COVID Asterisk Year

The good old days were not necessarily good for everyone.

May 31, 2022 By Paul Kawata

I'm just going to say it: the world is going to shit. Last week saw another mass shooting at an elementary school and monkeypox. We can never grow complacent about gun violence. Unfortunately, experience says we will. The prior week 10 African Americans were killed in Buffalo in another racist mass shooting. Our failure to protect them is everyone's responsibility.

Most of the children and adults killed in these massacres were people of color. NMAC is not a gun control nonprofit, but that doesn't mean we don't have a responsibility to speak out about the insanity of gun violence in America, particularly gun violence that is the result of racism. Our country is a house divided with little middle ground. The divisions turn mistrust and hate into violence.

On one side you have anti-abortion, pro-gun supporters who want to take America back to the days where White cisgender heterosexual men sit at the top of the food chain. On the other side is everyone else. All of us understand it's a fight for the soul of America. Our country is becoming more diverse but rather than create more seats at the table, some people want to go backwards. The good old days were not necessarily good for everyone.

Black Lives Matter saw hundreds of thousands take to the street to demand justice after too many police shootings of African Americans. We watched on video as George Floyd was killed, yet two years later what really changed? The world has witnessed too many atrocities. We are overwhelmed and numb to violence, death, and suffering. Just when you couldn't imagine another thing, there is a monkeypox outbreak among gay men. What fresh hell is this? They say it's not sexually transmitted, but the largest outbreaks happened at a bathhouse in Madrid. Most of the cases are among gay men.

Given the overwhelming sad news of last week, some may have missed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announcement that new HIV diagnoses decreased by 17% in 2020 vs. 2019. Normally this would be something to celebrate. The reality as noted in the article was the 2020 data could not account for the COVID impact on HIV services. Good news with a *COVID asterisk. Maybe that's the best we can expect. Under impossible circumstances with no clear pathways, we did the best that we could. This is not normal. It's not supposed to be like this.

Yours in the Struggle,

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.