-based (‘fear’-based) means. Similarly, the violence in society cannot be solved by violent means. We require a non-violence fearlessness paradigm of another level of consciousness to provide us with adequate analysis and solutions. I cited in that 2001 dissertation exam paper the work of Jiddu Krishnamurti, for example, as a wise voice of philosophical and spiritual criticism to contemporary society. Krishnamurti wrote, “The evil of our time is the loss of consciousness of evil,” a point very similar to Carl Jung’s view.³³

Gun Problem: Fear Problem

Assuming that the current “Fear has no place” youth movement is a latest branch of the “without fear” movement documented above, then it is exciting that the American population really wants to solve the Fear Problem in their nation, if not in the wide-world. My contention for a few decades is that the good intention here is not accompanied yet by an adequate paradigm, framing and critical theory and praxis to perform the kind of solution they wish to accomplish—that is, to create less fear-based relationships and communities and school cultures.

I have continually been saying throughout my career that the crime problem (add gun problem) that gets all the focus is a safety and security problem. That’s seems self-evident. However, few analysts are sharp enough to see that the entire problem is underwritten by a human Fear Problem. If the youth movement since the

³² Anyone who studies my research and critical theory, on the problem of defining fear will encounter my strategic and epistemic work on a notion of ‘fear.’ The (‘) marks distinguish a deconstructed and reconstructed idea of what *fear* is, was, and is evolving into. Again, this is much to complex of a topic to go into here but you can read most any of my work and see what I mean by it. In general, ‘fear’ ends up being a culturally-modified fear—thus ‘fear’—and thus, as highly problematic and pathologically dangerous form—as are culturally-modified organisms (analogously).

³³ Cited in the front cover of Zweig, C., & Abrams (1991). *Meeting the shadow: The hidden power of the dark side of human nature*. Los Angeles, CA: Jeremy P. Tarcher. See also Fisher & Subba (2016) discussion of the need for a “fearless imagination for fear” analogous with Carl Jung’s call for a critical and conscious “imagination for evil” that was in his view lacking generally and thus part of what feeds the problem of evil in the world (p. xxi).

Florida massacre this spring were to come out in droves and say that they wanted to transform American society and wanted to start with the “fear problem” as the cause of the “gun problem” then I believe something very powerful could change. I think people would hear things differently.

If the youth could come out and say that the American “culture of fear” is killing not just school kids but all of us—world wide—then, we would have a fearlessness movement of powerful possibility. The missed strategy, as far as I am concerned, was in the emotional reactionism of these youth—and, understandably so, they were hurting, horrified, terrified. They did what they could to make initial targets for their anger and hurt and fear. I understand that. It is just too bad their guiding activist leaders for their movement never took time to sit down and do a historical, cultural and political analysis of the fear in America, of which the “guns” and “violence” is only symptomatic. Many great leaders, like Martin Luther King Jr., had always said that hate and violence are merely surface forms of fear. He, like Gandhi, and many other critics knew the problem at root is fear. And, yes, fear comes from hurting. We need to become a healing society, and thus, a loving society.

The Fearlessness Paradigm I have offered to the world since 1989, interestingly at the same time that the “No Fear!” youth extreme-wear trend was starting with the Gen-Xers in America, is about a *healing paradigm*. This is in contrast with the *coping paradigm* that has near totally dominated American society and most all of the West for millenia. That’s all part of a larger critique, but my point has always been that a coping culture, is a *culture of fear*,³⁴ is a risk-avoidant society—and, is built paradoxically on fear and produces more fear (‘fear’) and risk, more or less. Security culture, obsessed with safety, no risk, no fear, etc. is all part of a purification (false) syndrome of coping rather than living. It won’t really work to make people less afraid on a daily basis.

³⁴ There is a huge literature of criticism, across disciplines, on America’s “culture of fear” dynamic and problem that it has not been able to solve. See for e.g., Glassner, B. (1999). *The culture of fear: Why Americans are afraid of the wrong things*. New York: Basic Books.

