

# **AMISH FORGIVENESS – A LESSON FOR THE REST OF US ?**

**Jonathan Kooker**  
**Georgetown University Law Center**

## I. What Happened: Inside the Nickel Mines Amish Schoolhouse on October 2, 2006

On October 2, 2006, while waiting for my Alternative Dispute Resolution class to begin, I found on my Yahoo! login page, a headline appeared on the screen, “Six Dead in Amish School Shooting in PA.” Attached to the headline was an aerial photo of a one room school, much like the one down the road from my parents’ farm in Pennsylvania. As soon as I saw the photo, I knew the shooting occurred at one of the many one room Amish schoolhouses located in the community where I grew up.

A law student in Washington, D.C., I called my father in Pennsylvania to hear firsthand what was going on. Through our conversations over the ensuing days and by reading articles in Lancaster, Pennsylvania’s *Intelligencer Journal*, I found the following details about how the Amish faced the brutal violence perpetrated toward them with nonresistance and forgiveness.

At 8:45 AM on Monday, October 2, 2006, Charles Carl Roberts, IV, a 32 year old milk truck driver, walked his children to the school bus stop by his home near Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania. He returned to an empty house as his wife had already left to attend a prayer group meeting. At that time, Mr. Roberts proceeded to write suicide notes to his wife and each of his three children, all under 7 years old. Although the note to his wife was cryptic, it contained innuendos to having molested young female relatives of his twenty years ago and expressed a desire to repeat the

actions. The note also indicated Mr. Roberts' anger toward God for the loss of his daughter, who had died approximately twenty minutes after her birth nine years earlier.

Mr. Roberts arrived at a nearby Amish hardware store and purchased eyebolts, plastic cable, and a box of assorted hardware at 9:16 AM. At 9:51 AM, Mr. Roberts entered a one room Amish schoolhouse less than a mile from his home. He interrupted the German lesson and asked a question. Although, he refused to look the teacher, Emma Mae Zook, in the eyes, he showed the class a clevis and asked if anyone had seen one on the road. Ms. Zook said no but offered that the class help him look for it.

Without comment, Mr. Roberts stepped out of the schoolhouse and returned to his truck. About five minutes later, he re-entered, brandishing a gun and demanding all the students lie down in the back of the classroom. Ms. Zook and her mother, who was visiting the school, looked at one another and darted out a side door. Mr. Roberts ordered a young boy to retrieve them threatening that he would kill everyone in the room if they failed to come back. Within a few minutes, Mr. Roberts dismissed the boys and remaining adult women from the room.

At 10:36 AM, Ms. Zook completed her sprint to a nearby farm and telephoned the police, reporting a hostage situation. While Ms. Zook had been running to reach a telephone (Amish do not allow telephones in their homes or schools), Mr. Roberts had effectively barricaded himself in the schoolhouse with ten girls, ages 6 to 13, using the merchandise he had purchased from the Amish hardware store. Within 5 minutes of the 911 call, police arrived on the scene and began communicating with Mr. Roberts.

Apparently feeling thwarted from his plot, Mr. Roberts began to panic and told police that if they did not leave within 10 seconds, he would begin shooting. Within seconds, the police heard gunfire and attempted to storm the schoolhouse only to be stymied by the blocked windows and doors. They gained entry as Mr. Roberts turned onto himself the 9-millimeter semiautomatic pistol he had used on each of the 10 girls.

The police found that the girls had been shot at close range, execution style. They also found KY jelly and toilet paper on the scene, indicating an intent to sexually molest the children and to remain in the school for an extended period of time. Two girls, Naomi Rose Ebersol, age 7, and Marian Stoltzfus Fisher, 13, were pronounced dead at the scene. One girl, Anna Mae Stoltzfus, age 12, was pronounced dead upon arrival by helicopter to a hospital approximately twenty miles away. Two sisters, Lena Zook Miller, age 7 and Mary Liz Miller, age 8, died the following day. Rosanna King, age 6, was removed from life support after being declared brain dead on October 3, but has since shown signs of regaining consciousness while at home in her parents' care.

