

Many thanks to Michael Redmond who has framed this difficult and complex issue exceedingly well.

I am most grateful to have encountered Robert Barr's Heritage Foundation article from early 2021. It represents one of the strongest cases for the "natural law" basis for the right to hold firearms for self-defense of life, clan and community.

Katherine Schaefer's article from the Pew Research Center (9/2021) – and any subsequent updates should be in the hands of those wishing to have any sincere exploration of the breadth and depth of the cultural and ideological divide that must be acknowledged along with the narratives and histories upon which they are built. It also helps to have the high-level view of the 2nd Amendment from Cornell and the Legal Summaries of the Heller (2008) and Bruen (2022) Supreme Court decisions from Oyez in their original form including concurrences and dissent.

It is a sad reflection of this dilemma that the cycle of good articles on Constitutional Issues, Social Impact and Next Steps seem to repeat itself with what I would call alarming frequency – one finds similar stories after many such tragic events. Even so, these particular selections cover the ground very well and should serve as starting points for one of many *bona fide* attempts at public discourse and perhaps some agreement on at least a FEW common values.

For me, I found Barr's piece to have the most profound initial effect

- 1) It brought a new perspective on the concept of those "natural laws" that form the bedrock of the some of the core principles upon which the United States of America was founded – the right of a citizen to defend him/herself – without having to seek permission from government. I was further intrigued by his assertion that "the onus is on government to PROVE that any curtailment of a right is for the overall public good without undue impact on individual citizens to preserve life, liberty and property as they see fit". Here appear to be the links to the core ideological justifications that we find in both the Heller and Bruen Supreme Court Decisions.
- 2) I was surprised and bothered by some of the language used and the resort to stereotypical biases in what had been a well crafted argument. Here are two sets of "broad-based assumptions" that might not stand up to actual conversation with PEOPLE who are either "Left" or "Liberal"
 - a. The reference to the "Left's twisted logic" resting on "wrong principles" – **Is it really wrong that the public is endangered by the presence of guns outside private residence? Is really wrong that the duty of protecting people in public falls to police, not private citizens?**
 - b. How can the "Liberals concocting ways " in essence – 'to remove firearms from the hands of individuals' – which he calls their "ultimate goal" --

My quest to find some examples of conversations that "might" be possible brought me to a June Podcast from Braver Angels between a gun violence prevention activist and an avid gun ownership rights defender. It's worth a listen not so much for the specific words spoken, but the emotions underlying each individual's views. And the questions are good as well. Here's the link <https://youtu.be/EqeKtTeXQTg> - For anyone who listens to any part of it, I'd be curious if you thought this was a "Depolarizing Conversation"

From this podcast I pursued some of Mark Beckwith's blog posts related to his work with firearms management and violence prevention. <https://www.markbeckwith.net/blog/> Two blogs struck me. A November 28 post provides some reflection on his recent experiences as someone participating in "Bridging the Divide" type conversations and what I found to be an excellent description of the "gun culture", grounded in the history of Europeans on the North American continent and painting a picture of the emotional connection to identity that appears to have been so expertly exploited. (I don't think I can let the financial interests of the arms manufacture and distribution industry get away from mention). As one who regularly referred to the Diffusion of Innovation (explained w/graphic in this blog) in my work with technology entrepreneurs, I would hope that there might be some room for Innovation in addressing the FEW (VERY FEW) areas where a "common ground" might be found. More recently, in the wake of the mass shootings and other deaths by gun reported in January 2023, his January 28 post captures our current dilemma quite well. Much to the chagrin of the "doers" among us, perhaps seeing the current times as a Zen Koan might be helpful. (Perhaps I'll take the article on removing the Second Amendment to my meditation mat)

We are left with the conditions that we have discussed previously – the quest for power for its own sake, the challenges to diverse democracies, even Jonathan Haidt's powerful metaphor of the Elephant and the Rider.

There are some very specific political obstacles to having laws that might at least reduce the propensity of firearms being so plentiful and lethal. There are groups that call them out. Here are two that have emerged in the past two days (end of January 2023)

- 1) Danielle Allen challenges us to be part of a great "Pulling Together" <https://wapo.st/40pPLZ5>
- 2) Ideological Foes Unite on Constitutional Amendments <https://wapo.st/3l43qoK>

I look forward to robust, civil discussion!!

Respectfully submitted,

Pat Newcomb

I have chosen to respond specifically to the following:

- How should the right to own and carry guns be restricted or regulated?

Here's where I'm coming from: I would have been a good Quaker and most likely would have found myself on a boat leaving 17th century England and arriving on the shores of the Delaware River as a pacifist. I did not grow up in a "gun culture", but I respect its place not only in the separation of the North American colonies from Great Britain, but in the lives of those who own firearms, respect the damage they can cause, and take responsibility for their care and management (though I must say that I do not understand how an AR-15 can be characterized as a "sports gun").

As I wrestled with this topic, I find myself turning back to Jonathan Haidt's work as it appears in *The Righteous Mind*. Human behavior is aptly described by the metaphor of the Elephant and the Rider. The Rider is represented by all of the science, evidence, rationality, appeals to prevent the observed consequences of emotional and physical trauma, and calls for action based on the Moral Foundations of Care, Fairness and Equality (see Moral Foundations Questionnaire at yourmorals.org). The Elephant of Identity (or fear of its loss), lack of trust in once revered institutions, and a will to power appears to be in charge of the journey during these days.

Here are some distillations and some of my justifications:

- 1) It is time to REFRAME the issue – using the words "gun safety", "gun violence reduction", "firearm safety and management" have helped somewhat.
- 2) There are a FEW areas where bipartisan caucuses have attempted to address CORE ISSUES at both the federal and state