

My name is Doctor Roy Guerrero. I am a board certified Pediatrician and I was present at Uvalde Memorial Hospital the day of the massacre on May 24th, 2022 at Robb Elementary school.

I was called here today as a witness. But I showed up because I am a doctor.

Because HOW MANY years ago I swore an oath. An oath to do no harm.

After witnessing first hand the carnage in my hometown of Uvalde, to stay silent would have betrayed that oath. Inaction is harm. Passivity is harm. *Delay* is harm.

So here I am.

Not to plead, or to beg or to convince you of anything. But to do my job. And hope that by doing so it inspires the members of this house to do theirs.

I have lived in Uvalde my whole life. In fact I attended Robb Elementary school myself as a kid.

As is often the case with us grown ups we remember a lot of the good and not so much of the bad. So I don't recall homework or spelling bees, I remember how much I loved going to school, and what a joyful time it was. Back then we were able to run between classrooms with ease to visit our friends. And I remember the way the cafeteria smelled on Hamburger Thursdays. I guess those burgers must have been good because I can still smell them today as if they're cooking in my own kitchen. And maybe they still are - it's been a while since I visited Robb.

It was right around lunchtime on a Tuesday that a gunman entered the school through the main door without restriction, massacred 19 students and 2 teachers and changed the way every student at Robb and their families will remember that school, forever. I doubt they'll remember the smell of the cafeteria or the laughter ringing in the hallways. Instead they'll be haunted by the

memory of screams and bloodshed, panic and chaos. Police shouting, parents wailing. I know I will never forget what I saw that day.

For me the day started like any typical Tuesday at our Pediatric clinic - moms calling for coughs, boogers and sports physicals before the summer rush. School was out in two days then summer camps would guarantee some grazes and ankle sprains. Injuries that could be patched up and fixed with a Mickey mouse sticker as a reward.

Then at 12.30 business as usual stopped and with it my heart. A colleague from a San Antonio trauma center texted me a message: " Why are the pediatric surgeons and anesthesiologists on call for a mass shooting in Uvalde?"

I raced to the hospital to find parents outside yelling children's names in desperation and sobbing as they begged for any news related to their child. Those mother's cries I will never get out of my head.

As I entered the chaos of the ER the first casualty I came across was Miah Cerrillo. She was sitting in the hallway. Her face was still, she was clearly in shock, but her whole body was shaking from the adrenaline coursing through it. The white Lilo and Stitch shirt she wore was covered in blood and her shoulder was bleeding from a shrapnel injury. Sweet Miah. I've known her her whole life. As a baby she survived major liver surgeries against all odds. And once again she's here. As a survivor. Inspiring us with her bravery in telling her story. Thank you Miah.

When I saw Miah sitting there I remembered having seen her parents outside. So after quickly examining two other patients of mine also in the hallway with minor injuries, I raced outside to let them know Miah was alive. I wasn't ready for their next urgent and desperate question: "Where's Elena" ??! Elena, is Miah's 8 year old sister who was also at Robb at the time of the shooting. I had heard from some nurses that there were "two dead children" who had been moved to the surgical area of the hospital. As I made my way there I prayed I wouldn't find her. I didn't find Elena, but what I did find was something no prayer will ever relieve...

Two children, whose bodies had been so pulverized by the bullets fired at them, over and over again, whose flesh had been so ripped apart, that the only clue as to their identities were the blood spattered cartoon clothes still clinging to them. Clinging for life and finding none. I could only hope these two bodies were the tragic exception to the list of survivors. But as I waited there with my fellow Uvalde doctors, nurses, first responders and hospital staff for the other casualties we hoped to save, they NEVER arrived. All that remained was the bodies of 17 more children and the two teachers who cared so much for them, who dedicated their careers to nurturing and respecting the awesome potential of every single one.

BREATHE. PAUSE.

I'll tell you why I became a Pediatrician. Because I knew that children were the best patients. I wanted to be able to treat people who would deal only in facts. I love that with my job, a child who comes in is typically better in a few days. Their bodies are flexible but most importantly their minds are open. They accept the situation as it's explained to them, they follow the

treatment and in most cases they learn from the experience. Whether it's wearing their seatbelt or what to do next time they feel they have a fever. You don't have to coax them into changing their lifestyles in order to get better or plead with them to modify their behavior as you do with adults. No matter how hard you try to help an adult, their path to healing is always determined by how willing they are to take action. Adults are stubborn. We're resistant to change even when the change will make things better for ourselves. But especially when we think we're immune to the fallout.

Why else would there have been such little progress made in Congress to stop gun violence? Innocent children all over the country today are dead because laws and policy allows people to buy weapons BEFORE they're legally even old enough to buy a pack of beer. They are dead because restrictions have been allowed to lapse. They're dead because there are no rules about where guns are kept. Because no one is paying attention to who is buying them.

The thing I can't figure out is whether our politicians are failing us out of stubbornness or passivity or both. I said before that as grown ups we have a convenient habit of remembering the good and forgetting the bad. Nevermore so than when it comes to our guns. Once the blood is rinsed away from the bodies of our loved ones, and scrubbed off the floors or the schools and supermarkets and churches, the carnage from each scene is erased from our collective conscience and we return once again to nostalgia. To the rose tinted view of our second amendment as a perfect instrument of American life, no matter how many lives are lost.

I chose to be a pediatrician. I chose to take care of children. Keeping them safe from preventable diseases I can do. Keeping them safe from bacteria and brittle bones I can do. But making sure our children are safe from guns, that's the job of our politicians and leaders. In this case, you are the doctors and our country is the patient. We are lying on the operating table, riddled with bullets like the children of Robb Elementary and so many other schools. We are bleeding out and you are not there. You are sitting in your office filling out the paperwork so you can get paid. My oath as a doctor means that I signed up to save lives. I do my job. I guess it turns out that I *am* here to plead. To beg. To please, please do yours.