There are often questions raised to those of us who practice nonresistance regarding what we would do if someone were to kill our child, parent, or sibling. The implication in the question is that if we would refuse to take an opportunity to defend our loved ones against an aggressor, then we are cowardly or unreasonable. However, after the incident in the Amish schoolhouse in Nickel Mines, details emerged about how the Amish girls courageously answered this question. Mr. Roberts asked the girls to pray for him, which they did. One of the girls asked if he would pray for them as well. The girls granted their aggressor his wish for mercy and provided it graciously, as lovers of human life and forgivers of sin. Additionally, they reminded him that

they shared his fear, subtly pleading that he reciprocate the favor and believing in his power to communicate with God, despite the horrendous act he was committing.

Marian Fisher, the 13 year-old who died at the school, appealed to Mr. Roberts to shoot her first, hoping to spare the younger ones. Her sister, Barbie, who survived gunshot wounds to her hand, leg, and shoulder, asked to be shot next. These young girls implemented a selfless tactic as a measure of defense which held true to their beliefs that they should “turn the other cheek.” In response to this action, some Americans still managed to criticize these innocent children for not responding violently. On the Huffington Post’s *Fearless Voices* blog, a member wrote:

I would have liked it better if the Amish girls had died trying to wrestle the gun away from the madman rather than sweetly volunteering to be shot next while the others watched – in what way was this sparing the others? [M]aybe she thought he might run out of ammunition?

This blogger’s posting exhibits dissociation from human emotion and lack of value for basic human life. Not only does the viewpoint characterize the brave acts of children committed to nonresistance as stupid and feeble attempts based on illogical understandings of killers, it also faults them for respecting the life of this abominable man. The notion presented disregards the likely outcome of such action, specifically, that Mr. Roberts would have become more confused and panicked (as it appears he did when the police arrived) and would have executed his plan with vengeance. Furthermore, it neglects that Mr. Roberts was also a human, with feelings, children of his own, and a member of the community. Although he was poised to do one of the most horrendous acts imaginable, the girls knew that he still was a human being and cleverly appealed to his inner person. By appealing to these emotions through nonviolence, the Amish

girls increased their own chance of survival by setting up a scenario where he might have been compassionate. The scenario created by Marian's actions also had the effect of deterring Mr. Roberts from molesting the other girls. In the community, there have been reports that her offering herself as a martyr was in immediate response to his attempts to molest some of the younger girls. Her goal, therefore, was to distract him from his plan to molest and kill all of the girls by urging him to gain release by murdering her.

Ms. Zook, the school teacher, chose to alert authorities instead of remaining in the schoolhouse to fight Mr. Roberts. One could argue, perhaps, that she did this because she believed that she did not have the force or resources to overtake Mr. Roberts. However, there were at least three adult women in the schoolhouse and she and her mother had already connected minds by eyeing each other. It appears more likely that Ms. Zook knew that combating violence with violence would not be her best role in this situation and that persons trained in dealing with hostage crises were best equipped to deal with Mr. Roberts. It was a very brave act for a teacher to risk leaving the schoolroom where a gunman had already ordered those inside to obey him.

## II. Who They/We Are: Amish and Mennonites

My father has been a large animal veterinarian in rural Southeastern Pennsylvania since I was two years old. Many of his clients are Amish dairy farmers, who rely on his services to care for the health of their cows. He has spent much of his professional life in Amish barns, tending to the herds to monitor pregnancies, perform emergency Cesarean Sections, and treat illnesses that may infect the animals' milk and could become public health issues.

I used to ride along with him as a child and loved watching him examine the animals and chit-chat with the Amish farmers. While he was working, I would often play with the Amish children in the barnyard, riding wagons, running in the grass, and being sure not to get too close to the horses. In fact, my father became so close with one Amish family that they became my babysitters while he ran his calls and my mother worked as a nurse. I recall vividly the dark kitchen where the Amish mother, Salome, worked and her child, Steven, and I played with toy tractors on the floor. Although Steven and I did not speak the same language (Amish children only speak German until they begin school at the age of five), we got along marvelously. We rode around the yard in tricycles and played with kittens, prattling in tongues that each of us only understood ourselves.

