

America's Gun Violence Epidemic: Colorado's Response



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Outline



- ▶ Why do we call it an epidemic?
- ▶ Where does Colorado stand in dealing with this epidemic?
- ▶ Framing this issue: *Myth vs. Reality*
- ▶ What's happening at the State Capitol
- ▶ What we'd really like to see
- ▶ Take questions at end

Our goals today...

- ▶ Boil the issue down to its basics
- ▶ Present both sides of the issue
- ▶ Challenge you to think about this issue in new ways
- ▶ Prepare & inspire you to talk about the issue safely and effectively

Our Basic Position

- ▶ Most Americans support a basic right to bear arms, but also support restrictions and don't follow the issue closely
- ▶ Laws are needed to keep guns away from dangerous people
- ▶ This debate is not just about mass shootings; those are a smaller percentage
- ▶ Domestic shootings and suicides are a significant part of the problem

Where does Colorado stand?

- ▶ Lower gun homicide rate than many states
- ▶ Much higher rate of gun suicide
- ▶ Slightly better than average in terms of strength of our gun laws:
 - ▶ + Closed the gun show loophole in 2000
 - ▶ + Require background checks on all transfers
 - ▶ + Limit high capacity magazines to 15 rounds
 - ▶ + Conduct background checks within state
 - ▶ - Don't have child access prevention law
 - ▶ - Prohibit locals from having stronger gun laws
 - ▶ - No licensing

Why do we call it an epidemic?

- ▶ Over 11,000 gun homicides/year
- ▶ Over 33,000 gun deaths/year (incl. suicides)
- ▶ Over 75,000 gunshot injuries/yr.
- ▶ Over 300 million firearms in America
- ▶ Among our **peer** nations we have:
 - ▶ Highest rate of gun ownership, by far
 - ▶ Easiest access to firearms
 - ▶ The weakest gun restrictions
 - ▶ Highest gun death rate, by far

Why is so little progress made?

- ▶ Extremely polarizing issue
- ▶ It can get nasty
- ▶ The two sides are seen as “extremes”
- ▶ Wrongly framed as:
 - ▶ Pro-gun/anti-gun fight
 - ▶ Fight for the right to self protection
 - ▶ Fight to prevent gun confiscation

The Common Narrative...

- ▶ If you ban all guns, only the bad guys will have guns and we can't protect ourselves
- ▶ The goal of gun control is to take away our Second Amendment rights and confiscate our firearms

The Reality

- ▶ Who's talking about banning all guns?!?
- ▶ Existing laws don't take away guns—unless you're a criminal.
- ▶ What laws have been introduced to confiscate guns?!?
- ▶ No law abiding citizen has had their gun taken away as a result of Colorado's new laws
- ▶ This talk of confiscation is just a distraction, a way to demonize, and get people upset
- ▶ How do you confiscate 300 million guns?

The Common Narrative...

- ▶ Our gun rights are continuously being eroded and taken away. We're on a slippery slope!

The Reality

- ▶ At the federal level, gun laws have actually been weakened (immunity, assault weapons)
- ▶ Same in many states (laws allowing guns everywhere, restricting free speech)
- ▶ Only in limited number of states are laws stricter
- ▶ Gun lobby pushing agenda of teachers with guns, open carry of guns, “stand your ground” laws, and more guns of any kind, anytime, anywhere

The Common Narrative...

- ▶ Gun control laws are an attack on our Second Amendment rights and they're unconstitutional!

What does the Second Amendment say?

A well regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a Free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.

The Reality

- ▶ Who is it that determines whether something is constitutional?
- ▶ U.S. Supreme Court ruled (Heller vs. D.C.) the 2nd Amendment provides an individual right to bear arms, and that reasonable restrictions can be placed on those rights
- ▶ The Court said you can't be as restrictive as Washington D.C.'s handgun ban; in essence, this right, like others, is not absolute

The Common Narrative...

- ▶ Criminals don't obey any laws
- ▶ The “bad guys” won't go through a background check!

The Reality

- ▶ Criminals, by definition, will ignore some laws
- ▶ But they DO go through background checks. In Colorado in 2016:
 - ▶ 7,881 gun purchases were stopped
 - ▶ 24 had been arrested for or convicted of **murder!**
 - ▶ 17 for kidnapping, 133 for sexual assault
- ▶ You can't assume all prohibited purchasers are the same. Some criminals are dumb!

The Common Narrative...

- ▶ Well, then, they'll just get a gun somewhere else. You just can't stop them from getting a gun.

The Reality



- ▶ For sure they'll get a gun if you make it **easy for them!**
- ▶ The question is: are we going to make it **easy** or **difficult** for them?
- ▶ The fatalism argument is fatal!
- ▶ Have you had a teenager at home?...

The Common Narrative...

- ▶ Gun control doesn't work. Just look at the gun deaths in Washington, D.C., Chicago and Mexico, where there are strict gun laws.

