

#1493 Marketing, Messaging and Mass Shootings

Intro 6-4-22

[00:00:00] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Welcome to this episode of the award-winning *Best of the Left Podcast*, in which we shall take a look at the obvious steps we need to take to reduce gun violence in the United States, debunk some of the favored propaganda supporting unfettered gun ownership, and explore the origins of how gun culture trademark was invented by corporations as the frontier-era need for guns began to vanish, pushing them to convert guns from tools that were needed but not loved, into items that were loved though no longer needed.

Clips today are from *CounterSpin*, *All In* with Chris Hayes, *The Daily Show*, *The Thom Hartmann Program*, the *PBS NewsHour*, *Letters and Politics*, and *Breaking the Sound Barrier* with Amy Goodman, with additional members-only clips from *Citations Needed* and *Letters and Politics*.

Igor Volsky on Ending Gun Violence - CounterSpin - Air Date 5-27-22

[00:00:54] **JANINE JACKSON - HOST, COUNTERSPIN:** Other countries have misogyny and racism, untreated mental illness, and bar fights and robberies. What they don't have are weeks like the one we saw in March of 2021, in which Americans, just reeling from the murders of eight people in Atlanta, woke up to news of 10 people killed in Boulder, Colorado.

It's the guns. The difference is the guns.

We asked for help thinking about that from Igor Volsky, Executive Director of Guns Down America and author of the book, *Guns Down: How to defeat the NRA and build a safer future with fewer guns*. I started by noting the journalistic and maybe just human tendency, in the wake of a mass shooting horror like Atlanta, like Boulder, like Sandy Hook, like Buffalo, like Uvalde, to seek more information, more details. What were the circumstances? The motivations? Who is this individual?

Somewhere along the way, one gets the sense that the problem of gun violence is too complicated to address. Whatever measure is being suggested wouldn't have prevented the latest attack. And somehow that's not a reason that that's not enough, but a reason to abandon the whole project.

I asked Igor Volsky if getting past that hopelessness calls for new goals, or maybe just clarity about what our goals are.

[00:02:27] **IGOR VOLSKY:** You're absolutely right. There's really this sense, oftentimes in the press, that this problem is just too hard, that we already have 400 million guns in circulation, and there's nothing we can do about it, that we somehow have to pay the price of a hundred people dying every day from gun violence, because we have a second amendment.

And the reality is that none of that is true, that we know exactly what needs to be done in order to save lives. And we know that because states across America have strengthened their gun laws, have invested in communities that are suffering from cyclical everyday gun violence, and have seen significant reductions in their gun suicide rates and in their gun homicide rates.

So these models of democracy or these laboratories of democracy, as Republicans in particular often like to point to, really serve as an example of what we need to do on the national level in order to have a standard that fits the entire country.

And secondly, we just need to look overseas at some of our allies who have dramatically reduced gun violence by doing three basic things. By number one, ensuring that gun manufacturers and gun dealers are actually regulated and can't produce incredibly powerful weapons for the civilian market. Those countries raise the standard of gun ownership by requiring gun owners to register their firearm, to get a license to have a firearm in the first place. And they've also addressed the root causes of gun violence, things like employment opportunities, housing security, healthcare. So we have the blueprint. We just need to follow it.

[00:04:32] **JANINE JACKSON - HOST, COUNTERSPIN:** Well, you will hear that assault weapon bans don't help because most murders happen with handguns, or background checks don't help because there's a lot of resales, and it's a lot of suicides. But if you spell it out to the goal being fewer guns, if you make that the goal, well, then that addresses all of those things. And it sounds like what you're saying has worked in other places. It has a goal of just there being fewer guns out there.

[00:05:07] **IGOR VOLSKY:** Yeah. The reason why the United States has a death rate that's about 25% higher than our other peer nations is exactly what you just identified. We have way too many guns and they are way too easy to get. And until our media and our leaders can have the courage, the political courage to recognize that reality and to begin communicating about it to the American people, it's going to be a challenge to meet the goal of saving lives. And I have to say, we now have a president in the White House who has done this work before, who, when he was running for the presidency, released one of the boldest gun violence prevention programs of any presidential candidate, who promised us that his experience in Washington, DC gave him the skills to work with Democrats and Republicans to get big things done.

And so he has the heavy responsibility to follow through on those promises, to address the nation fully about this crisis, and then to work through Congress diligently and aggressively to get tighter gun laws across the finish line.

[00:06:31] **JANINE JACKSON - HOST, COUNTERSPIN:** Well, let me just bring you back to media for a second. When media tend to move from incident coverage to policy coverage, then reporting on gun control gets often into this kind of static frame where you hear from opponents and proponents of a particular measure. They both get quoted. Sometimes they get quoted in equal amounts. But there's this kind of backdrop which is that in this country, any restrictions on individual gun ownership face an uphill battle because it's enshrined in the law, because the lobby is all powerful, and because this country just loves its guns. These are presented as blanket impediments to change.

But how true is that? Is that really an accurate current depiction of the lay of the land?

[00:07:22] **IGOR VOLSKY:** Yeah, this false balance that you're identifying that you often see in media stories, this effort to perpetuate literally what is a myth about the NRA's great power and abilities, and this notion of just regurgitating claims that the second amendment somehow impedes us from doing anything about this problem is a real hindrance I think to the kind of conversations we have publicly about this issue, to the kind of conversations we have with our friends and families, particularly if some of them are gun owners or more politicized gun owners.

And, you know, the truth of the matter is, the kind of coverage we need on this issue, the kind of press we need on this issue, is one that reflects the science and the real history. The overwhelming science in the gun violence space tells us one simple truth: where there are more guns, there are more gun deaths. And

that's really it. That's the reality that you have to start from. So any kind of argument about if you have gun restrictions, you're disarming the good guys, or if you have gun restriction, that means it will only harm the good guys because the bad guys will never follow it. That kind of argument that the NRA has so successfully gotten the press to parrot for decades is a real hindrance. And so, you know, I think we hopefully -- hopefully -- have reached a point where gun violence is so ubiquitous and support for actually doing something is so widespread that we will hopefully see less of this effort to just pretend that well, nothing at all is possible, right?

And just a second on the second amendment, you know, that the history of this is very intriguing to me, because for decades and decades and decades, really up to about 1972, it was hard to find anybody in the press or within even the gun community who argued that the second amendment is somehow an impediment to gun regulation. That argument is actually quite new. And it was developed through NRA-funded researchers and NRA-funded lawyers. They birthed this idea that the second amendment somehow prevents us from doing what we know we need to do. And oftentimes the media just parrots that invented notion without actually recognizing that it is certainly not what the founding fathers intended, but also doesn't reflect the reality of how most courts -- the Supreme Court to some degree, but also courts across the country -- have ruled repeatedly that the amendment allows for pretty significant regulation.

NRA's 'Good Guy With A Gun' Theory Failed In Real Time In Uvalde - All In with Chris Hayes - Air Date 5-27-22

[00:10:44] **CHRIS HAYES - HOST, ALL IN:** Today, Wayne LaPierre, head of the National Rifle Association hosted a number of Republican politicians, including the ex-President at his organization's annual conference in Houston, just days after 19 elementary school children and two teachers were slaughtered by a gunman a few hundred miles away.

Now, all of the speakers at today's conference acknowledged the shooting and, really, how could they not? And all of them blamed it on everything but the AR-15-style rifle that the gunman bought as soon as he was legally able to, when he turned 18. This is standard. I mean, this is the script. We know how this goes for the NRA, and the politicians who it pays. In the aftermath of the recurring horror these weapons of war have wrought, LaPierre and his allies in the Republican party just throw out any excuse to try to explain why guns are not the problem. It was following the Sandy Hook massacre, 10 years ago, which

left 20 children and 6 adults dead that LaPierre provided one of the most indelible excuses of the modern age.

[00:11:52] **WAYNE LAPIERRE:** The only way, the only way to stop a monster from killing our kids is to be personally involved and invested in a plan of absolute protection. The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.