My family's connection with the Amish community was not limited to my father's work or my child's play; we also shared a similar religious and ethnic background. My great-grandfather was the Mennonite son of Dutch immigrants. My mother's ancestors were Swiss-Mennonites named Bomberger, who were living in the Palatinate area of Germany and came to the United States in the early 1700s to flee intermittent persecution and wars that were razing their land.

The Amish and the Mennonites were once one religious group in Switzerland, known in the 1500s as the Anabaptists. The term means "re-baptizers," which they were named during the Reformation because of their belief that their infant baptisms were performed without consent and adult re-baptism was required to show commitment to God. The Protestant and Catholic civil authorities immediately began killing the Anabaptists for sedition and the group began seeking refuge in Moravia, Alsace, the Palatinate area of Germany, and the Netherlands.

Despite forming an Anabaptist diaspora throughout mid- and northern-Europe, the group was able to maintain a congregational form of government that articulated the religious beliefs of the group. Donald B. Kraybill writes in *The Riddle of Amish Culture* that among these tenets were the social separation from the evil world, the church as a community, and the rejection of violence in all spheres of human life. The group functioned as one community, now called the Mennonites, until a dispute produced a division in 1693. The quarrel was over the severity of treatment toward excommunicated members of the community. One group, the Alsatian Mennonites, believed that those who left the community should be shunned socially whereas the more lenient Swiss Mennonites only kept them from participating in communion. The Alsatian group became the present day Amish and the Swiss Mennonites, along with their Moravian, Palatinate, and Dutch counterparts, formed what has become as the Mennonite church today.

As a result of the split between the Amish and the Mennonites, the two groups developed their own interpretations of the basic tenets laid out by the early Anabaptist leadership. The most obvious difference appears in their understanding of what it means to be separate from the evil world. The Mennonites have tended to view this belief more liberally, accepting into their lives innovations such as electricity, the use of automobiles, and modern attire. This comes from the Mennonites allowing for a more individualized interpretation of the Bible among its members.

Part of the reason that the opportunity for independent interpretation of the Scriptures is available to the Mennonites is because of their value for education. Although I went to Mennonite schools my entire life prior to coming to law school, I was always encouraged to learn to articulate my own beliefs. The Mennonite History and Bible classes of my childhood were rife with debate. When we were children and while we were teenagers, the school and church provided ample

resources for us to learn various ways of interpreting Biblical teachings. We would often have guest speakers from both sides of the issue come to our classes and explain the Scriptural and experiential support they drew from to come to the understanding they held.

One of the disputes I recall being involved in at the age of nine was whether jewelry was appropriate for women to wear. Our teachers allowed students from a range of points on the conservative-liberal scale to contribute to the discussion and asked us each from where in the Bible our viewpoints came. Often, the principle of “being in the world but not of the world” would be used in discussion; however, we referenced this more as a malleable term that was up for debate. I can recall of no time where someone would articulate that a specific leader or church group deemed something “of the world” and that being the end of the discussion. Given the flexibility of the Mennonite church and its value for articulating the reasons behind a belief, it is easier for a Mennonite to assimilate into the larger culture and remain unrecognized as Mennonite.

Unlike the Mennonites, the Amish forbid the use of electricity in their homes, will not drive automobiles or tractors for fieldwork, and conform to church-delineated specifications for dress. The system for keeping members in check with these interpretations is supported by a system of sanctions administered by the church. If it is reported that someone is secretly using electricity or has been violating the dress code, church leaders will visit the member and, upon confession, the indiscretion will be solved. Donald J. Kraybill explains the Amish value of keeping “fences” around “the Lord’s vineyard” through the words of an Amish preacher:

The Saviour warned against little foxes that dig their way into the Lord’s vineyard. I often think of this illustration of the Lord’s vineyard and compare it

with a good fence around the church of Christ, how it is like a good [set of interpretations as to what is not to come into Amish culture]. If the little foxes dig their way in and are not dealt with at once, or if they are allowed to remain, there is great danger that still more will come in. And finally because they are allowed to remain and are not chased out, they become bigger and used to being there. They feel free, and build nests and dig themselves in and multiply, and do great injury to the grape stalks. Finally, they become tame and take over completely and finally the grape stalks will wither and die. It is just the same with permitting little sins to go on till they are freely accepted as the customary thing and have taken a foothold. Wickedness takes the upper hand, and then, as the Saviour says, the love of many becomes cold.