I am currently writing another book with two fine thinkers on this issue of law, safety, security, and fear.³⁵ Top security experts of high caliber, in some cases, have also warned American society that it needs to take a more realistic view on the nature and role of fear and to *not* continue to mistake “true fear” from “false fear” and thus make the mistake of trying to make their lives free from fear or turning fear into only a negative feeling or emotion to avoid at all costs.³⁶ Such a society is one that will be “paranoid.” It won’t be learning about becoming a “connoisseur of fear,”³⁷ but will lead to initiatives to make fear unwelcomed. Such will lead to more ignore-ance and arrogance re: fear management.

This is the latter problem of the current youth movement discussed in this paper. By using a teaching rhetoric with great passion to declare absolutely (for e.g.) that “*Fear has no place in our schools*” and/or in other places as well as is implied in the rhetoric, there is no place then to learn about fear better (nor fearlessness) than we do now. We won’t address the root of the problem of hatred and violence, and mass killers. With such rhetoric there will be less likelihood of an increased Defense Intelligence³⁸ nurtured in everyone, those who study fear management/education. The curriculum will try to replace or dismiss fear as a legitimate subject area of study. This would all turn the clock backward, as far as my argumentation goes.

³⁵ See Fisher, R. M., Subba, D., & Kumar, B. M. (2018). *Fear, law and criminology: Critical issues in apply the philosophy of fearism*. Australia: Xlibris.

³⁶ There are many critics of this of which one outstanding and popular security professional and author is de Becker, G. (1997). *The gift of fear: Survival signals that protect us from violence*. New York: Bantam. Note, also the philosophy of fearism movement takes this positive stand toward fear as motivator as well, see Subba, D. (2014). *Philosophy of fearism: Life is conducted, directed and controlled by the fear*. Australia: Xlibris. Note, I also have a criticism of this fear-positivist movement going too far and missing the understanding of the pathological ‘fear’ that is more than mere psychological or neurotic fear (i.e., “false fear”).

³⁷ I am referring to this term used by Sam Keen, and developed further in an Indigenous-based framework by Jacobs, D. T. (1998). *Primal awareness: A true story of survival, transformation, and awakening with the Rarámuri shamans of Mexico*. Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, pp. 156-75.

³⁸ Studying fear well, I have linked to a basic Natural drive of any organic living system, and that is to develop and mature an effective Defense Intelligence system—a fear management system (see Fisher, 2010, p. 231). This view of mine is similar to de Becker’s (1997), Jacobs (1998) and others.

How To Create A “Fearless Society”: Fearanalysis

In a brief space in this paper I have attempted to introduce a fearlessness paradigm perspective of fearanalysis to the youth movement in America today. I have not taken the more familiar route of prayers, love and kindness as the way to cure American society that so many take. In fact, I have challenged the “love” rhetoric that has been so ineffective because it is undertheorized and uncritical philosophically and theologically for the most part. The Fear Problem is not going to be solved by Love, to put it bluntly.³⁹ That’s what my lived experience shows and my systematic research since 1989. I also understand that “love” may be very useful to the solutions required by youth today. This latter focus is not one I take.

I prefer to talk about a “Fearless Society”⁴⁰ and how to get there by understanding the Fear Problem much better than we do now. We require a liberation critical and holistic-integral approach. Currently we suffer from a crisis in knowledge about fear and its management and education. Everyone can benefit from a better “fear education” is my basic argument.⁴¹ Earlier I documented the “without fear” type of education that was going on in the early 1990s, on into the informing of the current youth movement of “Fear has no place...” and I am certain this is not the best way to go.

So how would we build a Fearless Society for a “Fearless Age”⁴² and what would that even mean or look like? It sounds to some critics that the term “fearless” is like being stupid or insane.⁴³ Because most argue, interpreting very literally the term “fearless,”

³⁹ See a discussion of the Love-Fear issue in Fisher & Subba (2016), pp. xxxi-xlii.

