

**Washington State Domestic Extremism & Mass Violence Task Force – March 13, 2026  
Public Comments – Received by March 20, 2026 at 5pm PST**

<p>Sue Lani Madsen</p>	<p>The interesting presentations at the March 13, 2026 meeting prompted the following comments: One task force member described a particular program using culture as way of connecting to community and providing solid footing for youth as they seek meaning in their lives. Second and even third generation immigrants have always navigated a difficult space between two worlds. While I appreciate the value of understanding one’s family history and roots, focusing on roots cannot be at the expense of nurturing the stems and leaves reaching for daylight. Programs must also connect youth to positive patterns in American culture beyond being a hyphenated American. This larger sense of community belonging is the essence of the community sense of belonging and cohesion we used to proudly call patriotism. Another concern is with the focus on connecting youth to trusted adults. Yes, we all need mentors and trusted others in our lives to serve as sounding boards, celebrate victories, and provide support in difficult times. However, while listening to panelists it struck me this solution was essentially suggesting transferring the exploited youth’s trust from one trusted adult to another rather than reinforcing a sense of an independent self rather than gaining meaning from who they follow. The larger focus must be on supporting youth in completing their search for meaning, giving them meaningful tasks and responsibilities caring for others, and as Victor Fankl taught in “Man’s Search for Meaning,” to learn to face suffering with dignity. This includes facing bullying. For reference: <a href="https://www.litcharts.com/lit/man-s-search-for-meaning/summary">https://www.litcharts.com/lit/man-s-search-for-meaning/summary</a> As we have extended adolescence we have removed actual responsibility. We have forced teenagers into an age-based ghetto without meaningful connections across generations or a sense of purpose. Technological barriers reinforce this generational isolation (although I have to say my 94 year old mother does a great job of texting with her great-granddaughter). Youth with ties through a work or sports team, healthy extended families, and regular involvement in faith communities have access to cross generational connections. Would be most interesting to hear a presentation on these and other protective factors and how we might reinforce them. One of the most protective factors essential to mental health is meaningful work, providing a sense of empowerment and responsibility to others. In agriculture, youth living on family farms have these opportunities within the family, also with organizations like 4-H and FFA. We would do much good by transforming our labor laws in Washington state to support teens in entry level jobs with meaningful work. Encouraging entrepreneurship is another way to provide meaningful work opportunities. Idle hands are the devil’s playground.</p>
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