The Amish system of interpretation of what the Scriptures mean and what behaviors are acceptable is supported by the Ordnung. The Ordnung contains written and unwritten codes known by all members of the district. It can be very explicit, such as stipulating where the women's hair should be parted, whether embryo transplants are allowed in cows, and which types of wheels are to be used on farm wagons (rubber is considered too worldly). The Ordnung is established through both practice and education and personal interpretation of the Scripture as it relates to the Ordnung is not encouraged. For this reason, the Amish considered it essential to have their own education system to maintain their way of life and remain separate from the evil world.

Given our common ethnic, religious, and even personal backgrounds, I felt my community had been uprooted by the headline I saw last October. I knew that the Amish and I held most beliefs

in common despite differences in gradation of how to apply them to life. Specifically, I was aware we shared a philosophy of nonresistance, which we understood to mean that we forgive our oppressors. I also knew that I had been given the ability to learn more about why I held this understanding and that I had been exposed to much more of the world than they had been. Enrolled in a class that dealt with resolving conflict through less adversarial measures, I wondered not only how I would react to such an attack, but also how the Amish would handle it. For this reason, I embarked upon a quest to learn more about the Amish reaction to the slayings.

The most publicized act by the Amish in the school shootings was their statement of forgiveness. CNN reported that Marian Fisher's grandfather, while standing next to the girl's dead body, instructed his grandsons, "We must not think evil of this man." He went on to urge them to forgive Mr. Roberts. The grandfather of the sisters, Lena and Mary Liz Miller, agreed, responding to CNN's question about whether or not he had forgiven the killer, by stating, facing away from the camera, "In my heart I have [already forgiven him]." An Amish delegation visited the Roberts family and told them, "Do not leave this area. Stay in your home here. We forgive this man."

This sentiment was widespread throughout the Nickel Mines Amish community, said Wes Yoder, a community native. "[There is] a deep desire throughout the Amish community to ensure that the members forgive [Mr. Roberts]," he told CNN. Jack Myer, a member of the Nickel Mines community, told MSNBC, "Even though there has been this terrible thing [that has] happened, [the Amish] don't need to think about judgment, [they] need to think about forgiveness and going on." Catherine Saunders, a midwife for the Amish community who was in close communication with the families who lost daughters reported that "every family that

I've talked to that's lost a child, didn't speak of their child without also expressing concern and sorrow for his family.”

The Amish exemplification of forgiveness went beyond statements to the press and ideological instructions to family members; indeed, the Amish actually acted on their words. The same day the girls were killed, members of the Amish community met with the Roberts family to grieve with and console them. The family of Marian Fisher invited Mrs. Roberts to the funeral for the 13 year-old girl. Likewise, Elmer Fisher, a cousin of Naomi Ebersol, the 7 year old who died at the school, told ABC that Mrs. Roberts and her children would not only be welcome in the community but also at the funerals of the girls. Most notably, however, was the attendance of dozens of Amish at Mr. Roberts' funeral.

The media flourished with responses to this compelling reaction of peacefulness. Many thought the speed of the Amish forgiveness unfathomable or even unjustly disregarding the violence committed against their children. Op-Ed writer for The Boston Globe, Jeff Jacoby, quibbled:

Hatred is not always wrong and forgiveness is not always deserved. I admire the Amish villagers' resolve to live up to their Christian ideals even admit heartbreak, but how many of us would really want to live in a society in which no one gets angry when children are slaughtered? In which even the most horrific acts of cruelty were always and instantly forgiven? There is a time to love *and* a time to hate, Ecclesiastes teaches (emphasis in the original). If anything deserves to be hated, certainly it is the pitiless murder of innocents.