⁴⁰ It ought to be known that many authors across many disciplines, besides myself, have been interested in this topic of a “fearless society” and “fearless youth” (e.g., see the Internet and see Fisher, 2010). The United Nations Declaration of Universal Human Rights (1948) has a hint toward this “legal” just position by its inclusion of the “freedom from fear” as one of its essential components.

⁴¹ A good e.g., of my analysis and understanding of “fear education” can be seen in my study Fisher, R. M. (2003). Report on the status of fear education. Technical Paper No. 15. Vancouver, BC: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.

⁴² I am referring to the historical and evolutionary developmental theory of Fear Ages (Subba, 2014), of which his 10th “last stage of fears is fearlessness” (p. 45) or “Fearless Age.”

⁴³ See a complicated discussion in Fisher (2010), pp. 179-84.

that *fear is natural* and so my proposition seems to be suggesting to wipe-out fear and thus wipe-out and undermine what is natural in human nature. Let me take this apart bit-by-bit as a preliminary concern.

Fearless(ness), as commonly assumed, is only a simple literal conception, phenomena, virtue or principle. In my major work on the topic, I have at least 15 different definitions/meanings for “fearlessness” in the world’s literatures through time and across cultures,⁴⁴ and I did not even document or count all the different ones for “fearless.” We must take multiple perspectives, and bring diverse levels of consciousness also to understanding these important terms. Any serious fearology begins on that premise: *it is better to treat fear and fearlessness as complex rather than simple.*

One of the most basic misunderstandings of fearlessness (and, one could include courageousness), is that it is best to know fear before you attempt to manage it or even try to eliminate it. As I said earlier, this requires some amount of good information, study and practices to master the art of the transformation of fear.⁴⁵ Fear is assumed thus to be of great power and value, and there for a good reason, even though it can become irrational, neurotic and twist and distort perceptions and actions. The basic idea is to not try to avoid risk, fear, threat unnecessarily. There may be times when it is good to do so, but not ordinarily. Fear is basic to good learning processes⁴⁶ and as I said earlier, it is good for the development of Defense Intelligence and/or for developing one’s “fearuality”⁴⁷ (analogous to sexuality, morality, spirituality). Unfortunately, my research shows that most educators are not very

⁴⁴ See e.g., *Ibid.*, p. 151-52.

⁴⁵ See for e.g., Fisher, R. M. (2016). Transformation of fear: A critical look in educational philosophy and contexts. Technical Paper No. 63. Carbondale, IL: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.

⁴⁶ See for e.g., Fisher, R. M. (2011). A ‘Fear’ Studies perspective and critique: Analyzing English’s and Stengel’s progressive study of fear and learning in *Education Theory*. Technical Paper No. 37. Carbondale, IL: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.

⁴⁷ See for e.g., Fisher, R. M. (2013). Fearuality: Introduction to a theoretical and conceptual breakthrough. Technical Paper No. 50. Carbondale, IL: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.

well-informed about fear and give it little attention in their writings, research and pedagogies.⁴⁸

Now at the same time, as one may be embracing what is to learn from fear in the fearlessness paradigm, there is also a corrective and cautionary practice which involves critiquing fear-knowledge generally and especially *fear-based*⁴⁹ knowledge. The very definition and meaning of fear often understood, or in the dictionary, is not one to be used in the fearlessness paradigm without doubt and analysis. I have suggested that the very understanding of fear by people with colonialist backgrounds and histories (e.g., myself as a white man and Westerner) is ideologically fraught with a fear-based colonialist mentality and discourses.⁵⁰ I also have already warned readers that one has to make a distinction between *fear* in a discourse and when the object of investigation is '*fear*' as the latter is a whole other phenomena, pathological form, and is what I have called 'fear' without feelings.⁵¹ Unfortunately, be it the youth movement in question in this paper, or just about anyone else writing and teaching about fear, simply miss this distinction. Thus, we really don't know what is being talked about in normal discourses on fear management.

