



Buckeye
Firearms
Association

The Grassroots Action Guide for Ohio Gun Owners

Page 1 — 5-Minute Handbook for Grassroots Activists

Page 6 — How to Be an Effective Volunteer

Page 8 — 15 Ways to Fight for Our Second Amendment Rights

Page 15 — Become 500 Times More Powerful Politically

Page 20 — Gun Rights Are About More Than Guns

Page 22 — A Psychiatrist Examines The Anti-Gun Mentality

5-Minute Handbook for Grassroots Activists

Adapted from an essay circulating the Internet — author unknown

I've been a gun rights activist for nearly 10 years. I wasted a lot of time for the first 5 years because no one gave me the rule book you are now reading. Maybe that's because no one had written it. This is the stuff I wish I had known starting on Day One.

The next 5 minutes you spend reading this might save you 5 years of otherwise wasted time and energy. If you've been in the gun rights game for a while, this handbook will be the fastest refresher course you've ever taken.

This past year I've received a lot of mail from jittery gun owners who are finally waking up to what's happening to our right to keep and bear arms(RKBA). This handbook is mostly for them.

If the rules I list below scare off a few folks, so be it. I want to tell it like it really is to give a quick snapshot of the tips, tricks and tactics that actually work in RKBA activism.

The bad news is that this is not a complete list of the rules.

The good news is that there will never be a complete list of rules.

The rules listed below are based on my own experience from working thousands of hours with down and dirty RKBA activist pros. I am deeply grateful to all of them. They know who they are.

Some of these rules have been followed for so long by old-time activists that they have forgotten what the original rules were.

It's time to list them again. And sneak in a couple of new ones. So read them and weep, or read them and rejoice.

No one is as interested as you are.

Nowadays everyone's attention span and time are limited. Be grateful if you get anyone's attention on our issue, even for a few seconds. Some wannabe activists come in even faster, then disappear faster. Take whatever you get from any volunteer. Praise and thank them. Don't be disappointed when they drift away. They will. But some come back. Keep the light on for them.

Gun rights groups stink.

At the same time, these organizations are the best thing since sliced bread.

We won't keep our rights without them. It's normal to love them and hate them at the same time. Be sure your complaints about them go to the person who can do something about your problem. Never give up your membership — it's much easier to fix things from the inside. Avoid griping in public — our opponents love it when we do. Always handle our dirty laundry behind closed doors. Always.

There is no magic bullet.

There is no single answer, rule, or solution. Never has been, and never will be. None of us will write the single brilliant letter to the editor or Internet message that will miraculously turn everything around. Keep steadily busy. Do as much as you can, whenever you can. Anything you do counts, but some things count more than others. Find out what counts. Then do it.

There is no final victory.

Preserving RKBA is an ongoing *process*. We are winning and losing battles during this process, but the war will never be over. Becoming active to keep your gun rights is a lot like cleaning your house: it's thankless and boring work, but necessary. Like dirt, the anti-gun crowd will just keep coming back. Forever. Your activism will keep us winning more than losing. Our opponents count on wearing us down. They love it when one of us (not you, of course) gets discouraged and drops out. When you fully understand and accept the reality that RKBA is a never-ending struggle, you're automatically in the top 5 percent of all RKBA defenders. Congratulations.

RKBA activism is boring.

It's especially boring when you are doing things that really make a difference. Most of us want drama. We want to be entertained. Phone bank calling, precinct walking, going to RKBA grassroots seminars — suddenly, even a trip to the dentist for a root canal will start to look better. Sorry, but there is no workaround on this aspect. Freedom is not free. It's a pain in the ass. Get used to it, get over it, and get to work.

Use the power of fear and guilt.

Gun owners are susceptible to these emotions. Awaken sleeping RKBA activists by tapping these powerful emotions. Fear and guilt will move mountains — and fill the collection plate, and recruit new members. If gun owners won't become active for themselves, ask them to do it for their families. For their children. For their country. And — this tactic works! — ask them to do it for *you*.

Watch out for misdirected, time-wasting efforts.

E-mail to elected people should be used only as a last resort — unless the official already personally knows you. Focus on the stuff that works. If you're going to hunt ducks, go where the ducks are. (E-mail is a *lot* better than

nothing. If your only choice between doing e-mail and doing nothing, by all means, send e-mail to legislators!)

Politicians only care about votes and money.

In-person visits, phone calls, and snail-mailed, handwritten letters to elected folks help — because politicians know that if you take this much trouble, you and your family and friends will also vote.

HOT TIP:

Make yourself known to politicians for issues other than gun rights. Don't present yourself as a single-issue person. Praise and help politicians on *their* pet projects. Then, when a new gun control law comes up, your opinion will seem especially credible. Otherwise, you will soon be stereotyped and discounted as a single-issue voter.

Another HOT TIP:

Politicians have to explain why they vote Yes or No on proposed laws. Sometimes they really need your help in composing explanations to their constituents. If you want your elected official to vote No on a seemingly popular new gun control law, she might be more willing to vote your way if you give her a “back door” — a good, common sense explanation that she can give to all of her constituents.

