

# Where is the cause in Gun Violence?

By: Damion Rochester



**I**n wake of the Newtown, Connecticut tragedy that took the lives of 20 innocent school children and six educators on December 14, 2012, President Obama has called for stronger gun control. Through Congressional support, the president aims to reinstate the assault weapons ban on military style guns which expired back in 2004, and receive appropriation in the amount of \$10 million to initiate research with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) on the relationship between video games, media images and gun violence. In addition to these initiatives, the president has proposed background checks on all gun sales and limiting ammunition magazines to ten rounds.

However with stark polarization in Congress, gun-rights advocate firing activism from the Second Amendment and harsh criticism from the National Rifle Association (NRA), who ran a controversial advertisement that characterized the president as a hypocrite, as his skepticism of the NRA's plan to place armed guards in every school is contrasted with the lifestyle of his daughters, who attends the highly selective Quaker private school, Sidwell Friends, and are being guarded by armed securities there and by secret service elsewhere. Will the president be provided with the resources to control gun violence in America and prevent firearm-related violence in schools?

The issue is not one on gun violence but rather the causation of violence. Should the president succeed in his mission, he would need to resolve three fundamental problems; we have yet to learn the correlation to homicide rates and gun ownership, nor do we know if guns that are utilized in crimes are obtained legally, and we have

**no idea where the guns being purchased on the black market are coming from. But being that we have a constitutional right to bear arms, does this empirical data matter?**

**Following the Newtown shooting, Republican Rep. Louie Gohmert of Texas confessed to Fox News that he wished the principal was packing an M-4. “Hearing the heroic stories of the principal, lunging, trying to protect...I wish to God she had had an M-4 in her office, locked up so when she heard gunfire, she pulls it out and she didn’t have to lunge heroically with nothing in her hands, but she takes him out, takes his head off before he can kill those precious kids.” While self-defense is generally applauded, it can be misapplied in practice. On February 26, 2012, vigilante George Zimmerman gunned down the teenage Trayvon Martin for carrying a bag of skittles. His appearance posed a threat. According to Zimmerman, he was acting in self-defense. If Martin was carrying an M-4 to defend himself against his attacker, he would have consequentially validated Zimmerman’s stereotype of black men who wear hooded sweaters and it would have been difficult to prove his innocence. In such twilight of a situation Zimmerman could be crowned as the Neighborhood Watch hero. He could advance racial profiling, gun sales, public fear, and much unneeded mayhem. One can make the argument that more concealed guns will halt criminals from attacking members in our society for fear of their lives, but the same can be true that more concealed guns result in more disputes being solved with guns and thereby progressing violence.**

**In 2008, the Harvard Injury Control Research Center conducted a study on whether more gun ownership resulted in more or less gun violence. The study revealed that areas with large amount of gun presence had a greater probability of gun homicides than areas that were less populated with guns. The study however did not reveal its casual relationship. A scientific study was also conducted the same year, by the National Research Counsel (NRC), backed by a committee of leading professionals in criminology, sociology, psychology, economics, public health, and statistics. The NRC concluded that the “existing research studies and data include a wealth of descriptive information on homicide, suicide, and firearms, but, because of the limitations of existing data and methods, do not credibly demonstrate a casual relationship between the ownership of firearms and the causes or prevention of criminal violence or suicide.” It is difficult to say that guns cause gun violence and not other factors.**

**In the Newtown school shooting, Adam Lanza massacred 26 people, he “had lots of things going on in his life and one of them was access to multiple weapons. It is hard to parse out what the effect is of having the gun, but there’s no question there’s some effect.” Charles F. Welford, University of Maryland, Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice. How does one quantify that?**

**The day following the Newtown shooting, there was another attack at an elementary school which occurred in China. The attacker used a knife rather than a gun, 22**

children and one adult were injured. Although the result was not fatal, it simply reinforced the impulse of violence.

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