

Episode 186-- Brady in Brief We Respond to Common Arguments ...

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SPEAKERS

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JJ Janflone 00:08

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JJ Janflone 00:22

Hey, everybody. Welcome back to another episode of Red, Blue and Brady. I'm JJ, one of your hosts. And I am really sorry to report that, as we've seen another week pass here in the US that mass shootings have continued, from grocery stores, to schools to hospitals and beyond. After these mass shootings, they gained national attention. A lot of questions come up in conversation. Some of those questions, though, posit that gun violence prevention methods aren't the answer, that gun violence is the product of things like poor mental health or video games or just plain evil? How do we as folks who care about gun violence prevention, how do we best answer those questions? So in this very special episode, we're bringing you 12 very common questions that are raised after a mass shooting, and the answers that we, 12 different staffers at Brady, give in response. So like I said, everybody, extra special episode, how this is going to work is I'm going to drop a commonly asked question, and then one of our fantastic Brady panelists here, they're going to introduce themselves, and they're going to give you the answer that they use to it. So sit back, get your pens ready. We're all about to learn how to do some messaging. Okay. So statement number one: we have a mental health problem, not a gun problem.



Colleen 01:57

My name is Colleen Creighton, I'm director of End Family Fire for Brady. I think we do have a mental health problem in the United States, we do not have adequate funding or access to mental health here throughout the country. But I do think what we're seeing now is we have an access-to-lethal-means problem. And so far too many people have access to lethal means. And this is the problem where it all comes down to. And statistically across the board those with mental health issues are more likely to be victims than the perpetrators of a lot of crimes. And if you look across the board, if you look at the number of incidents across the country, the majority of deaths by suicide are by firearm. So I think the latest statistics showed that 53% of all suicides are by firearm. So a lot of times providing that just length of time and access to lethal means when in a time of crisis can save somebody's life. But I also think there's unintentional; so we across the country, we lose eight children a day to unintentional injury. And that means a kid gets into a firearm within their house, you know, or while playing with a neighbor or grandparents. And then they don't know it's not a toy. They're playing with it and unfortunately, it takes their life.



JJ Janflone 03:18

Statement number two: criminals don't follow laws, so more gun laws won't help.



Robyn Craig 03:23

Alright, well, my name is Robyn Craig, and I'm the Social Media Associate at Brady and how I answer this question. Let's be clear, no other country has to do with losing over 40,000 citizens to senseless gun violence. Statistics don't lie and gun violence provincial laws are proven to work. We can't simply be pessimistic when it comes to passing evidence based laws. If we continue to have this mindset, we clearly have a bigger issue on our hands.



JJ Janflone 03:47

Point number three, we need to use the laws that we have already on the books.




Anneliese Dickman 03:52

My name is Anneliese Dickman, and I'm the Midwest Program Manager for the Combating Crime Guns initiative. And how I answer that question is, yes, we absolutely need to use the laws we have on the books, but we have to do so equitably. So too often, we only focus on the demand side of the gun violence equation. And we enforce laws in such a way as to exacerbate mass incarceration. And we should be focused on the supply side to holding accountable those who supply the firearms the gun industry. I think that's imperative. But unfortunately, historically, there have not been enough federal or state resources devoted to enforcing the laws that regulate the gun industry. And the result is not only a flood of guns into our communities, but persistent inequity in our criminal justice system.



JJ Janflone 04:47

Statement number four, guns are overall better for the US. More guns equals less crime.

 Josh Scharff 04:54

I'm Josh Scharff, Senior Council, Director of Programs at Brady and I lead our Combating Crime Guns initiative and to be honest, I don't get that question a lot. And I talk to a lot of people, people in law enforcement, policymakers, folks that live and work in impacted communities. And I don't get that question a lot, because I think intuitively most people know that more guns does not equal less crime. And when I do get that question, it's often coming from somebody who has a preconceived notion about the roles of guns in society. How I do answer that question, is first, to say, look, the overwhelming science and literature out there on this topic does not support the notion that more guns equals less crime. In fact, most of the literature says the exact opposite. But if you're not persuaded by the science and the credible literature out there on this topic, I say, use your common sense, there are more guns in civilian hands in this country than there are people in this country. And if more guns equaled less crime, we would have one of the lowest crime rates in the world. And that's just not the case. And beyond that question of just crime in guns, is also the issue about the lethality and and violent crime. You know, when guns are introduced to crimes, there are more injuries and more death just because of the lethality of guns themselves. So looking at violent crime as a measure is also particularly important, and crime that leads to significant injury and death. Because we know that when guns are introduced into the equation that those numbers go up.

 JJ Janflone 06:53

Point number five: we need to talk about the real causes of gun violence; things like social media, or video games, or rap music.

 Kelly Sampson 07:02

Yeah, okay. Well, I can't wait to dive into this one. But first, for folks listening to the podcast, you might be familiar with my voice because I serve as one of the Co hosts of Red, Blue and Brady. I'm also a member of Team legal and for this question, most importantly, I'm Director of Racial Justice here at Brady. So this is something that we hear all the time. And it's something that you all probably hear a lot of times, which is it's a cultural problem. And embedded in that idea of a cultural problem. It's about rap music. It's about video games. Well, it's just not true. People have actually studied this. First and foremost, the United States of America is part of a globalized planet. So the video games that people play here, people play all over the world. The rap music that people play here, guess what people listen to it all over the world; there's a theme here, we are not unique in the culture that we consume. So the difference maker is not rap lyrics or video games, or fast food or anything of that nature. It's firearms, we notice because people have actually looked into it. Because these claims are so popular in terms of red herrings, people have actually studied whether or not video games lead to gun violence. And they found that they don't, they've actually looked into rap music and found it doesn't really contribute to gun violence. So when you hear arguments that are pointing to culture, there's a few things that are going on there. Usually, it's assuming that the United States lives on a cultural island. When in fact, of all the countries in the world, for us, it's the exact opposite. Because we are sort of this global leader, a lot of our culture is exported everywhere. It also assumes that we know about a shooter and so be on the lookout for you know, in the

moments after shooting, someone will say it's video games. Well, how do you even know the person plays video games in the first place, let alone the fact that video games don't cause gun violence. So these are whether they're well intentioned, ill intentioned, they're trying to divert from the real issue, which is that what is unique about the United States is not the music that we listen to. It's the unregulated and relatively easy access to firearms that sets us apart.



JJ Janflone 09:11

Statement number six. It's too soon and disrespectful to talk about gun laws after a mass shooting.



09:18

My name is Liz Dunning, and I'm the VP of Development at Brady. And the way that I answer this question really starts with the fact that I'm a gun violence survivor. What that means practically, is that I think about gun violence prevention and its impact on my life and the life of my kids every day. I also recognize and can feel every day that most people don't, and they don't have to, and I'm glad they don't. But when these horrible tragedies happen that forced gun violence, from the daily experience of so many of us to the news cycle, I've really do view it as an opportunity to wage a little bit of a fight against hopelessness. I think the pain and the hurt that's on display right now is pretty overpowering. I've certainly experienced that feeling of pain and trauma firsthand. And the week that we've just had has been hard for me in that way too. But I view that whether it's the work I do for fundraising, or whether it's the work our team does around advocacy, that is about bringing people in at the moment that they're ready to be in. It was a long time between when my mom was murdered, and when her killer was brought to justice. And that was a whole long period when frankly, people weren't quite sure what to say to me. It was hard to make those connections. I think these moments when it's in the news, and it's in the cover of the newspaper, it's easier for people to feel comfortable raising their hand and say, I want to give up my time, I want to make a phone call. I'm worried, and I'm scared, and I want to know what to do. And so to me, it would be cruel, and maybe inexcusable if the technical experts around gun violence prevention, the ones at Brady and the ones across the movement weren't right there with our hands out to say, here's what you can do. Here's how you can give. Here's how we can make a difference right now. And here's how we can understand the longer arc towards justice on this. So that's why I think it's not too soon.



JJ Janflone 11:21

Statement number seven, a good guy with a gun stops a bad guy with a gun. So we should just arm folks.



Tanya Schardt 11:27

Oh, goodness, I don't even know what to say. Well, actually, I'll tell you what I'd say. My name is Tanya, just so you know, I'm the Director of State and Federal policy here at Brady. And I hear this a lot. And my immediate response has always been that assertion is one wrong. And two that it's really dangerous. There is no factual support for the assertion that a good guy with

a gun stops gun violence. In fact, people very rarely use guns successfully to defend themselves from crimes and armed civilians have very rarely successfully intervened in the hundreds of mass shootings in America. Unfortunately, the recent shootings in Uvalde, where there were seven armed officers and in Buffalo where an armed security guard was shot and killed has shown us even more clearly that even trained armed men cannot prevent mass shooting events. So when there is an attempt by a good guy with a gun, what we've seen is more often than not, it actually undermines law enforcement efforts, as they act quickly to respond to shooting incidents, placing more people in harm's way. We've even seen many incidents where that so called "good guy" with a gun ends up getting shot and killed by law enforcement because they're confused about who the actual perpetrator is. But what we do know what there is data about is that more guns create more opportunities for injury and death, not fewer. And again, this is rooted in data and evidence. So I think it's really important to, to start there, instead of starting with this assertion that somehow a good guy with a gun stops gun violence. The most important point that I want to make, I think it's something we don't always necessarily think about is that this is not born of facts. It's borne by the gun industry. And the NRA, in particular was born following the Sandy Hook shooting to perpetuate a guns everywhere agenda, which is not about protecting people or upholding rights, which is about selling more guns. So the good guy with a gun fallacy is just one more example of the lies they will tell to sell more guns at the cost of people living in America, of how they will always put profits over people.



JJ Janflone 13:20

Position number eight, it's my second amendment right to own a gun. Any attempt at regulation is going to lead to a destruction of my rights, my American way of life and a spread of tyranny.



Jon Lowy 13:31

My name is John Lowy. I'm Vice President of legal at Brady, and how I answer this question is, first, the second amendment has always allowed for sensible gun laws, regulations, well regulated is even in the Second Amendment itself. And protecting families and communities with strong public safety laws is an important part of the American way of life. We care for each other, or we should. We protect our children, or we should. It's the tyranny that most Americans are concerned about, is the tyranny of indiscriminate gunfire of being shot when you go to church or shopping, or concert or school. Americans are not more criminal or mentally ill or suicidal or dangerous than people from other countries. We're subjected to so much more gunfire because the gun industry is allowed to run amok, and our political leaders have failed to enact common sense laws that have been shown to work in states and other countries. That is destroying our most important right, our right to live.



JJ Janflone 14:42

Statement number nine. This is all about a lack of security. The solution is to harden schools or grocery stores or other targets.



S

Shikha Hamilton 14:50

Hi, my name is Shikha Hamilton, Vice President of Organizing at Brady. And the way I would answer this question is number one; not every community has the funds or money to secure every grocery store, school, movie theater, place of worship. And secondly, is that the environment we want to live in with metal detectors and security guards everywhere we go, because gun violence is everywhere we go.



JJ Janflone 15:24

Position number 10. It's not about guns. It's about law enforcement being soft on crime, we should be tougher on crime and crack down on would be attackers.

E

Erica Rice 15:34

Hi, my name is Erica, and I'm a program manager for our Combating Crime Guns initiative at Brady. And I answer this question by reminding folks that police do crisis response and not prevention. Police departments are well established and well funded. So if policing was the sole answer to this problem, we'd have solved it. Ultimately, the people who live next door to you, who teach your children, who work in your grocery stores, and who attend your church are best positioned to prevent gun violence in your community. We should be looking to our neighbors for community centered, community specific solutions to gun violence. And most importantly, we should be funding the solutions the way we fund law enforcement,



JJ Janflone 16:14

Position number 11. This is just a social issue. It's something like bad parenting, and you can't legislate against evil.

E

Erin Davis 16:22

Hi, I'm Erin Davis. I am the Senior Counsel for Trial and Appellate Litigation here at Brady and I spend my days representing victims of gun violence against the gun industry. I answer that question by saying the gun industry has successfully been legislating evil themselves. They have proactively passed special protections that limit gun violence victims access to justice, and ensure that these victims are not subject to the same oversight of consumer products that every other industry in America has. For example, the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act makes it much harder for a victim of gun violence to successfully bring a lawsuit and the Tiahrt Amendment, handcuffs ATF for being able to present vital data that would protect the safety of our community publicly.



JJ Janflone 17:16

And finally, position number 12. Nothing ever gets done. Nothing ever changes. We never pass any legislation. So why should I even bother trying?



Cordy Galligan 17:26

My name is Cordy Galligan and I am the VP of Communications at Brady. And when I'm asked this question, which I am frequently, here's typically how I respond. I understand that people are frustrated, I'm frustrated. But we are seeing momentum here. At the federal level, the House has passed a number of bills; universal background checks, fixing the Charleston loophole, stopping dark money in the political process, which ensures that groups like the NRA aren't buying the votes of our elected officials. They're working to ensure police accountability and address unnecessary use of force. And at the federal level, we also have some bills that have been passed protecting voting rights, particularly for communities of color. All of these would go a long way to help prevent gun violence. The problem is with the Senate, where a few senators are basically holding legislation hostage using the filibuster. Thankfully, there's been some momentum to pass expanded background checks. But if we want more action in the Senate, there are two things that have to be done. One, we need to get rid of the filibuster. Two, we need to vote out elected officials who refuse to take action, time and time again. Senators listen to their constituents. So your calls and emails really do make a huge difference. But it's important to recognize that Congress isn't the only way to make an impact on gun violence. We've seen a number of bills signed into law in California, Colorado, Maryland, Nevada, New York, Virginia. And we're working on passing more with grassroots activists every single day. We're even making progress in the courts, where members of the gun industry have been held accountable for irresponsible business practices that just fuel our gun violence epidemic. So it may not feel like it and we have a long way to go. But we are winning here and there and the voices of advocates and survivors you and us are what make all of that possible? And if we don't try, what's the alternative? We sit back and watch more people die and have their lives torn apart by gun violence? I don't accept that. And neither should anyone else.



JJ Janflone 20:19

Yeah, well said Cordy. So many times, I just come up with that to myself, like, what is the alternative? So thank you all, all 12 of you for being here today and for and for sharing answers to these things, because I think this is going to be so, so helpful. I know, I can't wait to use some of these positions that you brought up, when people ask me questions when I'm, you know, in line at the grocery store, and things like that. So thank you.



JJ Janflone 20:42

All of those answers were so so helpful as launching off points for, you know, obviously, as we've talked about on this podcast for much deeper conversations, but I think it's a great place to start. What I keep coming back to is sort of my biggest thing is this, you know that there are just so many myths about how guns and gun laws actually work in the United States. And I will say, shameless plug, I'd be remiss if I didn't share with listeners that you know, if you've heard about things like how the NRA is super powerful and can't be beat, or how AR-15s aren't really that damaging, or, you know, even something awful to the fact of like, you know, something like Sandy Hook, a mass shooting like that, you know, is a so called, you know, quote unquote, false flag. We do have podcasts that address all of those myths and misconceptions. So if you want to learn more about the reality of how things actually are, or if you have, you know, things that you've heard that you want us to dig into, please listen to those podcasts or reach out to

us. We live basically to be a resource to all of you. And we would love to help. Whether you're someone who's been in gun violence for 10 years or 10 days, or you know, as of this podcast, 10 minutes. We're all in this together.



JJ Janflone 21:13

Hey! Want to share with the podcast? Let's just now get in touch with us here at Red, Blue and Brady via phone or text message. Simply call or text us at 480-744-3452 with your thoughts, questions, concerns, ideas, whatever, Kelly and I are standing by.



Kelly Sampson 22:10

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