

Liz Young
MCC Essay
Mrs. Ortman
11/6/08

Gun Deaths

“Force and mind are opposites; morality ends where a gun begins,” writes Ayn Rand, a Russian born novelist (“Gun Quotes”). In contrast, some, particularly American members of the National Rifle Association (NRA), cling to and incessantly quote the Second Amendment of the United States Constitution. This amendment protects the citizen’s right to possess and carry a weapon for the purpose of self defense (“Supreme Court”). Although it is our constitutional right as American citizens to possess a weapon, however void of hunting intentions, should Christians not, as citizens of the kingdom of heaven, seek a higher, less potentially violent road? “Seek peace, and pursue it” (Proverbs 34:14). America has the highest number of gun deaths in the world by a landslide; we beat out other countries such as Japan and Canada, with under a hundred, by almost eleven thousand gun deaths a year (“Bowling For Columbine”). Something is direly wrong with a country that has numerous school shootings a year and access to firearms at a whim. We, as Americans, can change that. If stricter gun possession laws were implemented, more vigorous gun safety courses were employed, and the types of weapons made available to the general public were largely restricted, we could look forward to a safer America.

People in rural areas are often known to resist gun restrictions. The reasons for this are often debated. It could be argued that people in rural areas see guns more as hunting devices, rather than for self defense against other human beings. Populations living in more urban environments often see gun violence with much greater prevalence, and accordingly associate firearms more with self defense than for hunting purposes. Therefore, people residing in urban environments are much more likely to support laws that restrict who can have a licensed firearm

and what firearm they could legally possess. If stricter gun laws were taken into practice, gun injuries and deaths could be dramatically decreased. The weapons used for the action of game hunting and those used for purposeful infliction of harm on another human being are almost as varied as their purposes. For instance, you would not implement a machine gun in either deer or pheasant hunting; therefore, why is this gun made available to average American citizens? An automatic or semi automatic weapon serves absolutely no practical purpose. These types of formidable weapons, with the sole reasonable purpose of the quick and mass destruction of human life, should not be marketed or legally available to citizens. These weapons should be solely possessed by military personnel for whom the destruction of human life is often called for and unavoidable during times of great conflict.

As Christians, we have just as much legal right to exercise the Second Amendment as anyone, but should we not do so with discretion? I do not believe the Bible verses in Matthew (“Book of Matthew”) are directly applicable to gun ownership. Using hermeneutics, people have suggested that we should use this verse as our reasoning for Christians to not own weapons. Coming from a rural community, I witness weapons used in non-violent manners often. I find it to be a tremendous stretch to imagine Jesus not wanting us, as his followers, to possess weapons, if not meant for the purpose of inflicting harm upon other human beings.

Throughout the United States there has been backlash against the “gung-ho for guns” attitude of the NRA. Even the forefathers of our country had such attitudes. George Washington said, “The very atmosphere of firearms anywhere and everywhere restrains evil interference – they deserve a place of honor with all that is good” (“Quotes on Firearms”). The District of Columbia, in March of 2008, decided to make a stand against the gratuitous use of the Second Amendment. They announced it to be a felonious crime to carry an unregistered hand gun and

prohibited the registration of them. This made it illegal to carry a hand gun under any circumstances. With the exception of on duty law enforcement officers, who were given one year renewable gun licenses. Citizens who already legally owned guns were allowed to keep them, under the conditions of being unloaded, disassembled, or with a mechanism locking the trigger. Special Policemen Heller from the district, after being denied the plea to register a personal handgun, filed a lawsuit on the grounds of the District of Columbia's ban as being unconstitutional. He claimed it flagrantly violated the Second Amendment of the United States constitution for there to be a ban on handguns and the required disassembling of them in the private home setting. The courts sided in favor of Heller. Other cases such as *The United States v. Cruikshank*, *Presser v. The State of Illinois* or *The United States v. Miller* have had similar outcomes ("Supreme Court").

Considering history, and human nature, one could argue that if non practical hunting weapons were banned, it would change nothing. Gun possession would happen with the same prevalence, just illegally. This is a valid thought, and one that should be considered. We should show our outrage with the gun related travesties happening throughout our country. Many are. Over one hundred U.S. mayors throughout the country are collaborating on a program called "How Cities Can Combat Illegal Guns and Gun Violence." This program supplies suggestions on how to combat the illegal trafficking of guns ("Center Publications"). Even if it would realistically change very little, our intolerance of human-on-human violence should be made known.

If stricter laws were executed on the possession and licensing of firearms, it would inevitably cut down on gun deaths and violence. Also, an adult should be required to be present at all minor gun-safety courses. If people better understood the weapons they were using; our

national average of 1500 accidental gun deaths a year would decrease exponentially (“Accidental Gun Deaths”). Rigorous background checks and gun safety courses should be taken by all people over the age of eighteen, to make sure weapons are not possessed by felons, people with predispositions to violent behavior, or the incapability to understand the responsibility that comes with owning a gun.

We can make America a safer, less violence riddled country. With broadened knowledge of gun safety, and fewer guns in the hands of unfit people, that America could be a reality. If restrictions on types of guns made available were put in place, the number of gun deaths could almost be guaranteed to decrease drastically. Most of the gun deaths in this country are due to ignorance: ignorance of the law, ignorance of responsibility entailed by owning a gun and ignorance of the firearm’s capability. If we all made a conscious effort to inform ourselves, we would be facing a brighter, less ignorance filled future.

Works Cited

"Book of Matthew." Bible Gateway. 7 Nov 2008

<http://www.biblegateway.com/quicksearch/?quicksearch=Matthew&qs_version=31>.

"Gun Quotes." Think Exist. 2006. 3 Nov 2008<<http://thinkexist.com/quotes/with/keyword/gun/>>.

Hopkins, John. "Center Publications." Center for Gun Policy and Research. John Hopkins
Bloomberg School of Public Health. 7 Nov 2008

Nichols, Alissa. "Bowling for Columbine asks why Americans love to shoot Americans."

Gateway. 11/19/02. University of Nebraska at Omaha. 7 Nov 2008

<<http://media.www.unogateway.com/media/storage/paper968/news/2002/11/19/ArtsLeisure/Bowling.For.Columbine.Asks.Why.Americans.Love.To.Shoot.Americans-2546080.shtml>>.

Raymond, Eric. "Quotes on Firearms Rights." Eric's Gun Nut Page. 1997. 7 Nov 2008

<<http://www.catb.org/~esr/guns/quotes.html>>.

"Supreme Court Of the United States District of Columbia v. Heller." Supreme Court Collection

2008 7 Nov 2008 <<http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/html/07-290.ZS.html>>.

Totty, E.J.. "Accidental gun deaths, intentional gun deaths, and gun control." The Lantern. Dec.
18 2007. Plunderbund. 7 Nov 2008

<<http://www.plunderbund.com/2007/12/18/accidental-gun-deaths-intentional-gun-deaths-and-gun-control/0/>>.