
# The Phyllis Schlafly Report

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# The Media Campaign Against Gun Ownership

The Million Moms March was not a grassroots uprising of mothers but a slick media event orchestrated by Bill Clinton's public relations experts and led by Donna Dees-Thomases, who worked for Democrats in Congress, contributed to Hillary Clinton's campaign and is the sister-in-law of Susan Thomases, a top Clinton adviser. The contrived nature of the campaign was evident in the cozy meeting with the President, extravagant television coverage, multi-page color "ads" disguised as "news" in national magazines, and the distribution of color brochures in airports.

The anti-gun moms pretended to model themselves on Mothers Against Drunk Driving, but those mothers are smart enough to go after criminally reckless drivers, not against automobiles. The anti-gun moms either aren't smart enough to see that kids are killed by criminals not by guns, or they are just trying to elect Al Gore. The march was such phony political theater. The Associated Press reported that Bill Clinton had "tears in his eyes" when he talked to the Marching Moms (who, of course, didn't number anywhere near a million).

The march was advertised as growing out of mothers' outrage at the large number of children who are killed by guns. But Professor John Lott Jr., senior research scholar at the Yale University Law School and author of *More Guns, Less Crime*, has exposed the blatant lies in the statistics bandied about by the President and the press, such as the oft-repeated lie that 12 children a day die from guns. Most of the "children" in the statistics on kids killed by gunfire are 17-, 18- and 19-year-olds killed in gang or drug wars in high-crime urban areas. It is unrealistic to think that trigger locks or waiting periods would have any effect in stopping those homicides.

The Centers for Disease Control could identify only 21 children under age 15 dying from accidental handgun deaths in 1996. But 40 children under the age of five drown in water buckets every year and another 80 drown in bathtubs. Are we going to demand that water buckets and bathtubs be locked up and fitted with safety catches?

Many more children are killed or injured every year from cars, drowning, fires, and even toys than from guns. The risk of a child drowning in a swimming pool is 100 times greater than the risk of dying from a firearm-related accident.

The Columbine killers violated at least 17 state and federal gun-control laws among the 20,000 gun-control laws on the books today. Does anyone think that Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold would not have known how to unlock their guns, or that a waiting period would have made a difference in the murders they planned months in advance? None of the proposals for trigger locks, waiting periods or gun-show restrictions would have stopped Harris and Klebold.

The only policy that effectively reduces public shootings is right-to-carry laws. Allowing citizens to carry concealed handguns reduces violent crime. In the 31 states that have passed right-to-carry laws since the mid-1980s, the number of multiple-victim public shootings and other violent crimes has dropped dramatically. Murders fell by 7.65%, rapes by 5.2%, aggravated assaults by 7%, and robberies by 3%. On the average, murder rates in states without concealed-carry laws are 127% higher than in states having the broadest carry laws.

The United States has a population of 270,000,000, and 600,000 to 750,000 people are in law enforcement. It is not believable that each law enforcement officer can protect 360 to 450 people from violent criminals or answer every 911 call before the criminal fires a gun.

The sheer number of guns and gun owners in America makes gun control far more unrealistic than Prohibition. At least 80 million Americans own about 250 million guns, and about 99% of gun-owners obviously handle their guns responsibly or we would have many more accidents.

The marching moms say they want handguns registered and handgun owners licensed similarly to what is required for automobiles. But registering cars doesn't make kids any safer, and many other methods are obviously better at improving safety, such as safety instruction itself.

Using automobiles as an analogy doesn't help the marching moms' argument, anyway, because it invites us

to put gun safety courses in schools like driver's ed.

It's time for Americans to separate truth from propaganda in news coverage about guns. Under the principle that "if it bleeds it leads," television redundantly reports on guns used to kill, but censors out the many incidents of successful defensive use of guns to disarm criminals and protect law-abiding citizens from becoming victims.

Guns are used to save lives almost five times as often as to commit crimes. Guns are used 430,000 times a year to commit crimes, but 2,000,000 to 2,500,000 times a year in self-defense to prevent deaths, rapes, assaults and other serious injuries. In 98% of the situations, the victim just brandished a gun, and in only 2% of the cases was the gun actually fired, usually just as a warning. But when was the last time you saw a news story about someone successfully using a gun in self-defense?

Gun control advocates refuse to make a risk-benefit analysis, balancing the good guns do against the harm. Instead, they use emotion and lies to plead their cause.

