

"Out of the Shadows".....The Story Behind the Song

February 14, 2018: Jan and I did a sweet Valentine's Day concert in Aspen, and the next day we flew to Tampa for a weekend at the Positive Music Awards.

It was when we arrived in Florida that we first heard the news: There had been a terrible mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, just 200 miles down the road. 17 students and staff members were killed, and 17 others were injured. It was the deadliest shooting at a high school in United States history, surpassing even the Columbine High School massacre that took place on April 20, 1999, here in our home state of Colorado.

Jan and I were horrified, of course, and so shocked and saddened. We really didn't know how to express our grief.

But what started happening within hours of the shooting, was that the student survivors themselves started speaking out eloquently, shouting their outrage to the media, railing against the insanity of gun violence, and calling B.S. on the lack of action by politicians.

This was monumental. The teenagers themselves stood up and demanded to be heard, to be seen, to be taken seriously. These savvy high school kids then combined their righteous rage and frustration with their social media skills to quickly create the student-led "Never Again" movement, a potent political action committee for gun control.

Shortly after that, student activists from all over the country organized the "March for Our Lives," on March 24, 2018, with over 880 sibling events throughout the US and around the world participating.

At the demonstration, one of the most outspoken of the student survivors of the Parkland shooting, Emma Gonzales, led a moment of recognition for the victims of the massacre. She stood on stage in complete silence for a full six minutes, which she observed was the length of the shooting spree itself. Six impactful, heart-breaking and excruciating minutes....And that silence said more than words could ever express.

So, a month or so later, when I had a chance to write a song with Joe Henry and Doug Johnson, one of the inspirations that first sprang to mind was that horrendous shooting and the student's strong and focused response. It was the younger generation....the kids themselves....who were taking it upon themselves to show up and spearhead **drastic** changes **Systemic Change** that we adults couldn't seem to manage by ourselves.

As we played with the idea, the music took the direction of a classic country song, and these lyrics eventually fell out: "Last night I dreamed the children were speaking, and the whole world was listening to their words. You be the spark, I'll be the candle."

It's as if these wise and soulful young people are now leading all of us out of the shadows. And together, we really can, and we really will, make a positive difference in the world.