[00:12:13] **CHRIS HAYES - HOST, ALL IN:** Ironically, that's the moral cosmology of a child, like a small kid who thinks about the world [in terms of] good guys with guns and bad guys with guns and that phrase and the sentiment behind it are now inescapable. I mean, it was obviously ridiculous back then. A ludicrous thing to say. And ludicrous now. It's simply not how a functioning society works. It's a Wild West state of nature in which conflicts are resolved only through violence and bloodshed. But it meant more guns, right? If you're Wayne LaPierre and you're solving at the board, they're sitting around, they're brainstorming like, Oh, there's 20 murdered kids, guns, more guns? Maybe we just try to shoot the moon here. The notion that only a good guy with a gun can stop a bad guy with a gun is still, it's an organizing policy principle of the Republican party. It is the mythos sold by the conservative movement for the last 10 years, at least to justify constantly expanding access in every legislative session to guns, like Texas governor Greg Abbott has done.

And in the aftermath of this latest horrifying massacre they tried it out again, because it's, it's what they do. The mythos was on full display again, everyone praising with solemnity the good guys with guns and claiming those good guys with those guns prevented an even greater tragedy.

[00:13:47] **TEXAS GOVERNOR GREG ABBOTT:** The reality is as horrible as what happened. It could have been worse. The reason it was not worse is because law enforcement officials did what they do. They showed amazing courage by running toward gunfire for the singular purpose of trying to save lives.

[00:14:18] **STEVE MCCRAW:** But as he was approaching, as the Governor mentioned earlier, there was a brave Consolidated Independent School District resource officer that approached him, engaged him, and at that time there was not, gunfire was not exchanged, but the subject was able to make it into the, into the school.

[00:14:37] **SENATOR JOHN CORNYN:** During a briefing from law enforcement, two of the Uvalde police officers who responded to the shooting,

shared their harrowing experience with us and in the face of such unthinkable evil, their courage was unwavering.

[00:14:52] **CHRIS HAYES - HOST, ALL IN:** Um, I'm just going to read what Greg Abbott said again, just cause just, I want it to let it sink in. Hold on one second. Uh, "the reason it was not worse is because law enforcement officials did what they do. They showed amazing courage by running toward gunfire for the singular purpose, trying to save lives".

That is a comforting story if you're mourning the horror of what's happened. But here's the thing. That's not just not true. We think now, the opposite of the truth. The argument that heroic law enforcement officers, the proverbial good guys with guns, showed an unwavering courage and prevented the massacre from being even worse.

That, that's not at all how it looks, as we learn the facts. After three days of misdirection, false starts, shifting stories, we have arrived at what appears to be the horrible, almost unspeakable, almost not believable truth of what actually happened in that classroom in Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas. Just listen to the Texas Director of Public Safety today admitting to the total and complete failure by police to stop the massacre.

[00:16:02] **STEVE MCCRAW:** There was discussion early on that an ISD, consultant at ISD, for Uvalde, and officer, was a resource officer and had confronted the subject. That did not happen. The bottom line is that officer was not on scene, not on campus, but had heard the 911 call about a man with a gun, drove immediately to the area, sped to what he thought was the man with a gun to the back of the school, and what turned out to be a teacher and not the suspect. In doing so he drove right by the suspect who was hunkered down behind a vehicle where he began shooting at the school. They caller identified, I'll not say her name, but she was in room 112, called 911 at 12:03. The duration of the call was 1 minute and 23 seconds. She identified herself and whispered, she's in room 112.

At 12:10, she called back in room 12, advising multiple dead.

[00:17:06] **REPORTER:** What efforts were the officers making to try and break through either that door or another door to get inside that classroom?

[00:17:13] **STEVE MCCRAW:** None at that time.

[00:17:15] **REPORTER:** Why?

[00:17:16] **STEVE MCCRAW:** The, the on-scene commander at the time, believed that it had transitioned from an active shooter to a barricaded subject. The question is simply this: there was a 40 minute gap. And if the 911 operators were aware that children were alive in that classroom, why weren't officers notified of that? And if that's the case, why didn't he take actions? That's the question. From the benefit of hindsight, where I'm sitting now, of course it was not the right decision. It was the wrong decision. There was no excuse for that.

[00:17:51] **CHRIS HAYES - HOST, ALL IN:** Nineteen police officers were inside the school for more than 40 minutes as the gunman holed up in a classroom with those terrified little children and those panicked desperate kids kept calling 911 and pleading with them to send in the police.. I honestly, I listened to this press conference today, I kept thinking that I was missing something or I had, I was screwing it up.

I was left speechless. Now let's just say that, let's just be clear here, the officer in charge on the scene who, that department of public safety official said, was, made this decision. It was not an active shooter situation and the 19 cops inside the building didn't have to go in, despite the gunman locking himself in the classroom full of kids and a barrage of 911 calls, uh, that individual wasn't present to defend himself today or her.

And I got to say, given the record of official pronouncement so far, there's no reason to take anything anyone from law enforcement in this situation says at face value, full stop. So that's what we have now, but it does seem confirmed even as we will likely learn more in the coming weeks, the worst possible set of facts appears to be the true one. That the police utterly failed with their guns, the good guys with the guns in the school, utterly failed to protect those kids. That they set up a cordon outside the school and yelled at and threatened and prevented parents from rushing in, even, it seems, as the gunman was still inside.

And in addition to the police responses an unfathomable failure is also just a profoundly upsetting demonstration of the bankruptcy of the arms race theory of violence prevention, something that just Wayne LaPierre pulled out of the ether, so he had something to say. This decades-long project outline by LaPierre 10 years ago.

Get, just give them everybody. And arm an increasingly militarized police force, more and more money, more and more weapons, make sure they all have SWAT teams. They all need to have SWAT teams because you never know. So

if one of those weapons ends up in the hands of the bad guy, we've got a huge paramilitary unit that's trained to go in there and stop them.

It's all BS. They've built up to this moment and here it was. Here's the proving ground. And we just saw it fail in real time. And yet even after that, in the wake of that, after that press conference today, in which that failure was enunciated at the NRA conference, after we learned about the failure of the good guys with guns, here's what happened.

[00:20:52] **SENATOR TED CRUZ:** Ultimately, as we all know, what stops armed bad guy is armed good guys.

[00:21:08] **DONALD TRUMP:** As the age old saying goes, the only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun. Have you ever heard that? No. You've never heard that.

[00:21:21] **CHRIS HAYES - HOST, ALL IN:** If those are the two categories, I'm curious for Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, which category were the police in this estimation? Of course, it's not two categories of people. That's the whole point. Whatever Donald Trump and Ted Cruz say the entire NRA worldview collapsed in on itself in a pool of blood in that elementary school in Uvalde, Texas on Tuesday and in the end, the sheer brutal bankruptcy of what these cretins have been proposing, Cruz and Trump and Greg Abbott, and Wayne LaPierre, everyone celebrating guns and gun culture in the news today, it has been laid bare.

Jordan Klepper Debunks The _Good Guy with a Gun_ Argument - The Daily Show - Air Date 12-11-15

[00:22:01] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** I'd done it. I'd gone from gun idiot to idiot with a gun. Qualified to conceal a deadly weapon in most of the country, probably in your home state! With all of eight hours of training, I was ready to handle every crisis situation.

[00:22:16] **PETE BLAIR, DIRECTOR OF ALERRT:** You're not ready to handle every crisis situation.

[00:22:19] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** Who the fuck are you?

[00:22:20] **PETE BLAIR, DIRECTOR OF ALERRT:** I'm Pete Blair I'm the director of the ALERRT program.

[00:22:23] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** ALERRT, or the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training program has trained over 80,000 cops to respond to active shooter events. So why was this dude trying to jam up on my gun nuts?

[00:22:36] **PETE BLAIR, DIRECTOR OF ALERRT:** Because you've had one day of training.

[00:22:37] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** I see how it is, you want to take away our guns?

[00:22:40] **PETE BLAIR, DIRECTOR OF ALERRT:** I wouldn't want to take away anybody's gun, but I would want to help train them.

[00:22:44] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** Okay. I'll tell you 30 states, the NRA, and uncle Sam all think that I'm good to go when it comes to guns.

[00:22:50] **PETE BLAIR, DIRECTOR OF ALERRT:** How many rounds did you shoot?

[00:22:51] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** Is rounds bullets?

[00:22:52] **PETE BLAIR, DIRECTOR OF ALERRT:** Yes.

[00:22:53] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** A ton.

[00:22:54] **PETE BLAIR, DIRECTOR OF ALERRT:** 10 20, 50?

[00:22:55] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** Yeah, and I shot him at the paper.

[00:22:58] **PETE BLAIR, DIRECTOR OF ALERRT:** I would recommend more training.

[00:22:59] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** Come at me, bro.