The Reality



- ▶ Yes, those places have a serious gun violence problem
- ▶ Guns cross state borders as easily as cars. A significant number of guns in Chicago come from neighboring Indiana, which has loose gun laws.
- ▶ Mexico – 70% of crime guns from U.S.

The Common Narrative...

- ▶ Mass shooters always target “gun free zones”

The Reality

- ▶ School shooters shoot at their school, disgruntled workers at their workplace—doesn't matter if it's a gun free zone
- ▶ Mass shooters go where there are many people and don't care if they're shot. Many want to be.
- ▶ Aurora shooter chose particular theater because of parking access.
- ▶ Mass shooters are not rational people

The Common Narrative...

- ▶ We have a right to protect ourselves in America!

The Reality

- ▶ Yes, we do.
- ▶ Gun safety laws don't take away that right!

The Common Narrative...

- ▶ Gun control laws inconvenience, punish and criminalize good, law abiding citizens—not the bad guys!

The Reality



- ▶ How the heck are law abiding citizens being inconvenienced, punished and criminalized?
- ▶ When you enter an airport or courtroom...
- ▶ Isn't the "sacrifice" worth it?

The Common Narrative...

We should enforce existing laws, not make new ones.

The Reality

- ▣ Yes, we should enforce existing laws
- ▣ That's a false choice! Who says we have to choose between the two?!? Why not do both?

The Common Narrative...

We should fix the mental health system, not pass gun control laws!

The Reality

- ▶ We dismantled our mental health system years ago
- ▶ With bills restricting access to mentally ill people, the gun lobby usually opposes them! And they oppose background checks that would catch disturbed people
- ▶ People with mental illness committed fewer than 5 percent of U.S. gun killings between 2001 and 2010
- ▶ We should improve the mental health system—but also expand those who are disqualified

The Common Narrative...

- ▶ We need guns to protect against a tyrannical government, like that of Hitler or Stalin

The Reality

- ▶ Nonsense! We protect ourselves from tyranny with the VOTE. It's worked for over 220 years!

The Common Narrative...

- ▶ More people are killed with cars than guns, but I don't hear you calling for a ban on all cars.

The Reality



- ▶ Cars often kill more, but we have driving restrictions, licensing, and registration as prevention
- ▶ 14 times more people die from cancer than from suicide...does that mean we shouldn't care about suicide?

At the State Capitol

- ▶ Issue is heavily partisan
- ▶ Gun lobby bills to:
 - ▶ Repeal high capacity limit
 - ▶ Allow anyone with concealed weapons permit to carry it in any school
 - ▶ Carry concealed weapons without permit
 - ▶ Use deadly force in businesses (“make my day” for businesses)

In Trump's Washington

- ▶ Gun rights for mentally ill
 - ▶ Repeal of Social Security rule already law
 - ▶ Repeal of Veterans' law passed House
- ▶ Federally mandated Concealed Carry
- ▶ Silencers
- ▶ Dispensing with Gun Free Zones, especially SCHOOLS!