A blogger on Benwitherington.com echoed criticism of the forgiveness and nonviolent reaction:

The pacifism and instant forgiveness of the Amish is not a model for the state, which must at times pursue justice in the form of retribution. It's not even something that works very well for the Amish themselves. I cannot help but think that if those poor kids, as well as others who have been murdered in schools by maniacs, had been protected by an armed guard, this may not have happened. Seeing the Amish so willing to reach out to the family of the man who murdered some of their children is indeed touching and impressive, but these sentiments die away when I think of the fact that these same people would not and will not bear arms to defend innocent lives. They would not do it during World War II. They would not have done it when these children were being threatened. There is virtue in being willing to die for one's principles, but when those principles force you to let others die, the principles are vicious, not virtuous.

Although criticisms of the Amish forgiveness appeared, the majority of the responses applauded their actions. Often, writers and speakers reflected a sentiment that something could be learned from the example the Amish embodied. Russ Eans of Johnstown, Pennsylvania's *The Tribune Democrat* wrote:

In my heart, I am wondering if [the Amish] are not giving a message to America at a time when we are so polarized and gripped by an ethos of violence. I begin to dream of an attitude of forgiveness actually gripping our whole nation. I wonder if, as a nation, we did not miss the mark after the attacks on Sept. 11, 2001...What

if, instead of vengeance, we had spoken of grace and forgiveness? I believe now that such a response would have done much more to “shock and awe” our enemies than all the bombs and cruise missiles dropped in Afghanistan and Iraq. Maybe our enemies might have had their hearts moved?

Joan Chittister expounded on this notion of applying forgiveness to national policy in her widely circulated article *What Kind of People are These?* originally published in the *National Catholic Reporter* on October 9, 2006. In that article, she writes:

It was not the murders, not the violence, that shocked us [about the shooting of the Amish girls]; it was the forgiveness that followed it for which we were not prepared. It was a lack of recrimination, the dearth of vindictiveness that left us amazed. Baffled. Confounded...

The real problem with the whole situation is that down deep we know that we had a chance to do the same. After the fall of the Twin Towers, we had the sympathy, the concern, the support of the entire world.

You can't help but wonder, when you see something like this, what the world would be like today if, instead of using the fall of the Twin Towers as an excuse to invade a nation, we had simply gone to every Muslim country on earth and said, “Don't be afraid. We won't hurt you. We know that this is coming from only a fringe of society, and we ask your help in saving others from this kind of violence...”

Indeed, we have done exactly what the terrorists wanted us to do. We have proven that we are the oppressors, the exploiters, the demons they now fear we are. And – read the international press – few people are saying otherwise around the world.

The tensions between the two types of reactions to the Amish forgiveness squared closely with the issues we were wrestling with in my Alternative Dispute Resolution course. We were wondering when the appropriate times were to negotiate, when it was out of the question to have meaningful mediation, and what societal factors led to dispute resolution systems that worked. Overriding these considerations was the question of whether a society could maintain its legal structure and order with private dispute resolution systems like negotiation and mediation in place.

### III. What I Learned: Fieldwork in the Field

In order find out more about these issues, I decided to go to the Nickel Mines Amish community to explore their understandings of what happened on October 2, 2006, and to find out the reasons they responded so peacefully. I wondered whether they were blindly following the Ordnung out of a sense of tradition rather than conviction. Did they think that those of us in the larger society who held the same beliefs would be able to implement similar policies that would be sustainable in the American system? Was this attack as similar to the September 11 attacks as the media's parallels indicated? How do the Amish reconcile nonresistance and separation from the evil in the world from their actions to call the police when they were attacked?

I informed my father of my desire to meet with some members of the Amish community in our home neighborhood and he immediately went to work on my behalf. He had been talking regularly with Leroy Zook, the father of Emma Mae Zook, the schoolteacher. He also said that he had a few other men in mind who would offer insight to the Amish belief system. Dropping by their homes during his daily rounds, my father obtained consent from the men and I was scheduled to meet with them.