[00:23:02] **GUN SAFETY EDUCATOR:** This is your weapon again. I'm handing to you as a hot weapon.

[00:23:05] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** Okay.

ALERRT agreed to test my Eastwood like reflexes in the following simulation. There's an active shooter in the building, with my Glock 17 modified to shoot paintball-like bullets, I'm the good guy with a gun who's going to take him down.

[00:23:18] **GUN SAFETY EDUCATOR:** You need to be ready. It could happen at any second from this point on. You just need to be ready.

[shots fired]

[00:23:25] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** Okay. That was a test run. I wasn't even ready.

[00:23:28] **GUN SAFETY EDUCATOR:** Probably not going to be ready for it in real life.

[00:23:30] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** I going to do over it. Let's do it over again.

So I kneeled down and prepared to do battle. And got shot again. And again. And again.

Why was that so hard? That was nothing like Call of Duty.

[00:23:46] **PETE BLAIR, DIRECTOR OF ALERRT:** I told you, it's not that simple.

[00:23:48] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** Yeah, but the only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun. That's science.

[00:23:51] **PETE BLAIR, DIRECTOR OF ALERRT:** That's inaccurate. About one out of every five active shooter events gets stopped by a potential victim at the scene, and most of those victims are unarmed.

[00:23:59] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** Where'd you get those stats, from some liberal think tank like Hillary PAC?

[00:24:03] **PETE BLAIR, DIRECTOR OF ALERRT:** No, it's from the FBI report that came out last year. A study of active shooter incidents from 2000 to 2013.

[00:24:09] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** Obama's FBI?

[00:24:11] **PETE BLAIR, DIRECTOR OF ALERRT:** It's the FBI.

[00:24:12] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** Yeah. You believe that liberal claptrap?

[00:24:14] **PETE BLAIR, DIRECTOR OF ALERRT:** I'm one of the coauthors of the study.

[00:24:16] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** I took a closer look at his report and it pretty much proved my good guy theory.

[00:24:21] **PETE BLAIR, DIRECTOR OF ALERRT:** There are some cases where we have good guys with guns who were able to stop the shooter.

[00:24:24] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** Most cases.

[00:24:26] **PETE BLAIR, DIRECTOR OF ALERRT:** Very few cases.

[00:24:27] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** Half the cases.

[00:24:28] **PETE BLAIR, DIRECTOR OF ALERRT:** Not half.

[00:24:29] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** A quarter of the cases.

[00:24:30] **PETE BLAIR, DIRECTOR OF ALERRT:** Not a quarter of the cases.

[00:24:31] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** What's the present?

[00:24:32] **PETE BLAIR, DIRECTOR OF ALERRT:** It's about 3%.

[00:24:34] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** 3%, but these guys said the only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun. We must not have enough guns.

If 97% more people had guns 100% of the time, there'd be 0% crime.

[00:24:50] **PETE BLAIR, DIRECTOR OF ALERRT:** I'm not sure that's how math works.

[00:24:51] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** Pete, it's simple. Gun goes bang, bad guy falls down. I get to have sex with Cher. What more do I need to learn?.

[00:24:59] **PETE BLAIR, DIRECTOR OF ALERRT:** If you're going to have a gun, we recommend as much training as you can get.

[00:25:02] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** Fine, I'll train some more. ALERRT uses this abandoned elementary school to teach law enforcement to respond to active shooter events. Their onsite trainers have over 40 years of combined experience in military and law enforcement. Training with these guys, I'd finally get enough training.

[00:25:19] **GUN SAFETY EDUCATOR:** There is never enough training. You can never get enough.

It's not so much a destination.

[00:25:23] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** After yet another four and a half more hours of training, it was time to show them how it's done.

The scenario is as follows: I hear shots fired at an elementary school. Police are on the way, but with innocent civilians inside, I have to draw my concealed handgun and respond.

There's the bad guy, mission accomplished. Okay, so that wasn't the bad guy. So where are the bad guys? There they are. There they are. I'm being shot. Oh, thank God, the authorities are here. I just hope they know I'm a good guy.

I had failed. You guys need help. I'm a good guy. I was shot over 20 times by two different bad guys with, and then the police mistook me for a bad guy and shot me a bunch too. Also I may have shot an unarmed teen twice in the chest. It was tough.

Being a good guy with a gun was starting to feel way more complicated than movies and video games and politicians make it seem.

[00:26:22] **PETE BLAIR, DIRECTOR OF ALERRT:** It's a complex situation and you don't want to just give people guns and say, you assume they know what they're going to do. It requires a lot of training.

[00:26:28] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** Who's got time for that much training?

[00:26:30] **PETE BLAIR, DIRECTOR OF ALERRT:** People who are going to dedicate their lives to protecting others.

[00:26:33] **JORDAN KLEPPER:** That's it, being a good guy with a gun just takes a lifetime commitment to training. All we have to do is figure out who the good guys are, get millions of them to volunteer for 300 hours of training a year, costing billions of dollars, then make sure they're in the right place at the right time, guns at the ready, and place this civilian army in our 4,700 colleges, 5,700 hospitals, 48,000 malls, hundreds of thousands of churches. You know, America just do that.

The Second Amendment Isn't About Killing Politicians or Overthrowing Democracy - The Thom Hartmann Program - Air Date 5-31-22

[00:27:00] **CALLER:** What you were saying earlier about the thought process of the people who wrote the Constitution and the second amendment, I would love for you to be -- I'll be one of those guys with the coffee mug and signs saying prove me wrong. You're going to have to explain it to me. I don't see how, given that these people just overthrew a government that was oppressive, they had to use their guns in order to do that, why they would not be thinking when they wrote in the second amendment that, Hey, we're going to need to use the same weapons that the government might have if we ever need to do this again. And there are of the understanding that a government can become so oppressive in order to do that.

[00:27:40] **THOM HARTMANN - HOST, THE THOM HARTMANN PROGRAM:** Sure. It's a good and serious question, Josh. The reason they weren't thinking like that and they weren't talking like that -- and I encourage you to go back and read Madison's notes on the constitutional convention. He took copious notes. And in particular, the notes on the Virginia ratifying convention, which was the convention where they were debating whether or not to adopt the Constitution. The Constitution was written in the summer of 1787; the Virginia ratifying convention was summer of 1788. And in the fall of 1789 is when the Constitution was adopted and we became a country. And then two years later, three years later, 1791 is when we got the Bill of Rights, which included the second amendment. But the second amendment was passed around -- the first 10 amendments, the Bill of Rights -- were passed around with the

Constitution in 1788. And it became a huge topic of discussion at the Virginia ratifying convention, because of the objections of Patrick Henry.

So number one: In answer to your question, just a straight up answer to your question, the reason why they didn't think that they would ever have to have guns to overthrow the government of the United States is because it was a completely different type of government. They were creating a democracy. They had overthrown a kingdom. Kingdoms are completely, consequentially, totally different kinds of governments. Democracies, these guys were true believers. They believed that a democracy would survive. They believed that a democracy would produce the very best outcome, and that a democracy would have to defend itself.

And in fact, there were a couple of rebellions, you know, Shays' Rebellion is probably the most famous, that where George Washington and his buddies put down the rebellions. So they definitely weren't thinking about gee, we want a little rebellion, Thomas Jefferson's comments when he was in Paris about the French Revolution that periodically the tree of Liberty needs to be watered with the blood of Patriots. He was speaking of the French Revolution in support of the French Revolution. Those comments notwithstanding, nobody among the founding generation was saying someday in the future, this government that we're creating, we, the people are going to have to destroy.

Just didn't happen. But it wasn't even part of the conversation.

[00:29:48] **CALLER:** You honestly believe that?

[00:29:49] **THOM HARTMANN - HOST, THE THOM HARTMANN PROGRAM:** No, this isn't a matter of belief. I wrote a book about this, Josh, and all the footnotes and all the references are in it. It's called *The Hidden History of Guns in the Second Amendment*. I spent a year researching it and I'm telling you, this isn't my belief. This is the actual history.