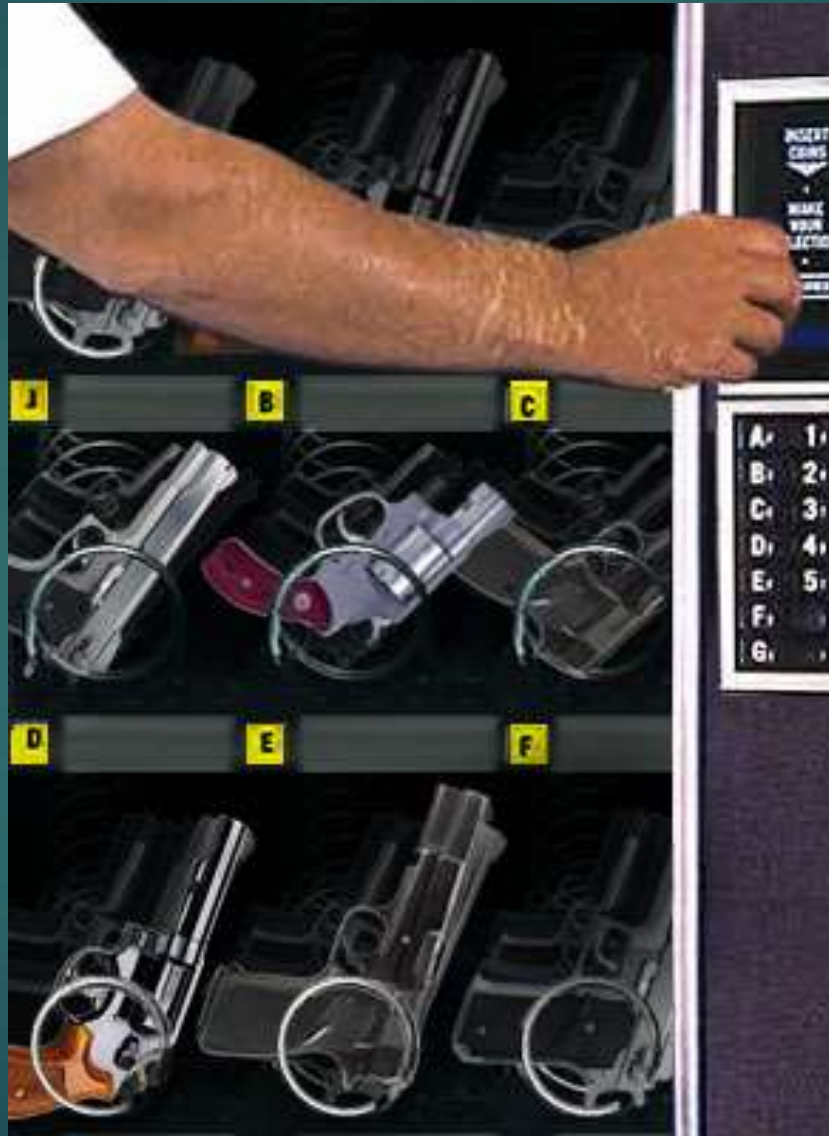
What we'd really like to see


- ▶ GVRO (gun violence restraining order)
- ▶ Denial of guns to those with violent misdemeanors
- ▶ Child Access Prevention (CAP) law
- ▶ Licensing for gun owners
- ▶ Repeal of immunity laws

Is All Hopeless???

- ▶ No, but...change won't be easy or fast
- ▶ Focus on:
 - ▶ Gun violence as a health issue
 - ▶ With rights come responsibilities
 - ▶ Prevention, prevention, prevention
 - ▶ The Vision: do you want to live in a world with nearly everyone armed and armed nearly everywhere?

Gun vending machines?!?





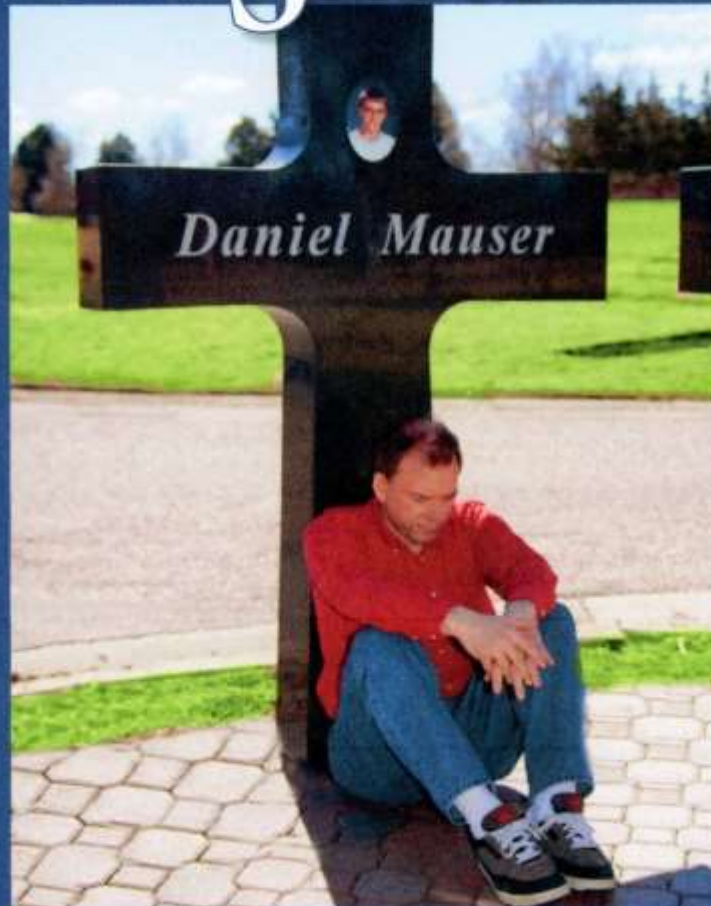
**If having more
guns and weak
gun laws made us
safer...**

What can I do?

- ▶ Thank supportive legislators
- ▶ Be informed!
- ▶ Don't waste time on The Unmovable
- ▶ Focus on the Movable Middle
- ▶ Join Colorado Ceasefire!
- ▶ Get engaged! Talk! Write!

Walking in Daniel's Shoes


*A father's
journey
through grief,
controversy,
activism,
and healing
following his
son's death at
Columbine*



TOM MAUSER

Book Outline

- ▶ “That horrific day” and following days & weeks
- ▶ Being in the middle of a high profile tragedy
- ▶ The healing process, including adoption of a Chinese baby
- ▶ Meeting with the parents of the Columbine killers
- ▶ Question of forgiveness

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- ▶ Available in e-book
 - ▶ Available on Amazon.com
 - ▶ Signed copies available from me here



Any
questions?

Discussion

Thank you!