In preparation for the interviews, I knew to be respectful, noninvasive, and subtle with my demeanor and questioning. I recognized that although I was Mennonite, I still was considered “English” to them by my clothes, education, and flashy modern accessories. Given my separateness and the sensitive nature of my project, I got ready to keep myself in check. I met with all men the same day and found that, by far, the most informative interview was with Leroy, on whom I will focus.

I arrived at Leroy’s farm at around 9AM on a rather cool winter Saturday. After parking my car by a shed, I walked to the somewhat obscure front door and knocked. His wife answered and I explained who my father was and that I was set to meet with her husband. She directed me to the barn and I was greeted eagerly by Leroy and his son.

Initially conversing by the horse stalls, I began with some questions about how he learned of forgiveness and refrained from mentioning the school shooting directly. Leroy explained to me that the basic concept of peaceful dispute resolution had a much longer and complex nature than simple forgiveness. There are also strategic concerns when dealing with the outside society, he told me, such as conflict deterrence and avoidance of litigation.

In typical Amish manner, Leroy told me stories to illustrate his point. “Did you hear about that accident Amos Stoltzfus (name changed to protect anonymity) caused with that tractor trailer down here on 41?” I hadn’t. “Well, we asked the guy if he would be happy with \$80,000 to cover his costs.” The man had not yet made a formal claim but had suffered significant damage to his rig and cargo. According to Leroy, the immediate offering, without any demand made, not only makes those on the other side of the conflict feel respected, it also ends the matter before anger begins to build. This, therefore, allows Amish to rarely be required to enter the courtroom and, thereby, to remain at peace with their potential adversaries.

In addition to constructive peacebuilding, this approach to negotiation has some significant advantages in achieving a successful negotiation. First, as Carrie Menkel-Meadow writes in her book, *Dispute Resolution: Beyond the Adversarial Model*, a primary quality of a beneficial negotiation involves collaboration. This means that both parties recognize the needs of the other side and balance them with their own. In the story that Leroy told me, the Amish did this by recognizing that the truck driver had experienced a loss and offering financial compensation in return. They also put forth their needs, specifically, to maintain peace and separate themselves from the outside world, which was court in this case. They arrived at a number they thought was fair considering his losses and their willingness to accept responsibility outside the legal system.

Professor Menkel-Meadow also points out in her text that labeling members of a conflict transforms the dispute into one between adversaries. Curiously, in the situation with the Amish buggy and the tractor trailer, the Amish never blamed anyone. Leroy said that they saw that it could be questionable as to whether Mr. Stoltzfus was at fault so they decided to resolve it on their own without pointing fingers at themselves or at the truck driver. Had they accepted blame,

they would have done themselves a disfavor as the driver may have seen it as an occasion to demand more money, extending the conflict. Likewise, had they said something like, “We think that Mr. Stoltzfus was mostly at fault but you seemed to be driving too fast as well, so we’re offering you \$80,000 instead of our normal \$100,000 in these situations,” they would have met with antagonism. The subtle way in which the Amish chose to dismiss the claim kept the relationship with the outside world peaceful and enabled a successful negotiation.

I now thought that I had broached closely enough to the topic of the Amish school shootings that Leroy and I could talk more directly about some of the issues involved in that matter. I pointed out that the scenario he had just described to me dealt with a member of the Amish community having done something specific that impacted another. But, what about a case where the Amish have been innocently wronged without any action on their part?

Again, Leroy told me a story. An Amish farmer in central Pennsylvania had a gasoline tank on his farm. Apparently, this was acceptable in the jurisdiction as it was for certain machinery that fell within the code. Every Sunday morning after church, he would return to the farm to find the meter had run and gasoline had been taken. So, one morning, the man stayed home from church and waited in the house for the regular visitor to conduct his weekly scheme. Eventually, someone drove up to the tank in a pick-up truck and began filling. The Amish man went to the tank and greeted the driver of the truck. Awkwardly, the driver responded to his dialogue and, feeling guilt-ridden, admitted that he had been taking the gas. The Amish man said to that he did not want any money for the gas the driver had been taking and was not going to report him. Rather, he asked him to join his family for dinner the following Thursday. The man agreed and departed.