So number one, there were two issues at debate with regard to the second amendment. The first was that Jefferson and his contingent, what ultimately became the Democratic Republican party, today's Democratic party, back then, there were no political parties at the time that this was written. The Federalist was the first party to emerge, and that was at the tail end of the George Washington administration. So back then, the big fear when the Constitution was being written was not that our government would become oppressive. The big fear was, generally speaking, that the military within our government could overthrow the government. They had seen governments in Europe that had been

quasi or semi democratic, where the power of the king had been reduced, the power of the legislature had been increased. Holland was probably, or the Netherlands, one of the better examples of that, it wasn't one of the ones that suffered an internal military coup, but they had seen this over and over through a thousand years of history that when governments got overthrown, they were almost never overthrown by the people. They were almost always overthrown by the military. And so the argument that Jefferson put forward -- and he was so outspoken about this, at least a dozen letters he wrote about this, including to the convention and including to the, I mean, published in newspapers and everything -- was that we should not have a standing army during the time of peace because a standing army is the mother of all mischief. It was his phrase. That a standing army has the potential to rise up and overthrow the country, a military coup like what happened in Egypt just a couple of years ago. And so his solution to that, and there was this huge debate about how do we prevent a standing army for being a threat a nation. And his solution was don't have a standing army during times of peace. Only have every state have a militia, the equivalent of what we would today call the National Guard. And during a time of national emergency, the federal government, the president, can call up those state militias.

And that's in the Constitution. It's in Article One, Section Eight of the Constitution. And so Jefferson argued, we should have no standing army. We should have a standing Navy. And in fact, again, Article One, Section Eight of the Constitution specifically says we can have a navy. And this is the amazing thing, Josh, there's only one place in the entire Constitution where the ability of Congress to raise money and spend money is time limited. Only one place in the whole Constitution. And it's in Article One, Section Eight, and it says that no appropriation -- I'm doing this from memory, but this is pretty close -- no appropriation for funding the army shall last more than two years. It's right there in the Constitution. And it's still the law today.

Congress can appropriate all the money they want for the Pentagon, but it cannot extend for more than a two year period. So in other words, it forced Congress every two years to decide, do we want to have a military or do we want to have all these state militias that the president could call up?

And that was the conclusion that they came to. When Jefferson came into office, there were over 400,000 men in the US Army. Actually I think it was the number was like 370,000. It was in the neighborhood of 400,000 men in the US Army. When Jefferson became president in 1801, in March of 1801, he dialed that back to around 6,000 people because he wanted to get rid of the standing army.

So by the time he left office in 1809, in January or March of 1809, our army was gone. We had a very strong navy at that point, but we had basically no army. Which is why and how the British and the Canadians could just march in from Quebec and burn the White House down in the War of 1812.

And so that whole debate about whether we should have a standing army or not, which was a hot, hot, hot debate from the 1770s, right up until the end of the Jefferson presidency. That debate ended with the war of 1812. Because after the war of 1812, at 1815, when that war was resolved, everybody agreed. We need to have a standing army. And we have had a standing army ever since. So that was one of the reasons why, that was the main reason, that was 90% of why the second amendment was written the way it was, why it was put in the Constitution the way it was: to prevent a standing army and provide a backup, being the state militias.

The second reason the second amendment was altered in that Virginia ratifying convention. James Madison was there. He is the father of the Constitution. He was shopping around this stuff with the Bill of Rights, including the second amendment, and Patrick Henry, who was the largest slave holder in Virginia, gets up and gives this long speech in which he points out that there's over 300,000 Black people in Virginia and they're all enslaved. And if they ever rise up against the state, the White people in Virginia are screwed. And the thing that could end the ability of Virginia to keep those Black people in servitude would be if the federal government called up their militia just for the hell of it. If the president was an abolitionist and he said, I'm going to end slavery in Virginia, if they got an Abraham Lincoln in the White House, all he had to do is call up the Virginia militia because the Virginia militia was also the Virginia slave patrol. And so the original second amendment said for the security of a free nation and in deference to Patrick Henry, James Madison changed that language to, for the security of a free state. So that the individual states, there were four states at the time that had militias that were also simultaneously slave patrols: Georgia, South Carolina, Virginia, and I believe the other one was Alabama, could be wrong. It's in my book.

And that's the history of the second amendment. None of it had to do with thinking, gee, maybe someday in the future, we're going to need to kill politicians in America. Never even discussed.

Supreme Court Justice Warren Burger speaking to Charlayne Hunter-Gault - PBS NewsHour - Air Date 12-16-1991

[00:35:57] **PBSNEWSHOUR HOST:** Former Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court from 1969 to 1986. Charlayne Hunter-Gault spoke to him last week.

[00:36:06] **WARREN BERGER:** If I were writing the bill of rights now, there wouldn't be any such thing as the second amendment.

[00:36:11] **CHARLAYNE HUNTER-GAULT:** Which says?

[00:36:12] **WARREN BERGER:** That's a well-regulated militia being necessary for the defense of the state, the people's rights to bear arms.

This has been the subject of one of the greatest pieces of fraud -- I repeat the word fraud -- on the American public by special interest groups that I have ever seen in my lifetime.

Now just look at those words. There are only three lines to that amendment. "A well-regulated militia." If the militia, which was going to be the state army, was going to be well-regulated, why shouldn't 16 and 17 and 18 or any other age persons be regulated in the use of arms, the way an automobile is regulated?

How the Gun Industry Used Marketing to Change a Culture - Letters and Politics - Air Date 8-7-19

[00:36:52] **MITCH JESERICH - HOST, LETTERS AND POLITICS:** I think this brings us into the heart of what I think this conversation is about. Is this commercial, advertisement, public affairs campaign about guns. Again, we've talked up to the point where the gun industry is really in trouble at this point, where they're really not making a profit at this point.

The industry, and tell me how this works, the industry then comes up with a plan to try to create a market for their guns.

[00:37:21] **PAMELA HAAG:** Well, not exactly.

[00:37:22] **MITCH JESERICH - HOST, LETTERS AND POLITICS:** Isn't that right?

[00:37:23] **PAMELA HAAG:** Well, not entirely. They weren't colluding with each other, they were coming up with ideas spontaneously that led them down the same path. It was a path that was very familiar to most businesses in the turn of the century. The gun industry was certainly holding on, World War One was a terrible time for them, but we have to think about the major changes that are happening in the United States at the turn of the century, and also globally. A lot of the imperialism that had been armed by these US manufacturers had died down, a lot more countries were at peace, and we were moving into a post frontier society.

America is becoming much more urban. The economy was much more corporate. People were leading more sedentary lives. They weren't actually going out to shoot vermin or hunt for dinner. So in this context, how were guns to remain relevant? Tools go obsolete all the time. There are other countries that have had frontiers and once those frontiers closed, then it become gun culture.

So, think of that as the dilemma that the gun industry is facing, and the major players at this time in the gun industry, which certainly included Winchester and Colt and Remington, and Smith & Wesson, they're all confronting the same dilemma, and they're trying to figure out how do we transliterate guns into this new world, how are guns still relevant? And this is where we really get into their independent, yet very similar and like-minded efforts to market guns in a new way.

[00:38:55] **MITCH JESERICH - HOST, LETTERS AND POLITICS:** Talk to me how they did that marketing. What kind of commercials did we start to see?

[00:39:01] **PAMELA HAAG:** Well, if guns are being advertised in the 1800s in farming journals, they finally get to the 1900s, there's a real sea change going on. The gun's changing from something that was needed but not necessarily loved, to something that was loved, but not necessarily needed.

So the gun industry becomes very interested, in a very self-conscious way, in developing the emotional, and the intangible, and the symbolic values of the gun. This is evident and a whole bunch of different places. Some of the most interesting advertisement from Winchester, were these calendars, where they would no longer advertise the gun in terms of how it works, but they'd advertise in terms of how it made you feel.

So they would illustrate a predicament scene where a man is squaring off against a bear, an enemy, and have to run this battle, so very adrenaline fueled kind of advertisement. Winchester and other companies began to employ people who they called missionaries to drum up enthusiasm for guns in advance of their salesforce going out into the field and selling them. So this is just general excitement about the idea of the gun. And really desire for the gun in. A way that was much more emotional.

Their text really shifted as well. They drew on the language of psychology to talk about avoid subconscious interest in having a gun, their natural instinct to have a gun, and language like this. It was a very different landscape from the 1800s.

[00:40:37] **MITCH JESERICH - HOST, LETTERS AND POLITICS:** They were individualizing gun for the lone individual. Could go even say four for the loner, for a loner?

