

Do words have consequences, or not?

When Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold went on their killing spree at Columbine High School, discussion centered on the terrible influence of heavy metal music. We were told the violent imagery of the music encouraged its listeners to commit real-life violence.

When the Harry Potter books were first published, they became targets of censorship. The claim was that reading about young sorcerers would encourage children to engage in witchcraft.

Fast forward to Tucson, Ariz. A U.S. House member is gunned down in the parking lot of a Safeway, and we are told there is no possible connection between nonstop hate speech filling our airwaves and acts of real-life violence.

We are told placing cross hairs over congressional districts, calling for "Second Amendment" remedies and suggesting daily that the people need to act against the radical socialists who plan to destroy our way of life apparently will have no impact on those who hear it.

And we are told there is no connection to killings in a Knoxville Unitarian Church, where the killer wanted to "kill liberals," the deaths of police officers in Pittsburgh because the shooter believed that Obama was "coming for our guns," or the shooting of a representative who voted in support of health-insurance reform and found herself and her district represented in the cross hairs of a rifle.

It is time for all of us to turn away from those who call names and suggest violent solutions to complex problems, and it is also time for us to take responsibility for our words, not just when it is politically expedient.

As U.S. Rep. Giffords said after her office was vandalized several months ago, words do have consequences.

Laura Monroe

Fairlawn