

To Arm or Not to Arm?

Do you agree and support the idea that it is important to have gun control laws to curb violence? Or, do you think gun control laws may not curb violence but will be used to take away our freedoms? Is gun control a necessary measure to protect us?

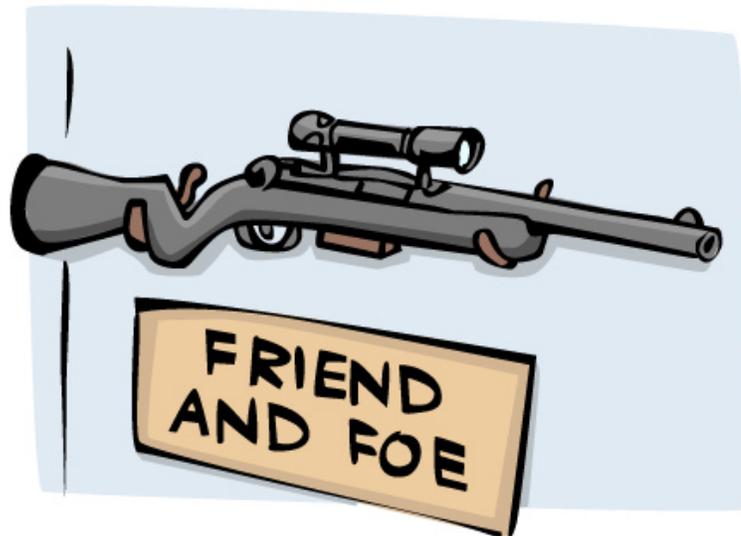
In 1999, with movie star Tom Selleck, a member of the National Rifle Association (NRA) in the US as her guest, Rosie O'Donnell, a popular television talk show host, lost her cool. She lashed out at Tom and the NRA for their opposition to government proposals for gun control.¹ Rosie had the sympathy of many viewers when she later explained she feared for the lives of her children. She sees gun control as a necessary measure to protect her family. Will it?

Does Gun Control Help Us?

Does gun control reduce violence and make the world safer for our children? In 1996, 640,000 Australians gave up their personal firearms after two mass shootings. Fearing for their safety, Australians eagerly consented to gun control statutes.

After their government spent more than \$500 million to buy and destroy guns, did crime rates go down? For 25 years, statistics indicated armed robberies in Australia had been steadily decreasing. After gun control, armed robberies increased. In 1998, The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported: "The number of robberies with guns jumped 39% in 1997 while assaults involving guns rose 28% and murders by 19%."²

In the state of Victoria, homicides using guns nearly tripled—close to a whopping 300% increase. Are Australian families safer without guns? Or, when we take away our right to own a gun, do we risk our own safety and the safety of others?



Washington, D.C. had the strictest gun control laws in the United States. It also had the highest murder rate in the country. "Washington D.C. enacted a virtual ban on handguns in 1976. Between 1976 and 1991, Washington D.C.'s homicide rate rose 200%, while the U.S. rate rose 12%."³ In 2008, the courts overturned the D.C. handgun ban after six people went to court to challenge the city's gun law. One of them had been assaulted and wanted a gun in his house for self-defense. He stated, "The fact is that the criminals don't obey the law and they do have guns. It's the law-abiding citizens who are disarmed by this law."⁴

The media and politicians are succeeding in pushing the need for gun control. How? By playing to our fears. What mother or father doesn't fear for their child's safety? Is our world safer with or without guns in the hands of ordinary people? Currently, we are only hearing one side of the debate. The problem may well be that "A gunned-down bleeding guy creates news. A man who spared his family by brandishing a handgun is only water-cooler chat."⁵ The reality may be that gun control laws only take guns from law-abiding citizens.

***When our right to own a gun is taken away,
do we risk our own safety and the safety of others?***

In Canada, gun registration was legislated in 1995. As in Australia, the legislation was implemented after mass shootings. When the law came into effect, news reports indicated gun owners were reluctant to register, the police association didn't give initial support for the legislation, and at least one provincial government stated they would not enforce the law.

One police officer stated he wanted people armed so there would be help in case some major threat occurs.

Will You Speak Up?

“ *In Germany they came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up.* **”**

Quote attributed to Martin Neimoller,
A Protestant Minister

Lessons of the Past

Well-known radio commentator, Paul Harvey, looks at history for guidance on the implications of outlawing guns: Turkey established gun control in 1911 ... the government exterminated 1.5 million Armenians in 1915. Stalin established gun control in the Soviet Union in 1929 ... the government exterminated approximately 20 million dissidents over a period of 24 years. China established gun control in 1935 ... the government exterminated 20 million political dissidents from 1948 to 1952. In 1956, Cambodia established gun control ... one million 'educated' people were exterminated

from 1975 to 1977. In 1964, Guatemala established gun control ... 100,000 Mayan Indians were exterminated from 1964 to 1981. Uganda established gun control in 1970 ... 300,000 Christians were exterminated in the 1970s.⁶

"Oh, yes," we say. "But that was then and this is now. It won't happen now." On my first flight to Germany, I found myself wondering what type of people allowed Hitler to come to power and instigate World War II. When traveling in Germany I realized the answer was people like you and me. The people of Germany and my country today have similar fears and a desire to live as comfortable a life as possible, as did the people of Germany in the 1930s.