[00:40:49] **PAMELA HAAG:** Yeah. That's one of the paradoxes of the gun industry that really interests me, because this was a firearm that was being mass produced, yet its mystique became very much about individualism. Oliver Winchester had been gone that messaging even in the 1880s. He imagined a customer as the single individual out there needing protection, but the idea of the gun as your one last defense against chaos, against danger, even if it was no longer on the frontier. Colt started advertising guns to be sold for protection on the roads if you were in your automobile, or if you were alone in your home. The industry that's really began to feed, in a much more self-conscious way, on fear, on danger, and the idea that even if you're living in a city, in a town home in a city, you're still vulnerable in ways that the frontier life has been might've been vulnerable.

So that was part of the packaging. Part of the packaging was to develop almost like a modern gunslinger mystique.

[00:41:55] **MITCH JESERICH - HOST, LETTERS AND POLITICS:** We've done a number of shows in the past on the history of the National Rifle Association, how it has changed, and the history of the reading of the second amendment of the US constitution as well. When do we start to see this connection to the second amendment and about being American?

[00:42:12] **PAMELA HAAG:** The second amendment is really quite silent in any of the historical archives around the gun industry. That was certainly not a selling point, and it certainly wasn't the case that the second amendment

patented, invented, produced, distributed, or marketed guns. That's really the legacy of the gun industry. So today the second amendment conversation absolutely dominates this gun discussion, and I think it's working almost like a cloaking device to hide the gun industry from view.

Historically, the second amendment really wasn't the selling point. In my reading, you can begin to see the first glimmers of a political identity emerging around the second amendment, perhaps in the early 1930s, with one of the first attempts at federal firearms legislation.

Even at this point, the NRA wasn't a deeply combative organization. They certainly weren't paying for lobbyists per se, but you can read and some of the industry action and in the testimony around that legislation this sense of the second amendment as a player, as an issue that needed to be brought to the foreground. Before that point, it doesn't really factor heavily, certainly in the gun industry, and not even that heavily in the political culture.

[00:43:35] **MITCH JESERICH - HOST, LETTERS AND POLITICS:**

Obviously, this is a story that as much about guns, as much about business, and capitalism. When did the gun industry, when did this advertisement campaign start to pay off and start to see profits for the industry?

[00:43:51] **PAMELA HAAG:** Different companies certainly had profitability in the 1800s as well, and that's important to note, it's just that their profitability and their viability really came, not from the domestic American market, it came from military contracts and from their business abroad and internationally.

Around the turn of the century, the industry really begins to cultivate that domestic market, such that if we take the Model 1873, which is probably the most famous Winchester rifle, those sales were actually the highest in the 1800s, but in 1906 and 1912, ironically when we're in this post frontier, urban world, their sales were doing quite well. And other historians have noted that certainly the marketing effort and the expansion of sale, and this whole change in the gun industry philosophy, that you don't just meet demand, you don't just fulfill demand, but you create demand had something to do with this continued relevance and this continued profitability.

The gun industry was really like other industries, all industries were doing this. The idea of sales was really changing in the early 1900s, and the gun industry was right there with the others, getting on board with this idea of how do you make people want your product?

[00:45:10] **MITCH JESERICH - HOST, LETTERS AND POLITICS:** It made me think of fast food industry and these types of things.

[00:45:13] **PAMELA HAAG:** Oh absolutely. Interestingly, in one of the sales bulletins in the Winchester archives, the executives talk openly about, "what can we learn from the liquor people? Because they've really done a good job of educating young men the use of their product, and maybe we need to start doing this." They sought out women customers, they sought out ways to market guns more as a luxury. In one bulletin, they compare the gun to a Packard automobile or a diamond. So the gun isn't just a tool anymore, now it's acquiring this luxury status. So we can see how they're tweaking the guns image and its mystique to keep it relevant.

Mass Shootings: American Exceptionalism of the Worst Kind - Breaking the Sound Barrier by Amy Goodman - Air Date 5-26-22

[00:45:55] **AMY GOODMAN - HOST, BREAKING THE SOUND BARRIER:** "Together, we rise" reads the motto on a wall of the Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas. The school serves about 600 students in the second through fourth grades. Over 90% are Latinx. Nineteen Children between the ages of nine and eleven and two of their teachers were murdered there Tuesday by an 18-year-old gunman, armed with a semiautomatic AR-15 rifle. The shooter, Salvador Ramos, was killed at the school by a U.S. Border Patrol agent. At a news conference on Wednesday, Texas, Governor Greg Abbott, a Republican who consistently rejects gun control, blame the shortage of mental health services for the atrocity. Manny Oliver, whose son Joaquin was killed in the Parkland, Florida school massacre in 2018, said on the Democracy Now! news hour:

[00:46:47] **MANNY OLIVER:** This is not about mental health—that happens all around the planet. This is about guns and easy access to guns.

[00:46:55] **AMY GOODMAN - HOST, BREAKING THE SOUND BARRIER:** In the middle of Governor Abbott's briefing Beto O'Rourke, who's running against Abbott and the upcoming gubernatorial election, interrupted.

[00:47:03] **BETO O'ROURKE:** The time to stop the next shooting is right now and you are doing nothing... You said this is not predictable. This is totally predictable

[00:47:14] **AMY GOODMAN - HOST, BREAKING THE SOUND**

BARRIER: Others on the stage cursed it O'Rourke demanding he leave. As police closed, O'Rourke exited. His accusations were echoed in a Tweet by Amanda Gorman, the youngest presidential inaugural poet in U.S. history, who wrote, "It takes a monster to kill children. But to watch monsters kill children again and again and do nothing isn't just insanity—it's inhumanity." Many U.S. politicians parrot the line that this is the greatest nation on earth. American Exceptionalism is ingrained in our culture. We have the most number of weapons, with an estimated 400 million guns in circulation. That's more guns than people in the United States and almost half the civilian-owned guns on the planet. We're without question number one when it comes to mass shootings. The Gun Violence Archive has counted 213 so far this year alone, and more than 3,000 since 2014. A shocking number of U.S. mass shootings take place in schools. According to the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, there have been 2,054 school shootings in the United States since 1970, with 681 deaths. Canada has had a total of eight school shootings in about the same timeframe, from 1975, with a total of 31 victims killed. Mexico has had 17 school shootings since 2004 with 15 victims killed. In Australia in 1996, a young man with an AR-15 semiautomatic rifle massacred 35 people in the tourist town of Port Arthur, Tasmania. Australia is a country of gun lovers, but reaction to the shooting was swift, with a popular, national mandatory gun buyback for semi-automatic guns. Some 643,000 guns were collected and destroyed. Since then, Australia's experienced just one mass shooting of the type that occurs almost daily in the United States. Similar policies were established in other wealthy industrialized nations in the wake of mass shootings, in Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Norway. When access to guns is restricted and gun ownership is more difficult, gun violence dramatically drops. There's consensus on tightening gun laws here in the United States. Preventing those suffering from mental illness from owning or accessing guns has between 85 and 90% bipartisan support. According to the Pew Research Center, banning clips that hold more than ten bullets has 64% bipartisan support. A federal database tracking every gun sale enjoys 66% support. Why don't elected officials heed the electorate? One clear reason is the decades of lobbying by the National Rifle Association.

[00:50:22] **ROBIN LLOYD:** The American gun lobby, which is supported by American gun manufacturers, is alive and well.

[00:50:29] **AMY GOODMAN - HOST, BREAKING THE SOUND**

BARRIER: That's Robin Lloyd, managing director of Giffords, the organization dedicated to preventing gun violence, led by former Congress member, Gabby Giffords, who was shot in the head in a mass shooting in Tucson.

[00:50:41] **ROBIN LLOYD:** The National Rifle Association has been weakened due to self-inflicted wounds of greed and mismanagement of funds. But other organizations like the National Shooting Sports Foundation, which is the lobbying arm for the gun industry and gun retailers, is alive and well. And actually the National Shooting Sports Foundation spends more on lobbying against gun violence prevention measures here in Washington and the NRA does. So they're the true face of the American corporate gun lobby.

[00:51:16] **AMY GOODMAN - HOST, BREAKING THE SOUND**

BARRIER: Nicole Golden, executive director of Texas Gun Sense, organizes for common sense gun control in the Lone Star state.

[00:51:25] **NICOLE GOLDEN:** I've been involved in gun violence prevention in Texas for almost a decade. I have sat through brutal hearings at the State legislature. I have heard unbelievable arguments to our very sensible ask for common sense gun laws, laws that most Texans support, laws that law enforcement supports, laws that are working to prevent gun violence in other states. But we have a political climate here that makes it such that it's been, you know, our work has basically been shut down.