This latter point is all about creating a critical theory/praxis around the topic of fear and fearlessness—that is, a critical literacy long overdue. Yet, let me be more concrete in recommending a different tactic than the slogan "Fear has no place...".

I would agree 'fear' in its most pathological forms has no place that is useful to generating life but it still has validity because it is

⁴⁸ See e.g., Fisher, R. M. (2018). Education and the Fear Problem: An investigation of "truths." Technical Paper No. 71. Calgary, AB: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.

⁴⁹ Deciding how to recognize "fear-based" (when something is more than 50% motivated by fear and/or distorted by 'fear') is what I am talking about. For more details on this see Fisher, R. M. (2013). The problem of defining the concept of "fear-based." Technical Paper No. 48. Carbondale, IL: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.

⁵⁰ Fisher, R. M. (2016). Ideological underpinnings of colonial domination in understanding fear itself. Technical Paper No. 60. Carbondale, IL: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.

⁵¹ Fisher, R. M. (2013). 'Fear' without feelings (FWF): Latest discoveries and speculations on the cure for 'fear.' Technical Paper No. 44. Carbondale, IL: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.

a message and teaching of what is going on. However, ‘fear’ also has to be criticized and eliminated if possible. Yet, the premise of the fearlessness paradigm is to know it first, then change it and/or eliminate it (if that is even possible). When it comes to *fear* then the situation is more to learn from it and no need to try to eliminate it. Fear can become ‘fear’ and that’s what we have to be cautious and critical about. Fearlessness is the path of recognizing and learning about fear and ‘fear’ but it is not a path of trying to overcome or conquer without good education and understanding first. That’s typically why fearlessness is more advanced in consciousness than is courage or bravery. The latter two, typically don’t have a lot of intricate fearanalysis in them because they are more interested in behavioral coping adjustments to fear and “managing” fear so it is not going to get in the way with the will of the person or organization having fear. Fearlessness is an entirely different way and healing and liberation paradigm.

Now to reconvert the rhetoric of the current youth movement in question in this paper, it would be much better to say ‘fear’ (as I have defined it) ought to be kept out of our schools and other places where health and growth and learning are being developed. Yet, fear is not such a character to be kept out. I think a good start to rethinking about the Fear Problem (e.g., gun problem) is to utilize the African-American writer Toni Morrison’s notion when talking about and learning what fear is. Morrison, 1993 Nobel Prize for Literature, wrote in her novel *Sula* to “*make a place for fear*” amongst the oppressed,⁵² in order to better “control it.” This was to embrace fear as part of life experience but that one did not have to be a total victim to it either. The wisdom of Morrison was and still is useful to the fearlessness paradigm but it is only a beginning point. What I have shared in this paper is an offering to expand on and correct the current rhetoric of “Fear has no place...”.

There is another ironic criticism I have found in the rhetoric of “Fear has no place...”. First, it is not a concept founded by youth

⁵² See the arguments made by Chadrack, the character in Morrison’s novel *Sula* that ushered these words. See also Foucks (2009) for a good description of this character and how fear and violence influenced this philosophy. Foucks, B. (2009). Trial by fire: The theodicy of Toni Morrison in *Sula*. In S. A. Stave (Ed.), *Toni Morrison and the Bible: Contested intertextualities* (pp. 8-25). New York: Peter Lang. See also Miller, D. Q. (2000). “Making a place for fear”: Toni Morrison’s first redefinition of Dante’s Hell in *Sula*. *English Language Notes*, 37(3), 68-75.

