

In the wake of the tragic Atlanta and Boulder mass shootings, the topic of firearms has once again taken the stage front and center in our National dialogue. When such despicable tragedies occur, and I speak for every Libertarian that we hope justice prevails for the victims and families involved, sympathetic Americans seek to find solutions to these crimes. The Libertarian solution to mass shootings is simple yet not easy, allow the private sector to address the underlying causes that create killers, begin to address those issues, while providing for one's own security and safety and that of others through force if necessary. It is easy to oversimplify a complex problem, and gun violence is a complex issue, however, blaming an entire subset of American society on the actions of the few is not only attempting to simplify a complex issue, but it also seeks revenge in the only way government knows how, making law abiding Americans surrender or limit their arms via government force.

A free people ought to be allowed to righteously own and carry firearms for their own defense, for when one is denied this right, the only other option is to rely on government for protection. The government supposedly exists as an extension of the rights of the individual, that is, to protect the individual and the public from harm, rights which one has themselves. However, in the cases of *DeShaney vs. Winnebago* and *Town of Castle Rock vs. Gonzales*, the Supreme Court ruled that the police and government agencies have no duty to protect the individual, even when they know harm will occur. Meaning, that we are legally obligated to provide for our own safety, whether as individuals or as the private sector. Why then, are many Americans limited on using firearms for self-defense and calls for more limitations increasing?

The only way to understand firearm culture in America is to understand that for hundreds of years, the Bill of Rights supposedly limited the ability of government to infringe on the rights of the people to bear arms. This changed after the civil war, not to make the streets safer, but instead to limit the possession of firearms for the new, free, black community, who could now enjoy these rights. Gun control found its roots in racism, and for the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was a constant excuse to limit the possession and purchase of firearms in the hands of minorities who wanted to protect themselves from the mob, while whites feared an uprising. These racist roots are forgotten, yet now both the Democrats and Republicans have been calling for new gun control in the name of protecting the innocent.

The fact of the matter is millions of Americans carry firearms every day for protection. According to a 2013 study ordered by the CDC and conducted by The National Academies' Institute of Medicine and National Research Council reported that, "Defensive use of guns by crime victims is a common occurrence" and that "estimates of annual uses ranging from about 500,000 to more than 3 million." Which tells us that firearms are being used in a defensive manner, a manner which may be even higher today as concealed carry permits and background checks for gun purchases have skyrocketed over the past decade. Americans have chosen firearms as their go to tool for self-defense.

The Libertarian National Committee had passed a resolution which stated in part, *"Be it resolved that the Libertarian National Committee condemns.... all legislation which seeks to deprive the individual the ability to provide for their own self-defense. The Libertarian Party stands for the 40% of households which are protected by firearms and the millions of citizens who responsibly exercise their right to possess firearms in the protection of themselves and their community every day."*

Security is a need that we all share, the non-aggression pledge in which Libertarians abide by states that we oppose the use of force to achieve social and political goals. We do assert our right to self-defense when aggressed against, just as our mascot the porcupine represents. Peaceful, the

porcupine minds its own business, but when provoked, its quills spread out in a sheath of self-defense. This simple and yet profound understanding of the role of force in society is the center of our ideology, it is the way in which libertarians govern to how we see the national defense. All government needs to do is step out of the way and allow Americans to exercise this inherent right to self-preservation and allow the private individual to take up the slack where government fails to provide security.