[00:52:01] **AMY GOODMAN - HOST, BREAKING THE SOUND**

BARRIER: Despite the power of the gun lobby, Nicole Golden is not without hope. She was speaking on the Democracy Now! news hour.

[00:52:09] **NICOLE GOLDEN:** We're here for the long haul. We're not going anywhere. And I'm certain that at some point, when the political will is there, we will have built the infrastructure to see real change here. Until then, we'll keep chipping away, working in our communities to pass meaningful change and continuing with building this extremely strong movement.

[00:52:31] **AMY GOODMAN - HOST, BREAKING THE SOUND**

BARRIER: As the children of Robb Elementary School proclaim, together we rise.

Rightwing Media's Increasingly Goofy, Hyper-Militarized Non-Solutions to Mass Shootings - Citations Needed - Air Date 5-27-22

[00:52:37] **ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** One thing you do see is every single time there's a mass shooting, Republican senators and Republican pundits and Fox News and partisan messaging apparatuses of those institutions, they clearly have a whiteboarding session where they come up with new reasons why gun control isn't the solution. And we wanted to sort of start off by, and much of what we're going to be citing today is this from the people at Media Matters, again, who document Fox News, and so we're grateful for that.

[00:53:04] **NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Yeah, absolutely. So that we don't have to actually watch —

[00:53:07] **ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** We're gonna start off playing a video by Katherine Abughazaleh at Media Matters who did a montage, if you will, a supercut of pundits on Fox News giving solutions to mass shootings, none of which involve any kind of gun control at all.

[Begin Clip Montage]

[00:53:21] **MAN 1:** I advocate always for an armed security guard

[00:53:24] **MAN 2:** Armed School Safety Officer

[00:53:26] **MAN 3:** Armed deputy

[00:53:28] **MAN 4:** Arming teachers

[00:53:29] **MAN 5:** Potentially arm and prepare and train teachers and other administrators

[00:53:33] **MAN 6:** Armed school staffers

[00:53:34] **MAN 7:** Bring in policeman

[00:53:35] **MAN 8:** Training the students themselves

[00:53:38] **MAN 9:** Retired military, retired law enforcement, we can offer them tax breaks.

[00:53:42] **MAN 10 :** If you give law enforcement the opportunity to impose martial law we can guarantee safety and security.

[00:53:48] **MAN 11:** Securing that perimeter, kind of provide a kind of a ring of steel

[00:53:51] **MAN 12:** If you have the fences, you have the main administration building and then you have wide gaps on either side. The fencing is not very high.

[00:53:58] **WOMAN 1:** Were the doors locked?

[00:53:59] **WOMAN 2:** Bulletproof glass

[00:54:00] **WOMAN 3:** All of these shootings have happened at the same time that we see religion and Christian values and Judeo-Christian values declining.

[00:54:08] **MAN 13:** Anybody who decides that they want to do something like this should immediately know that attacking a school is a death sentence for them.

[00:54:15] **MAN 14:** Kids are afraid of being the school snitch.

[00:54:17] **WOMAN 4:** We have to stop letting these schools be gun-free zones.

[00:54:22] **MAN 15:** People need to put their phones down and get to know the person next to them.

[00:54:25] **WOMAN 5:** We have spent billions of dollars on COVID related measures for our schools. Let's take some of that money and divert it over to hardening these soft targets.

[00:54:35] **MAN 16:** A lot of these private schools, they take security way more serious.

[00:54:38] **WOMAN 6:** Parents take your children to church.

[00:54:41] **WOMAN 7:** This anti-police narrative is forcing people not to call police.

[00:54:45] **MAN 17:** A series of interlocking doors at the school entrance that are triggered by a tripwire and it traps the shooter like a rat.

[00:54:53] **WOMAN 8:** God is the answer to that.

[00:54:55] **WOMAN 9:** There's a moral rot going on that we all need to dig in and try to address.

[00:55:00] **MAN 18:** I vote for decreasing social media exposure.

[00:55:02] **MAN 19:** We need to start focusing on mental health.

[00:55:04] **MAN 20:** Tell us why you think it's important to pray in a moment like this.

[00:55:07] **WOMAN 10:** It calls for faith and prayer.

[00:55:11] **WOMAN 11:** Why is it that schools aren't protected in the same way that airports?

[00:55:14] **WOMAN 12:** There are some people who don't want police officers in schools with guns because other people are triggered.

[00:55:21] **MAN 21:** Assault rifle and enhanced body armor

[00:55:23] **MAN 22:** Notification system to let everybody in the school know what's happening.

[00:55:27] **MAN 23:** Single point of entry.

[00:55:29] **MAN 24:** I don't like talking about this stuff as it happens because I don't think it contributes anything positive.

[00:55:34] **MAN 25:** Parents should be held accountable for raising their children properly.

[00:55:37] **WOMAN 13:** Ballistic blankets,

[00:55:38] **MAN 26:** We just don't have the resources to get law enforcement there quickly.

[00:55:42] **MAN 27:** How about an executive order for these mental health facilities

[00:55:46] **WOMAN 14:** We have to start rebuilding this country and returning to God.

[00:55:49] **MAN 28:** I arm myself everywhere I legally can.

[00:55:52] **MAN 29:** It's up to you to protect yourself.

[End Clip Montage]

[00:55:54] **ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** They get increasingly goofy. Senator Ted Cruz proposed, Nima, that we need to limit the amount of exits and entrances in schools to one.

[00:56:02] **NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** There are too many doors in schools. So that seems to be something that we really need to figure out in this country, Adam, the guns obviously are not the problem. The doors, doors, too many fucking doors. As they say on Reading Rainbow, 'don't take our word for it,' you have to hear the too-many-doors argument from Ted Cruz himself. Senator Ted Cruz of the State of Texas said this on Fox News on May 25.

[Begin Clip]

[00:56:30] **SENATOR TED CRUZ:** One of the things that everyone agreed is don't have all of these unlocked back doors. Have one door into and out of the school and have that one door armed police officers at that door. If that had happened, if those federal grants had gone to this school, when that psychopath arrived, the armed police officers could have taken him out and we'd have 19 children and two teachers still alive.

[End Clip]

[00:56:55] **NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Of course, you know, more locked doors, fewer doors, that is but one of the options of course in that supercut that Media Matters put together. We are losing our Judeo-Christian values, Adam, we need more God in school. That's the problem.

[00:57:11] **ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** That's a classic mainstay, that's not new. One of the newer ones, which I find to be probably the most cynical because it really, we're going to be talking about this on next week's episode to some extent, but the idea that lockdowns, COVID lockdowns because supposedly one reporter said that this particular mass shooter who we will not name, stopped going to school after COVID, and so we're going to listen to the absolute most, content warning here you have to listen to Tucker Carlson speak.

[00:57:36] **NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Yeah, sorry about that.

[00:57:37] **ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** I'm not being ironic. I know that it's actually somewhat disturbing to certain people because of the fucking way he talks. So we're going to listen to Tucker. Now of course, this was the line all day on right-wing media, Zaid Jilani, others have pointed to the COVID lockdowns are what caused the shooting.

[Begin Clip]

[00:57:49] **TUCKER CARLSON:** Oh, so the lockdowns dramatically increased the incidence of mental illness among young people and in 10 days we've seen two mass shootings by mentally ill young people, could there be a connection? Now that's not finger pointing, it's not to blame Fauci for yesterday's shooting, we're not that low. We're not Joe Biden. But if people are becoming mentally ill because they're disconnected from others, what can we do to connect them to others and thereby reduce the incidence of mental illness? That's a real conversation. Is there a more important one?

[End Clip]

[00:58:19] **ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Clearly here what you, what we're seeing is that they need to come up with new excuses, because the old ones don't really seem to, the thoughts and prayers is not working anymore.

[00:58:26] **NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** New excuses to pretend that they care, right?

[00:58:29] **ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Right.

[00:58:30] **NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** They don't give a shit that this happens all the time, on an average of more than one mass shooting a day. And then when there are things that happen like in Buffalo, that then becomes a different kind of media cycle, as well it should when these horrific things happen, that are even less ordinary than the ordinary mass shootings that just fucking happen every day. But Republicans obviously have no interest in changing any gun laws and curbing anything about gun manufacturers, doing anything about this. And so they resort to let's come up with some things that we can say to hand wring, and obviously blame liberals, blame Democrats, blame progressives and certainly the far left for all of this that of course has nothing to do with the right-wing refusal to do anything about this. It is all about — what? — making sure people are safe during a pandemic or maybe, I'm sure, mask mandates probably drove mass shooters to this point, right?