Surprisingly, the following Thursday the Amish man saw the same pick-up truck come up his lane. He invited the man inside and the family shared a very silent meal with him. After the dinner, the Amish man ushered him to his truck. Before he left, the man confessed that he had been going through an extremely difficult time: he had lost his job, he was nearly out of money, he was losing his house. He then apologized through tears and left the farm. From that time on, the Amish man returned from church to find an unmolested gas tank.

Leroy's point by telling this story is that successful peacekeeping requires effort regardless of which side of the conflict one finds himself. Even if a complete stranger comes into another's home to take from him, the peaceful man tries to mediate with him. In one paradigm for successful mediation, Professor Menkel-Meadow writes that both sides should have the opportunity to describe the other's point of view. This allows for an increased ability to reach compromises that may not have come to light when each party remains entrenched in articulating its own stance. It also elevates the parties to a point where they are working together without drawing attention to that goal. Finally, it fosters compassion, understanding, and trust, which are often requisite in the mediatory context.

The Amish man in Leroy's story never professed to know why the truck driver was stealing his gas. He also told him explicitly why he stayed home that Sunday and approached him. However, the Amish man's acts embody the mediatory technique Professor Menkel-Meadow depicts in her book. He expressed an understanding that the man was not financially secure by offering him a free meal. He did not focus on getting to know the man's problems or attempting to put a stop to the theft. Instead, he sat with him in silence through the meal and politely walked him to his truck. He was also compassionate, understanding, and trusting when he invited the

thief further into his life, offered him fulfillment of a basic human need, and pardoned him. As a result, the Amish man allowed the truck driver to find an honest way to continue on while spreading the peace he lives by.

The Amish man's actions seemed so similar to those of Leroy's daughter and the students in the school that I decided to show him the above-extracted article from Joan Chittister. At this time, we moved to where there was more light and stood together next to the dairy cows. He was very impressed with the article and so I asked him what he thought would have happened if an Amish person would have been president after September 11.

"Our ways are not for the larger society," Leroy said. My heart sank. I had heard this line of reasoning before and I was disappointed to find that he, too, believed that a nation could not survive with this peaceful approach. But, why not? Is there too much at stake when you have the responsibility of protecting others? Is there no way to implement the Amish ways in foreign policy?

Leroy said that the Amish can continue to work the way they do because they live separate from society. This enables them to eschew the problems of foreign policy and war because they are not at all involved. In other words, wars are the rest of the United States' problem and they will get themselves into and out of them on their own. Leroy's words indicate a belief that a modern society could not function in such a cloistered fashion and, as a result of that, are going to be confronted with the need for defense.

This sentiment is reflected in Barry Carter's *Introduction to International Law*. One of the main criticisms of international law is that it has few enforcement mechanisms. Therefore, the

peaceful, legal means for regulating war crimes and stopping illegal incursions are backed by the powers of the militaries of those opposing the violence. Still, I believe, and I think that Leroy would agree, that though military might may be what gets opponents to listen initially, that power should be used for facilitating negotiation and mediation similar to that of the Amish. The Amish had power in the Amish school shootings in that the law and police were on their side. In Leroy's story about the theft of the gas, the Amish man had the financial ability to suffer a loss and to provide additional assistance. In the traffic accident, the Amish again had the financial ability to pay a large sum of money upfront. Finances and the law are strong forces in this country, just like a solid defense system is an immense asset in the international arena. Therefore, it seems that although America's military power may be behind another regime's willingness to enter into dialogue with the United States, the negotiations and mediations can remain successful and peaceful.

The Amish belief in forgiveness serves as a peaceful method for effecting successful negotiations and mediations. It serves the purpose of spreading a nonviolent response to conflict while engaging in meaningful interaction with adversaries. Just like the events of September 11, the Amish school shooting involved a person from outside the community who attacked and killed innocent people. However, the Amish response provided an example to the world as to how one can promulgate peace even in the face of the most wretched aggression. The Amish had the power to do this, just as the United States did. Their example documents that an entire attack, from beginning to end, can be handled peacefully. This way of responding to violence is attainable in larger schemes as long as there is the will give it a meaningful chance to succeed.