All scientific studies show that restrictive gun laws are more dangerous than guns. Crime is reduced by putting guns in the hands of law-abiding citizens. Guns are the safest and most effective means of resisting violent criminal attack. Areas that increase gun ownership have lower crime rates than other areas. Even those who do not own a gun are safer because the criminal fears that his next victim might have the power to defend himself.

By definition, laws will be obeyed only by the law abiding. If we disarm those likely to obey the law, gun restrictions will encourage crime rather than prevent it. As Professor Lott warns: "Despite good intentions, gun-control advocates are going to end up risking more lives than they're going to save."

## *The Lies Behind Gun Control*

*"We need more gun regulations."* False. There is no academic evidence that gun regulations prevent crime and plenty of evidence that they encourage crime. It stands to reason that, if we disarm those likely to obey the gun laws, we make crime more attractive, profitable and likely for those who do not obey the law. Washington, D.C. has the strictest gun control laws in the country and the highest murder rate, 69 per 100,000, while other major cities with more gun freedom have only a fraction of that rate. 200 scholars from major universities (Harvard, Stanford, Northwestern, UCLA) released an open letter to Congress on June 16, 1999 stating that proposed new gun laws are ill-advised: "With the 20,000 gun laws already on the books, we advise Congress, before enacting yet more new laws, to investigate whether many of the existing laws may have contributed to the problems we currently face."

*"The United States has a higher murder rate than other countries because Americans own so many guns."* False. Switzerland and Israel have more gun ownership than the United States and their murder rate is far less. Switzerland has more guns per person than any country in the world, yet is one of the safest places to be. All males age 20 to 42 are required to keep fully automatic rifles or pistols at home. It's a common sight to see Israelis carrying sidearms. On the other hand, Brazil and Russia have complete gun control, and their murder rate is five times that of the United States.

*"Guns in the home are so dangerous because most murders are acquaintance murders, that is, someone you know gets angry and picks up an available gun."* False. The vast majority of "acquaintances" who kill involve drug dealers, gangs, prostitutes, cab drivers, barroom brawlers, etc., and 90% of murderers have criminal records.

*"The easy availability of guns in the home contributes to crimes of passion and domestic violence."* False. Denying guns denies a woman the ability to defend herself against an abusive man. Guns equalize the means of physical terror between men and women.

*"Passive resistance is the safest response to an attacker."* False. It depends on the means you have to resist. If a woman has only her fists to defend against a rapist, she's not likely to be successful with active resistance. But if the woman has a gun, active resistance can mean the difference between rape and safety.

The *"increase in rampage killings"* shows we need gun control. False again. Professor Lott, who did a couple of thousand hours of research on this issue, found that there has been no upward national trend in such killings since the mid-1970s.

*"We need safe storage laws."* False. States that passed "safe storage" laws have high crime rates, especially higher rates of rape and aggravated assault against women.

*"We need waiting periods and background checks to reduce crime and youth violence."* False. No academic study has shown that crime is reduced by waiting periods or background checks.

Clinton brags that we are safer because *"the Brady law has kept 500,000 criminals from buying handguns."* False. The only academic research done on the Brady law showed that the Brady waiting period has had no significant impact on murder or robbery rates and is associated with a small increase in rape and aggravated-assault rates, perhaps due to removing victims' ability to defend themselves.

*"Guns create a terrible danger of accidental deaths."* False. Rep. James Traficant (D-OH) told the House: "Something does not add up, the number of accidental deaths involving guns average 1,500 per year; and the number of accidental deaths caused by doctors, surgeons, and hospitals average 120,000 a year. That means ... [it is] 80 times more possible of being killed accidentally by a doctor than a gun." (April 4, 2000)

*"We should register guns and license gun owners just like automobiles, and that won't lead to confiscation*

*because we haven't confiscated cars."* That's a false analogy. There are 130 million automobiles in the United States weighing about a ton each and confiscation would be impossible. We've seen gun confiscation and its results in many other countries. The analogy to automobiles also fails because cars are not used in self-defense to protect lives.

*"The gun show loophole most be closed."* False. There is no gun show loophole. Anyone who is engaged in the business of selling firearms, whether at a gun show or a fixed retail store, must fill out a government registration form on every buyer and get FBI permission through the National Instant Check System for every sale. There is no evidence that gun shows are an important source of criminals' guns. A 1997 National Institute of Justice study in December 1997 reported that only 2% of felons acquired their guns at gun shows and those included purchases from licensed dealers who conducted background checks.