[00:59:30] **ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Well, their only solution is to come up with an increasingly militarized school system which we already have, and of course, we know that the police officers who were present, based on reporting right now, I hesitate to be too harsh —

[00:59:43] **NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Right. That there were law enforcement officers on site.

[00:59:46] **ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Based on current reporting, again, we could learn more later so I don't want to be too smug about it. But from what it appears that the law enforcement who were there were fucking useless.

[00:59:55] **NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** But that's why, you know, Rambo teachers just need to have AK-47s in the classroom.

[00:59:59] **ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** But as we know, with all kinds of carceral ideology, it can never be disproven. So if there's five cops there, and they all run away, we actually need 20 cops, and we need to turn teachers into cops, and then the cops themselves need to be super cops, and then the cops need to mate and have sub cops and then they need

other cops, and then basically, we should just have a school that's like 500 cops and 10 students —

[01:00:20] **NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Who turn into Robocops.

[01:00:21] **ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** This is the solution, just have 15 ED-209s roaming the hallways. I mean, this is, I mean, I'm being sarcastic, obviously, but every single time there's a mass shooting, the solution Republicans come up with is to just throw more fucking police, law enforcement and armed teachers at the problem because they obviously can't touch the third rail of sensible gun laws.

[01:00:41] **NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** And also turn personal safety, the ability for, say, children to stay alive at fucking school into a personal responsibility.

[01:00:52] **ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Of the teachers and the children. Right.

[01:00:54] **NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Right. So they need ballistic blankets, they need to know how to hide better, they need more places to hide.

[01:01:01] **ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Again, a clip pulled by the Franciscan monks at Media Matters, this is from Nicki McCann Ramirez who pulled this clip from Fox News guest Maureen O'Connell, who is said to be a former FBI agent.

[01:01:13] **NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Hmm. Yes.

[Begin Clip]

[01:01:15] **MAUREEN O'CONNELL:** I mean, this is just beyond shocking. I would like to see this national push toward, instead of parents buying their kids all these tools and toys and games, invest in the classroom to make it safer. There are companies out there that will do that, they'll come out and they'll do threat assessment of the whole school, they'll say this is an area of vulnerability that you might want to address and this is how we would address it. And they have, I mean, they have blankets that you can put up on the wall that are colorful and beautiful, but they're ballistic blankets. I mean, there are ways to obscure the classroom windows so that the shooter can't have target acquisition.

I mean, there's just a million tools out there, and we've been banging this drum for years. Let's start investing in our kids and in the safety of our children.

[End Clip]

[01:02:07] **NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Okay, so that's just fucking ridiculous, right? That she's hand wringing and saying, 'Oh, my God, let's care about the children finally, let's put up Kevlar tapestries in schools,' that that's the way to care about kids that, you know, there are so many things they can do, Adam, right?

[01:02:25] **ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Yeah.

[01:02:26] **NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** There's so many solutions, except the obvious ones.

[01:02:30] **ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Yeah. And then there's the sort of other argument that you see from, I don't want to get Democrats totally off the hook here, but for the purposes of this episode we're going to focus on, well, there was the Matt Yglesias take that was, would have been infamous which is, quote, "For all the very real problems, one shouldn't lose sight of the fact that the contemporary United States of America is one of the safest places to live in all of human history and there's a reason tons of people of all kinds, from all over the world, clamor to move here." Setting aside the narcissism and chauvinism of that statement —

[01:02:56] **NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Oh great, the Nick Kristof argument.

[01:02:58] **ADAM JOHNSON - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Yeah, what the people will say very often is that school shootings are actually very rare, that you shouldn't legislate around what is basically a one in a million chance of your kid dying, you shouldn't sort of live in fear of the one in a million chance of dying. And while that's true, the US still has way more gun deaths in general and also way more mass shootings than even countries with comparable amount of guns, forget the comparable population, just actual amount of guns, because there's basically no regulation and the last two major mass shootings would have been stopped, had there have been some form of background check. You know, they say, 'Well, bad guys are going to get guns no matter what.' Some will, but some won't, and the point is mitigation and lowering the possibility.

[01:03:35] **NIMA SHIRAZI - HOST, CITATIONS NEEDED:** Seatbelts don't save everyone in every single fucking car crash. But seatbelts are important, right? It's about mitigation.

A History of the 2nd Amendment, Gun Control, & the Rise of the NRA - Letters and Politics - Air Date 5-25-22

[01:03:41] **MITCH JESERICH - HOST, LETTERS AND POLITICS:** I began by talking about the 1968 Gun Control Act. I do find that history fascinating. Can you talk to me about what led up to the enactment of the Gun Control Act? In my introduction, again, I said this was in part, maybe entirely, because of the assassinations of JFK, his brother Robert Kennedy, and then Martin Luther King Jr.

[01:04:01] **ROBERT J. SPITZER:** Oh, yeah, that is right. The impetus for the 1968 Gun Control Act really began in the aftermath of President Kennedy's assassination in November 1963. Congressional committees conducted hearings on, a new gun control law. The most significant previous gun control law enacted had been passed way back in 1934, and a smaller bore law in 1938, but there'd really been nothing at the federal level to speak of from the 1930s up until the 1960s.

But Congress didn't move ahead on that legislation in the early 60s and then, indeed, you have the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King early in 1968. Senator Ted Kennedy takes a leading role after the assassination of his brother. The other thing that's going on at this time, though, is violence and inner city rioting and urban disorder. And you also begin to see crime rates rising. So there's a generalized anxiety about guns in America being used to commit crimes. In addition to assassinations, and that finally culminates in the passage of the 1968 law, towards the end of Lyndon Johnson's presidency.

[01:05:11] **MITCH JESERICH - HOST, LETTERS AND POLITICS:** You also have advocacy with guns, in the sense of, I think of the Black Panthers, who were carrying guns.

[01:05:16] **ROBERT J. SPITZER:** Indeed they did, and it was a very interesting political strategy on their part because they were very careful to do it following existing law, mostly in California, because that's where the Black Panthers were strongest. So for example, you could carry a firearm, but I think

the action had to be open or something, in other words there were technical things you had to do, and they were quite careful about that. But of course it alarmed the power structure in California and the government aggressively went after the Black Panthers, partly because they did carry weapons, and then you had some shootouts where a number of Black Panther officials were killed. Some some others were killed as well, and it didn't end very well, but that was certainly one dynamic that caused people to be alarmed about guns.

[01:06:04] **MITCH JESERICH - HOST, LETTERS AND POLITICS:** Did that play a role in the passage of the 1968 Gun Control Act?

[01:06:09] **ROBERT J. SPITZER:** Not so much, I don't believe, partly because the Black Panthers were around by then, but the crescendo of left wing violence came subsequent to the 1968 law. Although it may have been one political thread of the larger process.

[01:06:25] **MITCH JESERICH - HOST, LETTERS AND POLITICS:** Because we have a long history of gun control that we're going to dive into, but some of our original gun control laws were aimed at keeping guns out of the hands of Black people in this country and Native Americans.

[01:06:36] **ROBERT J. SPITZER:** Well, that is true, and in fact, the very first gun law passed in America was enacted in 1619. It was a year before the Plymouth settlers arrived in Massachusetts. It was passed by the Jamestown colony, and in the summer of 1619, the first Indigenous governing body formed. And the Americas was what came to be known as the House of Burgesses. They met in the summer of 1619 and formulated about 35 laws to govern the colony.

One of those laws was a law that said that anybody selling or giving guns to Indians, to Native Americans, would be violating the law and would be subject to a death penalty if they did so. We saw proliferation of gun laws early in America's history by the colonies in the 1600s, into the 1700s, and even greater into the 1800s. And those laws included laws making it a crime to sell or give guns to Indians as well as to slaves.

It was possible to have guns if you were freed African-American, but there were restrictions, but there were all kinds of other restrictions as well, saying that to restrict or bar guns to indigents, to people we would considered poor people today, to indentured servants, to people who refused to swear loyalty oaths to the colonial governments coming up to the revolution. There were all kinds of hunting related restrictions. There were restrictions regarding the storage of weapons. There were restrictions and regulations regarding guns in terms of

militia service. There were all kinds of regulations, certainly regulations related to criminality.