and their rebellions and attempts to build a better society. It is a discourse of the culture of schooling, by which most of that discourse is controlled by teachers, parents and administrators as well as adults who control the schooling systems. These same generic schooling systems have dominated the discourse on education in general, and schooling in particular, through a long chain of “fears” about the nature of education (and children and youth) in America (starting with the biased and distortive 1983 Nation at Risk Report⁵³). A case has been made by several educational critics that “marketing of fear” in public schools has been a long-term and insidious part of the “culture of fear” dynamic and constitutes a violence itself against critical thinking, intellectual and emotional development and courage of the public—starting with youth suppression *via* fear-based pedagogies and draconian “right wing” policies⁵⁴--nowadays, this is called the ideology of neoliberalism.⁵⁵

Second, is the problem of the “zero tolerance” ideology within the “safe schools” movement and an accompanying “shock doctrine” politics⁵⁶ (i.e., “politics of fear”⁵⁷) that has invaded every aspect of our lives—all of which has been passed down from adults (and adultism) in American culture and politics to infiltrate school culture discourses, and thus influence and direct youth discourses. But there is a dark side to severe conservative punishment regimes like zero tolerance, and they have a history in America that the current youth movement ought to know about. Listen to this introduc-

⁵³ The fearmongering in American politics in general, but specifically in education, has a pivotal intersecting point in the 1983 Nation at Risk Report and the timing of the 1980-83 *The Figgie Report on Fear of Crime* (see for e.g., Fisher, 2010, pp. xxxii-xxxiii, 240). Arguably, these are two popularized reports and “movements” being set in place to make Americans afraid and feed the “culture of fear” from it.

⁵⁴ For e.g., see Poynor, L., & Wolfe, P. (Eds.) (2005). *Marketing fear in America's public schools: The real war on literacy*. New York: Routledge. See also the general problem of “commodification of fear” as part of a late-capitalist economy; Seaton, E. (2001). The commodification of fear. *Topia: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies*, 5, 1-18; Massumi, B. (1993). Everywhere you want to be. In B. Massumi (Ed.), *The politics of everyday fear* (vii-x). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

⁵⁵ For a good analysis of the culture of fear and neoliberalism and its suppression of and violence toward youth today see Giroux, H. (2003). *The abandoned generation: Democracy beyond the culture of fear*. New York: Palgrave/Macmillan.

⁵⁶ For a good analysis see Klein, N. (2007). *The shock doctrine: The rise of disaster capitalism*. New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt.

⁵⁷ See e.g., Robin, C. (2004). *Fear: The history of a political idea*. New York: Oxford University Press.

tion by education critics of this policy/ideology from a 1999 article:

The 1997-98 school year was a shocking and frightening one, filled with reports of seemingly random violence in communities heretofore immune to such incidents. In the wake of these tragedies, we can expect to hear renewed calls for increasing severe penalties for any kind of school disruption, a stance that has led to the widespread adoption of so-called zero tolerance discipline policies [with their origin in policies in the 1980s of state and federal drug enforcement agencies during the “War on Drug” era].⁵⁸

Understanding the political/ideological underpinnings of a discourse of intolerance, like this example above, is essential for the youth movement today to be sure they are not merely reproducing an intolerance of another kind, for example, an intolerance to fear as in the “Fear has no place...” doctrine. What if the youth also are saying “Violence has no place...” and make that a doctrine of their movement, which is one the peace movement has also done *via* anti-violence campaigns for a few centuries? The question is: Does this intolerance end up meshing with the zero tolerance conformist conservative and extreme policies like the “War on Drugs” or “War on Poverty” etc. that American elites have carried out for a long time, and which many critics have shown the horrible bias and destruction wrought by such policies.

This paper here is not the place to debate all this in detail, but it raises the questions to be considered within historical discourses and formations of policies and rhetoric—all carried out in the name of “safety and security” and sometimes benign intentions, yet with dubious philosophical and emotional motivations that involve elites control of power in societies. Youth are rarely invited into such draconian policies ever. Adults are running the show. When it comes to fear, I highly recommend that adults don’t run the show, and that youth are fully invited into the co-development of fear management/education for the 21st century. At the same time, youth also need to inform themselves, and fearologists may offer youth more wise guidance than have others.