Get the right people in office in the first place.

If we have the right people in power, anti-gun laws will not be passed. Period. The laws are what matter. This concept is so simple that many folks can't see it, just like they can't “see” the air they breath. The anti-rights crowd can hold all the gun control seminars and news conferences they want, but nothing will happen unless they can pass more laws. This fact tells you about the how, what, where, when, why, and with whom you should be spending your time, energy, and money. Politicians pass laws. Therefore, you must get involved in politics to protect your gun rights. There is just no way to get around this. Sorry. I don't like politics either. Bummer!

Stop the saber rattling — NOW!

Avoid those shrill folks who sound threatening or talk about doomsday. It's a waste of your time. These noisy folks remind me of a couple in a failing marriage who only talk about a getting a divorce instead of talking about their real problems. If they don't solve their problems, separation or divorce becomes the inevitable outcome. Some people get pumped up on silly fantasy scenarios. I do not.

Arm yourself with accurate information.

Paradoxically, bad information or disinformation is a plague in the so-called Information Age. When you write or talk about firearms issues, use only the

facts, the truth, and the provable. Verify any quotes that you use. Back up your generalizations with powerful and specific examples. Get on the Internet, and get your like-minded friends online. Join several of the net communities that will keep you informed instantly and completely about our special issues. Information is power!

Ignore media spin and the news waves.

It's far too easy to go bonkers reacting to the latest media-driven crisis. Don't let the media push your buttons. The RKBA grassroots pros I know do not overreact to crises. In fact, most of the ultra-pros that I know do not react at all to media hysteria. Bashing the media about their bias is not productive. Some gun owners use media bias as an excuse to do nothing — because the situation seems so overwhelming and hopeless. Truth is, if you are a busy activist — already steadily doing stuff that matters — you will find the media reacting to YOU. Be friendly and polite with them — not hostile. Become a reliable source of information for them. And just keep on being *active*.

JUST SHOW UP.

It's been said that 80 percent of success is showing up. Being there. Showing up to vote. Showing up at an RKBA seminar. At your legislator's office. At a city council meeting. My father's favorite motto: "Your actions speak so loud that I can't hear a word you're saying." Your "silent" activism can be a model for others. What will your 3 hunting buddies think when they find out you spent an afternoon handing out brochures door-to-door for a pro-gun politician?

Don't mess with true believers.

In the time you spend trying to convert one hard core anti-gun person to our side, you could have gone out and motivated and organized 20 people who already think like you do. Go with the flow. It's easier on your nerves, and much more effective. Personally, I have converted several anti-rights true believers, but never again! Lots of NRA members are not registered voters. A lot of gun owners aren't NRA members. Even more folks have no idea of their elected officials' positions on gun issues. Where is your time most effectively spent? Think about this before you spend an hour writing a clever response to a silly message you found somewhere on the Internet.

Simplicity still matters.

The old rule, Keep It Super Simple (KISS), is as important as it ever was. It applies to Internet postings, planning, speeches — everything. And keep it short. And keep it sweet: don't ever ridicule or insult anyone. Did you notice that I did *not* say, "Keep It Simple, *Stupid*?"

You are not alone.

Well, not quite alone. You do have some help. The NRA has a staff of several

hundred, and Buckeye Firearms Association has a group of about ten key volunteers who donate hours in the triple digits each week. There is no way humanly possible that we can put out all the brush fires started by the anti-rights crowd. Pro-gun national organizations give direction and information — but they cannot save your rights. Only *you* can save *your* rights. You are 100 percent responsible. When you fully accept this reality, you are automatically in the top one percent of all RKBA activists.

The hidden bonus of gun rights activism.

The more involved you get with firearms freedom, the more you will realize that your single issue actually complements and protects other human rights issues. Personally, I am deeply offended by many aspects of today's culture. When I focus my activism on RKBA, I can often sense I am making a measurable difference. All rights — like all humans — are connected.

When in doubt, just DO something.

Sometimes we don't know what will work. Sometimes the rule is that there are no rules. I once wrote an essay I thought was mediocre at best. Five years later, I'm still receiving mail about it. Don't hesitate to try something new and innovative — get it out on the table! Often your finest essay or brilliant letter will not be acknowledged, or you will just get a form letter response. But that letter to the editor that you dashed off in a few minutes appears in tomorrow's newspaper! Go figure. Better yet, try not to figure. Trust yourself, trust your instincts — and just do something.

I'll see you in the trenches.

How to Be an Effective Volunteer

Buckeye Firearms Association is a grassroots political action committee (PAC) dedicated to one issue: gun rights in Ohio. We defend and advance the rights of citizens to own and use firearms for all legal activities, including self-defense, hunting, competition, and recreation. We work to elect pro-gun candidates and lobby for pro-gun legislation.

We are a non-partisan, all-volunteer organization. In fact, volunteers like you provide the muscle for our work. We need YOU to help hand out literature, write legislators, put up posters, run special events, and more.

