

Title:

Gun Control Will Solve Nothing

Word Count:

987

Summary:

Blaming guns is the simple and lazy response to crime in the United States. Unsurprisingly, it is also wrong.

Keywords:

gun control, guns, NRA, death

Article Body:

Statistics from the National Federation of State High School Associations reveal that, in 1999, 15 students perished while playing in high school football games. This fact received little to no coverage in the national media. Angry parents did not parade into Washington, D.C., in order to demand stricter regulation of high school football. Politicos feigning intense anguish did not bemoan football's domination of most learning institutions' sports programs. The large majority of this country's citizens watched their favorite high school football teams oblivious to the blood that soaked the pigskin and dripped onto America's playing fields.

Conversely, when 15 students died from gunshot wounds during the 1998-1999 school year, as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate, the national media evangelized endlessly about the evils of guns. Apparently forgetting that many of the kid killers, such as Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, had obtained their weapons illegally, hordes of crusaders seethed that if guns weren't legal and available, the school murders wouldn't have happened. A few local governments, hoping to score political points, filed lawsuits against gun manufacturers, blaming them for the orgy of death and violence that seemed to have consumed America's school system.

Why did 15 deaths related to high school football inspire scant attention, while 15 deaths resulting from gun violence kindled nationwide apoplexy?

Many right-wingers would simply answer, "Because the gun grabbers want to seize our weapons, they will ignore any fact that stands in their way!" These conservatives believe leftists across America want to confiscate firearms for the sole purpose of extending government control over the citizenry. But really,

the notion that an enormous conspiracy, in which common liberals from all regions of the country participate, exists to subjugate the American people, is patently absurd. Most Americans care too little about politics and government to sustain such a far-reaching plot. Instead, the average gun control advocate honestly does believe that laws tightly regulating firearms, if not outright banning them, would reduce the number of Americans who die as a consequence of criminal attacks.

Gun control advocates amongst the populace acquire their ideas about firearms from news personalities and government officials who use guns as convenient scapegoats for this country's high crime rate in order to avoid having to search for genuine causes and solutions. Whenever an event such as a school shooting occurs, the personalities and officials shamelessly exploit the opportunity to vilify guns and the individuals who own them. The real interest here is not to save lives, but to exacerbate public opinion against guns. That is why the whole world mourned the tragic deaths of 15 students from gunshot wounds during the 1998-1999 school year, but few people, if anyone, seemed to care that 15 high school football players died in 1999.

The truth about guns is that they save far more lives than they take. According to the Fall 1995 issue of The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology, law-abiding citizens use guns to defend themselves an average of 2.5 million times per year, and only in less than 8 percent of these occurrences will citizens actually need to fire their guns, because most criminals will flee at the sight of a firearm. Of the 2.5 million annual instances of self-defense, 200,000 are cases of women defending themselves from sexual abuse. In contrast, accidental deaths, suicides, and homicides involving guns number, on average, less than 40,000 every year. This means that American citizens usually employ guns to defend themselves over 60 percent more times yearly than they do to kill, intentionally or otherwise.

According to the August 28, 1996, issue of The Wall Street Journal, states with looser gun control laws experience less crime than states with tougher laws. For example, in states that had begun to permit concealed weapons in the early 90's, the murder rates fell by an average of 8.5 percent, the rape rates by 5 percent, the aggravated assault rates by 7 percent, and the robbery rates by 3 percent. Extrapolating from these data, if states that forbade concealed weapons instead allowed them, 1,570 murders, 4,177 rapes, 60,000 aggravated assaults, and 11,000 robberies annually would not have taken place.

The story of Australia demonstrates what could happen in the United States if the American government were to ban guns. After a nut conducted a particularly brutal massacre in the mid-90's, Australia enacted laws disallowing personal

firearms. By the end of 1997, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, crime had increased. The homicide rate rose by 3.2 percent, the assault rate by 8.6 percent, the armed robbery rate by 44 percent, the unarmed robbery rate by 21 percent, the unlawful entry rate by 3.9 percent, and the car theft rate by 6.1 percent. Even supposing that Australia's new gun laws did not directly cause the increase in crime, the laws certainly did nothing to help matters.

Because guns are not the forces for evil the media and the government claim they are, no reason exists to forbid or to constrict the right to bear arms for law-abiding American citizens. Restrictions of freedom are only necessary and proper when their design is to prevent individuals from harming other people, which outlawing guns would not accomplish. Indeed, all the criminalization of guns would do is leave the average American defenseless against murderers and thieves who would retain their own guns, in natural contrivance of the law.

Rather than inhibiting freedom, the United States should err on the side of liberty, as per the Constitution, and allow its citizens to exercise their Second Amendment rights as they have over the first 200 years of American history. (Contrary to the notion that the Second Amendment does not grant individuals the right to bear arms, the Supreme Court ruled in its 1990 decision *U.S. v. Verdugo-Urquidez* that the Second Amendment applies to "persons who are a part of a national community.") As Thomas Jefferson, one of the most intelligent Founding Fathers, said, "I would rather be exposed to the inconveniences attending too much liberty than to those attending too small a degree of it."