*"Assault weapons should be banned."* False. Civilian assault weapons are not machine guns. They are just ordinary guns that have a pseudo-military appearance. They do not fire faster, the bullets are not especially powerful, and they are slower than bullets from hunting rifles. Semi-automatic guns do not "spray" bullets and are not machine guns, they require a separate pull of the trigger for each shot to be fired just like a revolver. (Fully-automatic military assault rifles are *not* part of the current gun debate.)

*"Handguns must be banned."* False. The law abiding, by definition, will abide by the law; law violators will not. Handguns will always be available at some price; demand will create its own supply.

*"We must get rid of the Saturday Night Special."* False. This is a small, low-caliber, short-barreled, not-too-expensive gun. Not only does this type of gun have a legitimate sports and recreational use, it is the best defensive weapon for poor, inner-city residents who are the most likely potential victims of crime. Why deny them protection?

*"The American Society of Pediatrics says that handguns should be banned."* But the pediatricians' statement is based on the usual bogus statistics, not on any scientific study. If the pediatricians did a scientific study, they might reach the same conclusion that Professor Lott did, namely, that more guns in the hands of law-abiding people result in less crime.

We are told that *"we need zero tolerance in the schools about guns."* But schools were a lot safer prior to the 1970s, when guns in schools were very common. Professor Lott has pointed out that, "until 1969, virtually every public high school in New York City had a shooting club. High school students carried their guns to school on the subways in the morning . . . and regularly competed in city-wide shooting contests." When guns were so easily accessible, even inside schools, why didn't we have the problems that we have today? The reason can't be that kids take guns to school.

## *The Lessons of History*

The chief reason America has remained a free country is the widespread private ownership of firearms. Individual ownership of guns made the American Revolution possible. The principal purpose of the Second Amendment was to maintain our freedom from government. It is an insult to our heritage to imply that the Founding Fathers wrote the Second Amendment just to protect deer hunters.

My good friend, the late Reverend Stephen Dunker, C.M., was a missionary in China who was imprisoned by the Communists during the early 1950s. I heard him tell of his experiences many times. When the Communists first took over the area where he lived, they appeared to be good rulers. They established law and order and cleaned up the traffic in drugs and prostitutes. Then one day the Communist bosses announced, "You can see that we have established a good society and you have no need for your guns. Everyone must come in the night and dump all guns in the town square." The people believed and obeyed. The next day, the reign of terror began, with public executions and cruel imprisonments. Everyone accused of being a "landlord" was dragged through the streets and executed; a "landlord" was anyone who farmed his little plot of ground with two water buffalo instead of one.

Gun confiscation leads to a loss of freedom, increased crime, and the government moving to the left. This has already happened in England and Australia. After Great Britain banned most guns in 1997, making armed self-defense punishable as murder, violence skyrocketed because criminals know that law abiding citizens have been disarmed. Armed crime rose 10% in 1998. The *Sunday Times* of London reported on the new black market in guns: "Up to 3 million illegal guns are in circulation in Britain, leading to a rise in drive-by shootings and gangland-style execution." There has been such a heavy increase in the use of knives for violent attacks that new laws have been passed giving police the power to search anyone for knives in designated areas.

In 1996 Australia banned 60% of all firearms and required registration of all guns and the licensing of gun owners. Police confiscated 640,381 firearms, going door to door without search warrants. Two years later, the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that all crime had risen and armed robberies were up 44%.

Miguel A. Faria Jr., M.D., described his first-hand experience in Cuba. Before 1958, Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista had all citizens register their firearms. After the revolution, Raul and Fidel Castro had their Communist thugs go door to door and, using the registration lists, confiscate all firearms. As soon as the Cubans were disarmed, that was the end of their freedom.

Tyrannical governments kill far more people than private criminals. The Nazis conducted a massive search-and-seizure operation in 1933 to disarm their

political opponents, in 1938 to disarm the Jews, and when they occupied Europe in 1939-41 they proclaimed the death penalty for anyone who failed to surrender all guns within 24 hours.

The first line of safety has to be an ability to defend yourself. In some areas, a woman who is being stalked by her ex-husband must wait 10 days to buy a gun, even if her life has been threatened. Some cities criminalize carrying guns for self-defense but make exceptions for people carrying money or jewels. Are money and jewels more important to protect than people's lives?

