

Podcast Episode 3  
Gun Control and Its Racist History

- A. The title of episode 3 is “Gun Control and Its Racist History”
- B. I know the title is a lightning-rod, and I mean for it to be because I want to get your attention.
- C. Gun control is a subject that can become very heated and emotional quite quickly. I think that’s a normal reaction, because I believe, at the base of each side’s argument is an intense desire to protect human life.
- D. That’s a good thing, right? But as they say, the road to hell is paved with good intentions.
- E. And so while I give each side in this debate the benefit of the doubt - I do think an examination of the effects of public policies proves one side’s ideas to be severely flawed.
- F. And a more in-depth look at the history of gun control laws also reveals a systemic racism - and what I mean by that is there are laws that were put into place with racist intentions & that still produce racist outcomes.
- G. Hopefully by the end of it we can close the door on some very bad proposals, target some laws propping up systemic racism that need to go, and settle on some public gun policies that would make all of us safer and more secure in our liberties

I’m not an unbiased referee

- H. I’m a passionate defender of the 2nd amendment.
  - 1. I grew up around guns. I grew up being taught the significance of the right to self-defense.
  - 2. As a woman there is an added layer to that right
  - 3. And lastly, the second amendment is the first policy I was ever paid to work on.
- I. But I can promise you that I am a meticulous researcher, fair-minded, and devoted to logic & effective ideas.
- J. I’ve been known to change my mind on big, emotional subjects in the past when the data warranted it, and I’m sure I will again in the future.
- K. But on the subject of the second amendment and gun control, the more I’ve absorbed, the more entrenched in this defense I’ve become - because the evidence backs that position up.

I’ve also found that people on the left often hold more nuanced positions

- L. And you’ll so often find this to be true if you break out of your bubble. Our society is super segregated. We are so unlikely to know people....
- M. For the longest time, I genuinely believed that anyone who supported gun control, of any variety, was a secret socialist who intended to incrementally disarm our society so they could overthrow the constitution.

1. And to be clear, those types of people DO exist.
- N. But most people I encounter on the left are not hardcore commies or even people who want to do away with guns in our culture all together. A lot of them actually own guns themselves.
  1. **But, most on the left do favor stricter gun control laws.**
    - a) [NPR](#) found that 86% of democrats & democrat-leaning independents were in favor of such actions, compared to only 31% of republicans.
  2. What do they [mean](#) when they say stricter gun control?
    - a) Universal background checks, better mental health screening and treatment programs, requiring a license to own a gun, and a national red flag law are the most popular policies.
  3. Other policies commonly mentioned on the left include banning “semi-automatic” weapons and “assault rifles,” and requiring a license to buy a gun.

Before we can have a genuine, intellectually honest conversation here, we have to straighten a few things out and develop a common vernacular and a basic understanding of firearms and their mechanics.

- O. A big thing that frustrates me in the gun control debate is proponents of these laws often use mis-leading and incorrect language. If you're a novice, you'll probably be compelled by it and that's the goal.
- P. **First and foremost, there is no such thing as an assault rifle. Walk into any gun store and ask them for one.**
- Q. Assault rifles is a made-up term that traces its [origins](#) back to Adolf Hitler. He used the term for propaganda purposes to make his soldiers and their weapons sound tougher in the media.
- R. In America, the term is used by left-wing politicians to refer to guns like the AR15
- S. **Many people think that the “AR” in AR-15 is an abbreviation for assault rifle or for automatic rifle. No sweeties.**
  1. It stands for ArmaLite Rifle, the original manufacturer of the gun.
  2. ArmaLite Rifle designed their AR 15 rifle in the 1950's. But due to some money problems, they sold the design to Colt (another manufacturer) in 1959.
  3. In 1963, Colt was tapped to make the AUTOMATIC rifles that became standard issue for troops in Vietnam. That gun was the M-16.
  4. After that success, Colt ramped up its production of a semi-automatic/civilian version of the M-16, which it marketed as the AR-15.
  5. In the 1970's Colt's patent ran out and lots of other gun manufacturers began making their own, similar product.
  6. So an AR-15 is just a rifle. It's a semi-automatic weapon. It's never been used in war & would not be satisfactory for that environment.
  7. I've shot an AR 15.

