Guns In America Essay, Research Paper

GUNS IN AMERICA

Dan Collins

English

2/27/00

Today in America, gun control is a very serious issue. There are different opinions on this issue, the National Rifle Association (NRA), feels that guns are safe when used for protection by responsible citizens, others feel that guns are far to dangerous to be kept in homes, and that guns should not be owned by anyone, only used by the National Guard and law enforcement. These people think their opinions are correct according to the second amendment, the amendment that deals with the bearing of arms by citizens of America, but there have been different interpretations of it. The reason that people feel gun ownership is such a problem is that so many people lose their lives by them each year. Personally, I feel that guns lead to increases in crime, murder, and household accidents. By reducing availability of guns and providing education on gun safety, I think that these things will help make America safer. Before making up my mind on what I felt about the issue, I made sure to consider the opinions of others and to collect statistics.

People from the (NRA), who are against gun control, feel that the people are responsible for the negative effects guns have on America. Helen Smith, a forensic psychologist who shares the ideas of the NRA, wrote an article titled ?It?s Not The Guns?. In this article, she talks about the increase in school and youth violence, relating to guns. She blames the children and irresponsible parents. She denies that guns are easier for kids to get today which is understandable because many people keep their guns locked up. Dr. Gary Kleck, a criminologist at Florida State University, defends guns in gun related accidents. He conducted a survey, which showed that there are fewer gun related accidents than there are automobile accidents, falls, drowning, pedestrian, fire, poisoning, and suffocation. As a result of his survey, he said ?Subsequently politicians demand mandatory safety classes for all gun owners, yet many more lives could be saved by randomly selecting and educating a group of drivers rather than gun owners, not to mention the populace at large regarding, administering first-aid, how to eat, and basic common sense safety habits.?

Although these people do have good points, I cannot say that I agree with everything they state. For one thing, it is true that the people are responsible for how they use guns but not true to say that guns are not part of the problem. You cannot just get rid of people who are incapable of knowing how to treat guns correctly, but you can take away guns, so that these problems and accidents will not occur at all. In response to Dr. Kleck?s survey, I would like to say that although firearms may not be the largest cause of accidents per year, but they do cause too many needless deaths, so something should be done about them. Nine hundred deaths a year may not seem like a lot of deaths to some people, but I assume it would if their child or someone they knew were one of those people. That is what everyone needs to consider. Regarding the fact that Dr. Kleck thinks that more lives would be saved by giving random drivers safety lessons and teach the average citizen common sense, I?d have to say that common sense does not have much to do with the accidents on his survey. I am sure he has tripped and fallen or choked on his food before at least once. I have, does that mean I lack common sense? I also disagree with some of the points Helen Smith made in her article. I do think she is right that the children who would use guns on fellow students have mental issues that separate them from the average child. But, again saying that guns are not part of that problem is something I would beg to differ. If the Columbine students did not have access to assault weapons such as a Tech 9 and a shotgun, I doubt the outcome would have been the same. Because these two students had these guns, several other students were killed for no reason. Knowing this, how can someone say, ?It?s not the guns?? Hearing the opinions of people that differ from mine bring many different questions to mind, such as why do we need guns in the first place other than in the National Guard and law enforcement? The answer is to protect ourselves, but from what? Well, other people who have guns. It?s a chain reaction. Someone sees other people buying guns and decides that they also need one because so many others have them. This being the case, I can see people buying handguns to keep their families safe from a dangerous neighborhood. I can also see people buying hunting rifles for hunting purposes obviously, but I wonder, why assault weapons? Do some people buy these high-powered shotguns and machine guns with seemingly endless clips to hunt? I doubt it. These guns were designed specifically to kill. Why are these weapons sold to the average law abiding citizen? This is the thing that bothers me the most. We now have a standing army, unlike when there were only state militias. The second amendment was written to allow these militiamen to own weapons. The second amendment is now interpreted different ways, which creates a great deal of controversy.

The second amendment states ?A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to bear arms, shall not be infringed.? People have taken this to mean that in addition to having a militia, citizens of America have the Constitutional right to bear arms. Others think that seeing how we now have a standing army, not a militia, there is no need for average citizens to bear arms, so it is no longer their Constitutional right. There have even been Supreme Court cases to determine what the amendment means. The U.S. v. Cruikshank case of 1876, the first case involving the second amendment, decided that the right for Americans to bear arms was not protected by the second amendment, but it was not denied by the amendment either. The Supreme Court upheld the decision of the U.S. v. Cruikshank case in other cases that were brought to it.

Even if people have the right to bear arms, whether it is constitutional or not, statistics should turn people away from owning a gun. The Chicago Police Department Murder Analysis shows an increase in murder rates every year by firearms. In 1998, 65% of murders were by firearms, 52% of those by handguns. 25% of the murderers did not have a criminal record, which shows that new gun owners are using guns for more than just protection. In 1995, there were 13,790 firearm homicides. I?m not sure what these numbers mean to others, but to me they seem very large. I?m sure that almost all of these people who were victims of guns, should not have lost their lives.

My goal in this essay is to allow everyone to see and understand why gun control is necessary to lower the rates of crime, murder, and household accidents, which are much too high. People are losing their lives by firearms everyday, and I feel that is time for that to stop. In this essay, you have the opportunity to see both sides of the argument and choose who you agree with or form your own opinion. Hopefully, by providing you with statistics and background information as well as opinion, you were able to understand why I feel the way I do about this topic and understand why it is so important to control the spread of guns throughout America.