History teaches us that registration leads to the confiscation of guns and that is the goal of many gun control advocates. Pete Shields, founder of Handgun Control Inc., told *The New Yorker*: "The first problem is to slow down the number of handguns being produced and sold in this country. The second problem is to get handguns registered. The final problem is to make possession of all handguns and all handgun ammunition — except for the military, police, licensed security guards, licensed sporting clubs, and licensed gun collectors — totally illegal."

Atlanta public-safety commissioner George Napper told *U.S News*, "If I had my druthers, the only people who would have guns would be those who enforce the law." Like those who "enforced the law" at Waco? or at Ruby Ridge? or invading a Miami home to grab Elián Gonzalez?

**The Second Amendment** to the United States Constitution states: "A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed." Polls show that up to 80% of the public believe citizens have a constitutional right to own guns.

If the First Amendment read "A free press being necessary to the security of a free state, Congress shall make no law respecting . . . the freedom of speech, or of the press," nobody would argue that free speech belongs only to newspapers. Likewise, they should not argue that the right to keep and bear arms belongs only to government agents.

Chief Justice William Rehnquist, writing for the majority in *U.S. v. Verdugo-Urquidez* (1990), stated that the term "the people" has the same meaning in the First, Second, Fourth, Ninth and Tenth Amendments. All those five amendments in the Bill of Rights use the term "the people" to guarantee a right for individual citizens, not just some collective right of the state as a whole. There is no reason to believe that the Second Amendment uses the term "the people" differently from the other four amendments.

The claim that "militia" just refers to the National Guard is ridiculous. The first Congress passed the Second Amendment and the second Congress passed the Militia Act of 1792, which defined militia as "each and every able-bodied male citizen" from age 18 to 45 (with some exceptions) and stated that each one shall "provide himself" with a gun, ammunition, and a bayonet.

The currently effective Militia Act substantially keeps the same language ("all able-bodied males at least 17 years of age and . . . under 45"), and further defines militia as: "(1) the organized militia, which consists of the National Guard and the Naval Militia; and (2) the unorganized militia, which consists of the members of the militia who are not members of the National Guard or the Naval Militia." (10 U.S.C. 311)

In recent years, a scholarly consensus has emerged across the political spectrum that the Second Amendment protects an individual right. Between 1980 and 1995, of 39 law review articles, 35 noted the Supreme Court's prior acknowledgement of the individual right of the Second Amendment and only four claimed the right is a collective right of the states (and 3 of those 4 were authored or co-authored by persons connected with the gun-control lobby).

### *The Founding Fathers on the Right to Own Guns:*

- ★ **James Madison**: Americans have "the advantage of being armed" — unlike the citizens of other countries where "the governments are afraid to trust the people with arms."
- ★ **Patrick Henry**: "The great objective is that every man be armed. . . . Everyone who is able may have a gun."
- ★ **George Mason**: "To disarm the people [is] the best and most effectual way to enslave them."
- ★ **Samuel Adams**: "The Constitution shall never be construed . . . to prevent the people of the United States who are peaceable citizens from keeping their own arms."
- ★ **Alexander Hamilton**: "The best we can hope for concerning the people at large is that they be properly armed."
- ★ **Richard Henry Lee**: "To preserve liberty, it is essential that the whole body of the people always possess arms, and be taught alike, especially when young, how to use them."

***For more information:*** John Lott Jr., *More Guns, Less Crime* (2nd edition, 2000). Miguel A. Faria Jr., M.D., articles on England and Australia in the *Medical Sentinel*, May/June 2000, and letter on Cuba to the editor of the *Wall Street Journal*, December 28, 1999. Professor Sanford Levinson, "The Embarrassing Second Amendment," *Yale Law Journal*, 1989. Professor James D. Wright, "Second Thoughts about Gun Control," *The Public Interest*, Spring 1988. Stephen P. Halbrook, *That Every Man Be Armed*, Independent Institute, 1994, and the *Wall Street Journal*, June 4, 1999. Daniel D. Polsby, *Firearms and Crime*, Independent Institute, 1997. Joyce Lee Malcolm, lecture at the Independent Institute, September 21, 1999, http://www.independent.org/ For law review articles, gun court cases, and the 1982 Senate report, see http://www.2ndlawlib.org/

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