**T. On to the next needed distinction. If you're confused about the difference in a semi-automatic weapon and an automatic weapon, here is what you need to know:**

1. Automatic weapons, also commonly referred to as machine guns, are weapons in which you can pull the trigger down one time, and the weapon will continue firing until you release it.
  - a) These kinds of guns have been banned since before I was alive. Congress [passed](#) the Firearm Owners Protection Act of 1986 which banned the transfer and possession of automatic weapons.
2. In contrast semi-automatic weapons are legal and this term encapsulates weapons where the mechanism reloads the chamber after each shot. But in contrast to an automatic weapon, a trigger pull is required for each shot.
  - a) Most guns are semi-automatic weapons.
  - b) The guns that aren't semi-automatics are not the kind that are ideal for self-defense. The reloading time would get you killed.
3. I see a lot of mis-leading numbers given around semi-automatic weapons to make these guns sound more dangerous than they are.
  - a) Like this [headline](#) on NBC News from 2018 "Semi-automatic rifles kill twice as many as other guns, study finds"
  - b) Well, yeah, because most guns are semi-automatic weapons, so of course more gun deaths occur as a result of this kind of weapon.
  - c) Secondly, click the article and what does it say in the subtitle: Researchers who examined FBI data on nearly 250 "active shooter" assaults also found that the chances of dying, if shot, were the same no matter the weapon.
  - d) These guns are no more deadly or dangerous. But people don't read the article, they read the headline.
4. Proposals targeting "assault rifles" or semi-automatic weapons are poison bills. They're disingenuous, and they aren't based on data.
5. And the reality is, gun control proponents know this. They're strategic and they intend to move incrementally, because otherwise their ideas are dead on arrival.
6. Gun control activists began campaigning against "assault weapons" in the late 1980s, after they realized that their previous campaign to get handguns banned had failed. In 1988, handgun ban activist Josh Sugarmann [recommended](#) to other gun control groups:
  - a) *"Assault weapons . . . will . . . strengthen the handgun restriction lobby . . . Handgun restriction consistently remains a non-issue with the vast majority of legislators, the press, and public. . . Assault weapons . . . are a new topic. The weapons' menacing looks, coupled with the public's confusion over fully automatic machine guns versus semi-automatic assault weapons—anything*

*that looks like a machine gun is assumed to be a machine gun—can only increase the chance of public support for restrictions on these weapons. . . . Efforts to restrict assault weapons are more likely to succeed than those to restrict handguns.*

This history is important, but it's not the *most* important. To truly understand the gun control movement, its goals, and its impact on society, we have to go back.

- U. Before the Civil War ended, Black people were prohibited from owning guns under the Slave Codes. It was generally understood and documented that an armed population would have the ability to rise up and throw off the shackles of slavery.
  - V. But after the war ended and Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13th amendment abolishing slavery was added to the constitution, states continued to block Black people from owning guns under the Black Codes.
    - 1. They did this by arguing that Black people were not full citizens and therefore not entitled to full rights - an argument the atrocious Dred Scott Supreme Court decision in 1857 upheld.
    - 2. In 1865, Frederick Douglass urged federal action to stop state and local infringement of the right to arms. Until this was accomplished, Douglass argued, "the work of the abolitionists is not finished."
  - W. The Freedmen's Bureau Bill of 1865, Civil Rights Act of 1866, and Civil Rights Act of 1870, and the 14th amendment - ratified in 1868 knocked down these racist laws and made the 2nd amendment applicable to all citizens.
  - X. After losing that round, the white supremacists tried another tactic. In the 1870's, states started to use "facially neutral" laws to bar Black people from owning guns.
    - 1. This means that law did not specifically state its intentions. What this looked like was business and transaction taxes on guns, meant to price out Black people and poor whites from owning guns.
    - 2. In the 1900's they continued the trend. They also used things like police-issued licenses and permit laws, that allowed the states to arbitrarily block certain people from exercising their 2nd amendment rights
    - 3. They barred public housing residents from owning guns, which is a proposal we've continued to see come in and out of fashion.
- \*you know, because if you're poor you lose your rights

**Y. Arguably during this time, Black people had never needed guns more. Lynchings increased drastically.**

- 1. Vice-president of the National Colored Press Association, John R. Mitchell, Jr., encouraged black people to buy Winchesters to protect their families
- 2. Ida B. Wells, the leading journalist opposing lynching, agreed. In the nationally-circulated pamphlet Southern Horrors, Wells documented

cases in Kentucky and Florida, “where the men armed themselves” and fended off lynch mobs. “The lesson this teaches,” Wells wrote, “is that a Winchester rifle should have a place of honor in every black home, and it should be used for that protection which the law refuses to give.”

3. After the thwarted lynching in Florida, their state legislature passed a licensing bill.
  - a) A Florida Supreme Court Justice later explained: “the Act was passed for the purpose of disarming the negro laborers” and “was never intended to apply to the white population and in practice has never been so applied.”

**Z. As a result, black communities began to effectively fight back against white mobs who were attacking and lynching them.**

1. Notable incidents include the Atlanta Massacre of 1906 when police stood idle as 23 black people were murdered over a black man swimming in “white water” and The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921, which saw white people (with gov approval) burn down a square mile of a prosperous district known as “Black Wall Street” where historians estimate the true death total was as high as 300.
2. In each of these incidents, even more life would have been lost had members of the black community not been armed and able to fight back against their attackers.

**AA. And thus began a powerful and rich history of the Black community arming itself and rising up against its oppressors, many of whom were in government, in an effort that eventually gave us the civil rights movement and resulting legislation in the 1960’s.**

1. The Deacons for Defense were [formed](#) in 1965 and fought white supremacy terrorism in Louisiana and Mississippi with .38 special revolvers. When Dr. King led the “Meredith March Against Fear” for voter registration in MS, they provided security.
2. When the Klan targeted North Carolina’s Lumbee Indians in 1958 because of their “race mixing,” the Lumbee drove off the Klan in an armed confrontation, the Battle of Hayes Pond. Klan operations ceased in the region.
3. Condoleezza Rice became a self-described “Second Amendment absolutist,” because of her experiences growing up in Birmingham. She recalled the bombings in the summer of 1963, when her father helped guard the streets at night. Had the civil rights workers’ guns been registered, she argued, they could have been confiscated, rendering the community defenseless.
4. In 1966, the Black Panther Party for Self Defense formed to challenge police brutality against the Black community in the wake of the assassination of Malcom X. They organized armed citizen patrols in cities and grew to 2000 members.

\*this is the exact freaking purpose of the 2nd amendment. Self-defense against those who wish to do you harm, and the ability to fight back and demand your rights from a government that will always seek to seize freedoms if a population is not armed.

**BB. Of course, the civil rights act of 1964 and so much of this progress motivated blowback**

1. In 1968, Congress passed the Gun Control Act. Robert Sherrill, a supporter, said the legislation was passed not to control guns but to control blacks people.
  - a) Proof that the NRA has always sucked: At the hearings NRA Executive Vice-President Franklin Orth supported a ban on mail-order sales, stating, "We do not think that any sane American, who calls himself an American, can object to placing into this bill the instrument which killed the president of the United States.
2. **The Gun Control Act of 1968 was amended in 1993 by the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act which introduced a background check requirement of prospective gun purchasers by licensed sellers and created the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) to prevent firearms sales to such prohibited people**
3. It also created a list of categories of individuals to whom the sale of firearms is prohibited, among them those individuals who have been convicted of a felony crime. To date, no state restores these rights.

\*no other right do people lose permanently.

\*And wouldn't you just know it: African-American adults are [5.9 times](#) as likely to be incarcerated than whites, so it just so happens black people lose their rights more than others under this law.

**CC. Today, Black people continue to be most targeted by our gun control laws, and our laws in general**

1. To date, about 36% of white people own a gun, compared to 24% of black people.
2. In 2018, [56%](#) of federal firearm offenders were Black.
3. Black American are more likely than any other group, to be convicted of and subject to a firearms offense carrying a mandatory minimum
4. stop-and-frisk, infamous for its role in the police harassment of black Americans, was employed to enforce gun control measures.

\*people have to learn this basic principle: every new law is a new opportunity for government abuse.

\*Furthermore, every law we put into place is ultimately enforced by police. Black people are [three times](#) more likely to be killed by police. You can't really be serious about reforming policing and simultaneously give them more opportunities to abuse people. Come on y'all.

\*Lastly, product bans do not work. (drugs) Only lead to inequality and black markets.