⁵⁸ Excerpt from p. 1, Skiba, R., & Peterson, P. (1999). The dark side of zero tolerance: Can punishment lead to safe schools? *Kappan* (January), 1-11. Retrieved from <http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kski9901.htm>

Third, there is the ethical problem of how to talk about and teach about the nature and role of fear and violence (and guns), without inscribing more fear into the population. Sardello wrote, “One of the great challenges in [teaching and] writing about fear is to avoid generating more fear by doing so”⁵⁹—easier said than done, but a great ethical and pedagogical guidance nonetheless. The youth activists in the movement in question have to ask themselves many critical and ethical questions about how they go about protesting gun laws, violence and the way fear has invaded their lives through so much trauma. Are they inadvertently causing more trauma in their activities than is necessary? Does the attempt to try to eliminate fear cause more fear, because at its foundations it is based on fear itself? If adults and youth truly want a liberation from excess ‘fear’ in our world, which humans deserve, then we have to assess the quality of our “teachings” about fear management/education in general. I do not blame youth for making mistakes in this regard, because that was and is how they have been taught to think within the context of adult-driven fear-based school culture discourses. So far, this quality assessment has not been done in this movement, but it also is not being done by educators and teachers and leaders in the society in general.

Educators should be at the forefront of this exploration. However, youth may find they cannot wait around for adults to get their act together on this Fear Problem, just as it is empirically the case that youth have finally awoken and realized they cannot wait for adults to get their act together on the gun problem. As a refrain from my doctoral dissertation exam paper in 2001: “[research and empirical evidence shows] “that educators and teachers tend not to want to discuss *fear* with any depth or consistency.” My offering is that the path of fearlessness and a fearlessness paradigm are the better way to go. Youth have to develop their own “vision” for the kind of better world they want. This involves talking about a healing paradigm over and above a coping paradigm, the latter which now dominates and breeds a “culture of fear” everywhere. This is not acceptable, and youth today are saying so, even if they use a different language to express it.

⁵⁹ Sardello, R. (1999). *Freeing the soul from fear*. New York: Putnam Penguin, p. xvi.

For many reasons, I'll end with the short notion of reframing that the youth today could adopt another slogan, rather than "Fear has no place...". That is, to say they are fighting for "*freedom from (excess) fear*" because such 'fear' is destructive to life and all beings. Humans are responsible for creating that 'fear' and they must be the ones to rein it in and find solutions. "Freedom from fear" includes the study of fear and acceptance of how important it is in shaping everything humans do.

The good news is that "Freedom from fear" has already been adopted in various emancipatory projects, like the UN Declaration of Universal Human Rights,⁶⁰ although no one has near systematically asked what the details are and nuances and values that go with "freedom from fear." One of the main problems of the UN Declaration is its simplistic and reductive definition of "fear(s)." It is not adequate to the complex developments of fear itself in the 20-21st centuries. Youth will offer the world a great gift today, for future generations, by becoming the most informed generation about the nature and role of fear and fearlessness. I have proposed an international scale new 'Fear' Studies⁶¹ to help meet the critical literacy needs of our times and to back-up youth and leaders everywhere so they may be more effective in their mission to transform societies.

⁶⁰ See discussion in Fisher (2010), pp. 93, 176, 192-93.

⁶¹ See Fisher, R. M. (2006). Invoking 'Fear' Studies. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 22(4), 39-71. Fisher, R. M. (2018). Fisher, R. M. (2012). Foundations for 'Fear' Studies: 9 propositions. Technical Paper No. 43. Carbondale, IL: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute. Fisher, R. M. (2018). 'Fear' Studies, 12 years later: Progress and barriers. Technical Paper No. 74. Calgary, AB: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute.