



11350 Random Hills Road, Suite 800, Fairfax, Virginia 22030 Phone (703) 934-6101 Fax (703) 352-3678

fff@fff.org www.fff.org

Gun Control Claims More Victims

by Benedict D. LaRosa

Last year, Virginia Tech University successfully lobbied the state legislature to prohibit concealed-permit holders from carrying a sidearm on campus. At the time, university spokesman Larry Hincker commented,

I'm sure the university community is appreciative of the General Assembly's actions because this will help parents, students, faculty, and visitors feel safe on our campus.

In June of last year, the university reemphasized its ban on carrying guns on campus by students, employees, and visitors. Last spring, it disciplined a student with a concealed-carry permit who brought his handgun to class. On April 16, 2007, 43 students and faculty members paid the price for such shortsightedness when a deranged student killed 33 and wounded the remainder with handguns.

Despite claims to the contrary, this is not the worst school killing in U.S. history. On May 18, 1927, a disgruntled school-board member killed 45 people and injured 58 — most of them second-grade to sixth-grade children — when he set off bombs at Bath Consolidated School in Bath, Michigan.

In response to the Virginia Tech incident, gun-control advocates predictably demanded more gun-control laws. Carolyn McCarthy (D-N.Y.), author of the latest assault-weapon ban making its way through Congress, which is a more draconian version of the Clinton 1994 assault-gun ban that expired in 2004, suggested that we need to talk about guns on campus. For once, I agree with Representative McCarthy.

The gunman, Cho Seung-Hui, a Korean national with permanent resident status, had filled out the required forms and undergone the mandatory background check and waiting period, proving once again the uselessness of such laws.

The problem at Virginia Tech was not that there were guns on campus — only the campus police and gunman were armed — but that it was a “gun-free zone.” As a result, there were not

enough people carrying guns to neutralize the gunman once he began his rampage. He should have been outgunned after his first shots. To a criminal or deranged person bent on killing, a gun-free zone is a free-fire zone. As is obvious from all such incidents, the police arrive too late to prevent multiple killings.

That's not to disparage the police. In most cases, they act aggressively and competently. But they are rarely the first to arrive at the scene of a crime. The first ones there are the perpetrators and their victims. That's when self-defense weapons are needed, not after the damage is done.

Consider that in all such incidents, the shooters are not so deranged as to attack police stations, shooting ranges, or gun shows. They have enough presence of mind to assail unarmed people in gun-free zones because they will encounter no effective resistance. (The one incident in which an individual was foolish enough to threaten to kill hostages where guns were prevalent was at a shooting club in California in July 1999. The gunman was promptly shot by an employee, without harm to the hostages.)

Test my hypothesis. Was anyone carrying a gun killed or injured in the Virginia Tech shooting? Only one, the perpetrator by his own hand. All the other victims were unarmed. They were unarmed because of state law, university policy, the success of gun-control advocates, and a false sense of security. The gun-control lobby has succeeded in stigmatizing gun possession and training; influencing legislators to pass laws making it difficult for law-abiding people to purchase, carry, and use firearms; and convincing people that they can depend on the police to protect them. The students are also at fault for believing the lie that they are not responsible for their own protection in the face of common sense and history.

Handguns and self-defense

Handguns are self-defense tools. They are designed to protect people from those who would harm them. In many cases, merely the appearance of a firearm dissuades an attacker. When you prevent people from carrying self-defense weapons, you are making them easy targets.

Let's look at some examples to illustrate my point:

- In 1974, 34 Israeli students were gunned down in a bus on a school trip. Israel responded by arming teachers, administrators, bus drivers, and others to protect their children. Israel has not had a repeat of that tragedy. The U.S. government's response? Prohibit guns within 1,000 feet of schools, as if criminals and deranged people obey laws.
- In October 1997, Assistant Principal Joel Myrick used a gun to stop a violent teen who was shooting up his high school in Pearl, Mississippi. The student killed two and wounded seven before Myrick could stop him. Why did it take Myrick so long to disarm the shooter? His gun was in his automobile, which was parked more than 1,000 feet from the school in compliance with the law.

- In January 2002, a disgruntled student at the Appalachian School of Law in Grundy, Virginia, shot and killed the dean, a professor, and a fellow student. He was disarmed and subdued before he could harm anyone else by two students who retrieved guns from their automobiles.

- Utah and Oregon allow concealed-permit holders to carry their weapons on campus. To date, no school shooting incidents have occurred in these states.

- The most heavily armed populations are the Swiss and the Israelis. Crime is negligible in both countries.

- The Luby Cafeteria shootings in Killeen, Texas, on October, 16, 1991, where a gunman killed 23 people, provide a stark example of the danger of gun-control laws. Suzanna Gratia Hupp, who was having lunch with her parents, left her gun in her car in compliance with state law. Her parents were among those killed. Two other diners also left their guns in their cars for fear of violating state law. Hupp had a clear shot at the killer several times as he reloaded and leisurely executed patrons.

“I was mad as hell at my legislators,” she said, “because they had legislated me out of the right to protect myself and my family.” Hupp is responsible for Texas’s having enacted a concealed-carry law in 1995.

How many more victims must be sacrificed on the altar of gun control? How many more Virginia Tech incidents must occur before common sense prevails? Blaming inanimate objects for criminal acts and legislating barriers to self-defense is foolish and self-destructive. The hostile atmosphere to gun possession and training fostered by gun-control advocates is costing lives. Frustration, pain, and other emotions shouldn’t drive legislation; reason should. Though we may not be able to prevent such incidents, we can limit the damage they do.

Instead of listening to gun-control advocates whose advice brings death and injury, we would do better to abide by the Boy Scout motto: Be prepared!

Benedict LaRosa is a historian and writer with undergraduate and graduate degrees in history from the U.S. Air Force Academy and Duke University, respectively.

This article was originally published in the November 2007 edition of *Freedom Daily*.