Give you one example, there was a law in the 1600s passed in North Carolina that made it a crime to discharge a firearm if you were drunk, but they gave two exceptions in the law. One was weddings and the other was funerals. So if you were drunk at a wedding or a funeral and you were discharging a firearm that was okay, but in any other circumstance, if you were drunk and you discharged a firearm, that was a punishable offense.

And there were a lots, thousands, literally thousands of gun regulations of every variety early in our history.

[01:08:52] **MITCH JESERICH - HOST, LETTERS AND POLITICS:** So gun control laws were very common throughout all the states, including the states that would appear today to be very much against gun control laws.

[01:09:02] **ROBERT J. SPITZER:** Yeah, that's right, and I would pick one example in particular, because it is so different from the current era, which is the spread of concealed carry laws. Laws that barred or severely restricted the right of Americans to carry concealed weapons, including handguns and other concealable firearms, as well as other types of weapons.

Those laws spread first in the colonies, and then throughout the states. When crime began to be a real issue in America in the early 1800s, you saw the proliferation of the enactment of concealed carry restrictive laws by every state eventually, including territories, but eventually every state except for three states by the end of the 19th century.

And that was among the first reactions of state legislatures in the country to spreading violence and gun violence. Ironically, in the last 30 years, we've seen a reversal of that trend, where liberalized concealed carry laws exist in about 40 of America's 50 states. So in the 19th century, in the so-called wild west and every place else, there were sharp restrictions on concealed carry of firearms, but in the last 30 years, we've seen that trend reverse with liberalized laws, allowing it in most places.

[01:10:20] **MITCH JESERICH - HOST, LETTERS AND POLITICS:** Robert Spitzer, this debate about the second amendment and gun control is really a modern debate. It begins with this 1968 Gun Control Act.

[01:10:31] **ROBERT J. SPITZER:** You're right. What happens is this, the second amendment begins to be brought into the political gun debate in a very express way, beginning of the 1960s, but it really then takes off in the 1970s, and then into the 80s up to the present. And we see this specifically in connection with the National Rifle Association, which of course is the nation's largest and oldest a gun rights organization as we call it, but contrary to what most people think the NRA, which was formed way back in 1871, was not formed to defend second amendment rights, it was formed to improve the shooting and marksmanship skills of Americans and especially young males. The NRA was formed by two civil war veterans who firsthand witnessed a lousy shooting skills of the typical American man drafted into the military during the civil war. Most men didn't know one end of a gun from the other, and had poor or no shooting skills.

[01:11:30] **MITCH JESERICH - HOST, LETTERS AND POLITICS:** Its original motto is, "Firearms Safety Education, Marksmanship Training, Shooting for Recreation."

[01:11:37] **ROBERT J. SPITZER:** Exactly correct. Exactly right. And shooting was seen as one skill that was important for young men to have, it was viewed as a character building activity, and it did not have at all the political connotations that we assign to it today. Jump to the early 1930s, Congress passes the first modern gun law called the National Firearms Act in 1934. Congress holds hearings on that legislation, as Congress does, and in almost 200 pages of testimony, most of which was given by officials of the National Rifle Association, there was no discussion of the second amendment, none, in those nearly 200 pages of history.

[01:12:17] **MITCH JESERICH - HOST, LETTERS AND POLITICS:** Didn't the NRA help craft legislation in the 30s?

[01:12:20] **ROBERT J. SPITZER:** Yes they did. They played an important role in crafting the 1934 law. There were some provisions they were against, but there were other things they were for. The NRA helped to help to write, for example, the very strict gun law that was enacted in the District of Columbia in 1976, the very law that gun rights organizations later challenged in courts in the early 2000s, and that led, eventually, to the 2008 court decision of the Heller case, which established a personal right to have guns under the second amendment for the first time in history. So, the NRA did help write gun laws throughout our history.

Oh, it was in the 1970s when control of the NRA went over to a much more radical and political faction within the organization, then it became much more political, then it became to talk a lot more about second amendment rights. The NRA funded research by some lawyers, writing in law journals to argue that look, the second amendment is not really about militias, instead it's about personal, individual rights to have a gun, and eventually the Supreme Court, a five member of majority, embraces that point of view in the Heller decision, reversing to over 200 years of history in terms of how the second amendment has formerly been interpreted. Meaning, interpreted as referring to citizen service in a government organized and regulated militia.

Final comments on the bonus episode in which we explain the cultural foundations of capitalism, guns and beyond

[01:13:46] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** We've just heard clips today, starting with *CounterSpin* explaining the simple things we need to do to reduce gun violence, and why the second amendment isn't an impediment. Chris Hayes on *All In* laid out the childish NRA arguments and how easily they're proven wrong by reality. *The Daily Show* looked at the FBI stats on the effectiveness of good guys with guns. Thom Hartmann explained why the origins of the second amendment have nothing to do with defending against a tyrannical government. The *PBS NewsHour* spoke with Supreme Court Justice Warren Burger in 1991 about the second amendment. *Letters and Politics* looked at the marketing campaign by gun makers that intentionally invented gun culture, trademark, out of whole cloth. And Amy Goodman on *Breaking the Sound Barrier*, laid out the evidence of the effectiveness of gun control measures.

That's what everyone heard, but members also heard bonus clips from *Citations Needed* going over the ever evolving pro-gun talking points. And *Letters and Politics* went through the history of gun control laws and the origins of the NRA.

And now, just a quick plug for our upcoming bonus episode. We did a deep dive into the meaning of culture, with a focus on capitalism culture, but many of the lessons learned apply to gun culture as well. I think I may have actually broken into some real bit of insight as to the fundamental blockage for the diehard gun lovers when it comes to not being able to see any form of gun safety measures as legitimate or even worth discussing. And it's not because they are simply blinded by their love of guns, or that they're sociopaths, it's

more complicated than that. It takes a bit of explaining, so you'll want to go check out that full numbers episode to hear it.

Look, if you think it's a bit crass to have a membership tease here at the end of an episode on gun death, I actually completely agree with that. That concept is also explained in the capitalism culture portion of the bonus show. But as much as I may understand it, we are stuck in the same system you are, and it is membership dollars that help make this show possible, because, as much as I wish I did, I don't live in a moneyless mutual aid community—also explained in the bonus show.

The one saving grace though, is that we do offer financial hardship memberships for those who can't afford the cost. We need members, and so we perpetuate the myth of scarcity, just like everyone else—also explained to the bonus show—but we don't actually prevent you from accessing additional information just for lack of funds. So if you can afford it, sign up at bestoftheleft.com/support, and if you can't just drop me a line to jay@bestoftheleft.com and we will get you set up, no questions asked.

As always keep the comments coming in at (202) 999-3991, or by emailing me to the aforementioned jay@bestoftheleft.com. That is going to be at for today. Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show, particularly Deon this week, who did all the heavy lifting on this week's two horrifying episodes. So we really appreciate his work, his self sacrifice for having gotten through that. Thanks also to the Monosyllabic Transcriptionist Trio Ben, Ken, and, possibly for the last time, Scott, as we say goodbye to Scott. We thank him for all of the work that he has been doing to help put our transcripts together. Thanks to Amanda Hoffman for all of her work on our social media outlets, activism segments, graphic designing, web mastering, and bonus show co-hosting. And thanks to those who support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships at bestoftheleft.com/support, through our Patreon page, or from right inside the Apple Podcasts app.

Membership is how you get instant access to our incredibly good bonus episodes, in addition to there being extra content and no ads in all of our regular episodes. And don't forget that you can keep the conversation going by joining our Best of the Left Discord community, where we discuss the show, the news, other podcasts, interesting articles, videos, books, everything you can think of. So join up with us there. Links in the show notes for details on how to do that.

And of course remember that I am perpetually asking for your suggestions, things that you think I should be aware of, that we should check out, that we should read, listen to, consider. It just so happens one came in five minutes ago, and it was a recommendation on an episode talking about fighting gun culture and fascism, and that will of course be shared in the Discord community for further discussion there. So keep those suggestions coming in and hope to chat with you on Discord.

And with that, I've been coming to you from far outside the conventional wisdom of Washington, DC. My name is Jay, and this has been the *Best of the Left Podcast* coming to twice weekly thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show from bestoftheleft.com.