Will our media of today be viewed as a propaganda machine tomorrow?

After Hitler established gun registration in Germany in 1938, a campaign against Jews, Gypsies and those handicapped in some way led to the death of thousands of people from 1939 to 1945. Kitty Werthman, a youth living in Austria at the time of Hitler's ascent, shared her lessons many years later when living in the US. Shortly after Hitler and the National Socialist party took over in Austria in March 1938, all guns had to be registered. The media pushed the need for gun registration to ensure the safety of family and home. News reports falsely stated that the Jews and Gypsies were a threat and were armed. Fearing for their safety, the people cooperated by registering their guns. The government's next step was to outlaw guns. By this time, citizens realized the government's intentions but could do nothing. They had to hand over their guns because they had registered them—regulators knew who had guns.⁷

Today, we view the media of that time as a propaganda machine. Werthman explains that the people viewed the media reports back then as news and journalism. Will our media of today be viewed as a propaganda machine tomorrow?

Is Our Safety at Risk?

We've mentioned gun control, gun registration and the outlawing of guns. What is the difference? Most countries already have a level of gun control. In Canada, for instance, you can own a gun but you can't carry it around in public. In the U.S., you can own certain guns and you're also allowed to carry them around with you. Gun registration means the government has a record of who owns every gun and where they live—at least for law-abiding citizens who cooperate.. And finally, outlawing of guns means confiscating guns from all who have registered them, except the police and military.

Unfortunately excessive gun control leads to gun registration, which then leads to the outlawing of guns—this is the lesson history teaches us. It isn't guns that kill, it's people. Guns allow people to protect themselves. Guns are also a danger in the wrong hands. Those that want to use guns to harm others will always find a way to get them. As Dr Gary Mauser,

Armed Senior Citizen Stops Robbers ... and a Possible Massacre

With increasing new reports of mass shootings, this video offers a graphic reason why gun control may not be in our best interests.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=epZod2qyyN4>

a professor at Simon Fraser University in Canada states after a review of the world scene: "Clearly, the firearm laws have not caused violent crime to fall, and the gun laws have probably increased criminal violence by disarming the general public." He asks simply, "If gun laws work to prevent criminal violence, why do these events keep occurring?"⁸ We need to ask, "When our right to own a gun is taken away, do we risk our own safety and the safety of others?"

Is there a Hidden Issue?

Is the gun control issue related to the health freedom issue? Rather than point the finger at guns, is there another factor linked to mass shootings? Is the media reporting only one side of the story? The use of, and withdrawal from, psychiatric drugs has been linked to mass shootings in the US, Australia and Germany. Could chemicals that seriously alter brain chemistry be the culprit rather than guns?⁹ Are there natural health therapies and products that might be used for brain imbalances to help individuals avoid violent behavior?

The story of True Hope, a Natural Health Products company in Canada, gives us one example. When Health Canada regulators demanded they stop selling a product that many individuals with bi-polar disorder relied on, the company informed the bureaucrats they could not in good conscience withdraw the product. Customers, health practitioners, and even a leading psychiatrist, stated there would potentially be suicides and hospitalizations. Health Canada regulators proceeded to cut off access to the product and two individuals who had relied on the product committed suicide. After Health Canada took True Hope to court, the judge ruled in favor of True Hope stating that the company would have been charged with a criminal offence had they withdrawn the product. They would have been charged with criminal negligence as people relied on the product and to withdraw it was a dangerous risk to their health. Government bureaucrats, however, were not charged with criminal negligence for withdrawing the product.¹⁰

Thomas Jefferson on Gun Laws

“ *Laws that forbid the carrying of arms ... disarm only those who are neither inclined nor determined to commit crimes. ... Such laws make things worse for the assaulted and better for the assailants; they serve rather to encourage than to prevent homicides, for an unarmed man may be attacked with greater confidence than an armed man.* **”**

Source: Jefferson's Commonplace Book 1774-1776, quoting from *On Crimes and Punishment* by criminologist Cesare Beccaria, 1764.

Shouldn't we have the freedom to choose a Natural Health Product as readily as we choose the use of a pharmaceutical drug? Shouldn't we have the freedom to own a gun? As with all freedom issues, we have to earn the right to freedom. That means we have to give others freedom. Are you willing to allow others their beliefs on controversial issues—freedom of religion, freedom from racial prejudice, freedom to choose health therapies and freedom to own a gun—as long as we respect that our freedom ends where the freedom of another begins?

Mass shootings are shocking but we need to look deeper than what the media tells us. Will taking away a freedom, the choice to have a gun, make us safer?

For more on the causes of violence today, check another Be the Change article: "Are Prescription Drugs Messing with Our Minds?"

Note: The authors do not own any guns.

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