**So that's the history. And it's horrible. But not only is gun control systemically racist, it doesn't work. In fact, data shows the opposite.**

**DD. Mass shootings account for only 2% of annual gun deaths**

1. It's a pretty arbitrary bar to be included in this stat too. The shooting must only involve 4 people with a motivation to kill.
2. According to the [Crime Prevention Research Center](#) the U.S. makes up 1.49 percent of the murders worldwide, 2.20 percent of the attacks, and less than 1.15 percent of the mass public shooters. All these are much less than America's 4.6 percent share of the world population.
3. Of the 97 countries where they identified mass public shootings, the U.S. ranks 64th per capita in its rate of attacks and 65th in fatalities.
4. According to the Center, the frequency of foreign mass public shootings since 1998 has grown 291 percent faster than in the U.S
5. **Only 4-5% of those involve people with severe mental illness.**
  - a) And far from being the most likely perpetrators of violence, people with mental illness are far more likely to be a victim of it.
  - b) More than 60% of Americans who die by gun death die from suicide. So suicide prevention is obviously where the bulk of our attention should go in this discussion.
    - (1) Notably, Japan has the second highest suicide [rate](#) among industrialized nations while simultaneously maintaining very [strict](#) gun controls. Handguns are banned entirely and only shotguns and air rifles are allowed.
  - c) Red Flag laws go the wrong direction (more stig, discourage treatment, focus on method vs. cause)

**EE. There are some disputes about the percentage of mass shootings that occur in gun free zones**

1. The economist John Lott found that 8 percent of mass public shootings since 1950 have taken place in gun free zones.
2. The anti-gun group "Everytown" found that 10 percent of mass shootings between 2009 and 2016 took place in gun-free zones.
3. Calling ref the [Washington Post](#) examined the stats and found that Under Lott's methodology, about 86 percent of mass public shootings took place in gun-free zones from 2009 to 2016.
4. The gap can be explained by this: Lott excludes gang related shootings and he excluded residential shootings in his data.

\*so basically Lott was examining the shootings that most of us would actually consider a mass shooting - a random, active shooter attacking and killing a large group of people unknown to them.

5. Everytown also excluded gun free zones where a police officer might/could be present. An obvious attempt to skew the data.

As we learned in the Parkland shooting, cops don't even have an obligation to defend you and oftentimes do not. If it's a place where I'm not allowed to arm and defend myself it is a gun free zone. Be serious.

**FF. Other stubborn [statistics](#) show that as the gun ownership rate in this country has increased, gun violence has actually decreased.**

1. Studies by both the Department of Justice and the Pew Research Center back this up. Not only do they show homicides have decreased as gun ownership increased, but suicides have as well.
  - a) These studies also found that of those who committed crimes with guns, only 2% obtained the firearm through a gun show or flea market. 40% obtained it from an illegal source.
  - b) 56% of people believe gun crime has been increasing thanks to media coverage. In reality, we've seen a 49% decrease in gun homicides.
2. **All signs point to this: more guns equal less crime**
  - a) [Estimates](#) show 162,000 cases per year where someone "almost certainly would have been killed" if they "had not used a gun for protection."
  - b) Other estimates show americans use guns in self-defense between 500,000 to 3 million times a year.
  - c) It's relatively easy to measure the number of lives lost due to criminal gun violence. It's harder to measure the number of lives saved by legal defensive gun use. Murders that didn't happen don't show up on crime statistics. This is just another example of Bastiat's classic principle of "the seen vs. the unseen."

GG. Continually we see that cities and states with the strictest gun laws see the highest rates of gun violence

1. CA and IL [lead](#) the country in mass shootings. These states notoriously have the strictest gun control laws on the books.
2. NY which makes it practically impossible for anyone but the rich, famous, or in power to own a gun has seen a [166%](#) gun violence increase during COVID.
3. Chicago Has Seen [700 Homicides](#), 3,000 Shootings Thus Far in 2020 - leaders claim this has coincided with an actual decrease in crime in general.
  - a) For comparison, [Dallas](#) is having one of its most violent years with 227 homicides

#### Better solutions

HH. End gun free school zones

1. Arm teachers
2. Bring back gun safety instruction

II. Better mental healthcare/responses

1. Early intervention, access to care (expand telehealth), emergency number, education initiatives, and cultural responses
2. Voluntary registry
  - a) I don't love it but I wouldn't organize against it. Obvious problems w/registries, doesn't address root symptom of suicide, but less harmful than other proposals.



JJ. Arm more people

1. Pleased to see some [progressive](#) groups like The Trigger Warning Queer & Trans Gun Club and the Socialist Rifle Association that have woken up to this and are focused on arming vulnerable populations.

KK. Focus resources on violence intervention

1. Ceasefire
  - a) Call-ins (target gang members, people with firearms priors) involve all levels of gov and community
  - b) Each participant who attends an Ex-Offender Notification is offered opportunities for education, training, counseling, and treatment - the necessary tools for change.
    - (1) After school programs, gang education workshops, youth gun-violence education programs, community events
    - (2) Mediation, Walk-away