Volunteering can be fun and rewarding, but it carries some responsibility as well. When you work as a volunteer, your words and actions reflect on Buckeye Firearms Association. If you want to act as a totally free agent, that's fine. If you want to act as a volunteer for us, you need to realize that you are part of a successful team.

Here is what we expect from ALL of our volunteers:

Act in the best interests of gun owners. As a volunteer, you are on the front lines of the fight between gun rights and gun control. Everything you say or do should be directed toward helping the cause and aiding Buckeye Firearms Association. Think before you speak. Keep in mind that what you do affects all of us.

Pitch in. We need a lot of help with a lot of things. If we need help with something specific, we'll ask. However, you don't have to wait for an invitation. If you have a special skill or a good idea, let us know. If you want to put up posters or hand out our wallet cards or brochures, contact us. This is the sort of initiative that we love.

Show up. This is probably more important than anything else. There are more than enough people who talk about gun rights. What we need are people who DO things. About 10 percent of our success is great ideas, but 90 percent is the result of people just SHOWING UP!

Be patient. There's no quick fix and no magic bullet. Changing the laws takes lots of work and lots of time. We're effective because we never give up. If you're looking for a quick resolution to every problem, you're going to find this sort of work frustrating. If you stand firm and keep working with us, it will eventually pay dividends.

Keep up-to-date on the issues. You don't need to be an expert on politics

or the law, but it helps when you are reasonably familiar with your legislators and the laws we are either fighting or supporting. The best way to keep up is to subscribe to Buckeye Firearms News and visit BuckeyeFirearms.org frequently. Our website is Ohio's most complete source for up-to-the-minute news on progun laws, candidates, and events.

Be courteous at all times. There is no excuse for treating anyone in a rude or disrespectful way. That includes those who hold different ideas on the gun rights issue. How you act is far more important than what you say when dealing with people. Don't get angry. Keep your cool.

Dress neatly and be well groomed. You should be clean and dressed in a presentable way at all times. If you show up at the Statehouse, you should wear business attire. For informal events, neat casual clothing is fine. We are in the public eye, so we want to present a professional appearance. When in doubt, ask.

Don't badmouth other gun groups. We all have a different approach or area of focus, but ultimately we're all on the same side. When you run down any gun organization, you do harm to all of us. If you don't have something good to say, don't say anything at all.

Don't bash politicians on our side of the issue. No one is perfect. And you will inevitably be disappointed with politicians from time to time. But we can't afford to alienate a candidate or representative who supports us. They are professional and personal friends. We need their help.

Never represent yourself as a spokesman. You are part of our family, but unless you have express permission, you are NOT to speak for Buckeye Firearms Association. This includes personal conversations, statements to the press, chat rooms, blogs, and communications with candidates or law-makers. We must stay "on message," and you may not know specifically what that message is. If you say the wrong thing, it could be used against us. Simply refer people to one of our Leaders.

Never, ever be under the influence. What you do on your own time is your own business. But you cannot be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs at any time while acting as a volunteer.

Have fun! Yes, being a volunteer can be a lot of work sometimes. But it's also rewarding. It's something you can be proud of. If you show up regularly, you will have an opportunity to socialize with like-minded gun owners and make life-long friends. And not everything is difficult. Even if you just do a few small jobs now and then, you can make an important contribution to the cause and have a blast!

15 Ways To Fight For Our Second Amendment Rights

By Chris Chumita

The fight to keep our Second Amendment rights has had some impressive victories lately. In the past few years, we have seen more states begin to allow citizens to carry concealed firearms, the repeal of the “Clinton Assault Rifle Ban,” and the recent passage of the “Lawful Commerce In Arms Act.”

Despite these victories, now is not the time for us to become complacent about our Second Amendment rights. In fact, it is under attack in ways that we have only feared. For example, we have seen the passage of an “Assault Rifle Ban” in Columbus, Ohio, a voter approved gun ban in San Francisco, and the confiscation of firearms from law abiding citizens during a natural disaster in Louisiana.

Now, more than ever, we have to fight to protect our Second Amendment rights. Below are 15 easy things that you can do to help. You do not have to do all 15 to join the fight, but if everyone could just do one of them, it would help gun owners everywhere.

1. Join the NRA.

The NRA (National Rifle Association) is without question, the most powerful pro-Second Amendment organization. I think that it would be safe to say that if it weren't for them, we would have lost our Second Amendment rights a long time ago. The NRA has been there for every national Second Amendment victory for over the last 100 years.

With over 4 million members, they are a consistently ranked the most powerful lobbying organization in Washington. The politicians in Washington D.C. know that when the NRA speaks, they are speaking for over 4 million people. So if you are not a NRA member, join today.

If you are a member, renew it today. Better yet, become a life member. If you are financially able to do so, donate to the ILA (Institute of Legislative Affairs) and the PVF (Political Victory Fund). Personally, a majority of my donations go to the NRA. Make it a goal to sign up three new NRA members a year.

During the holiday season, remember that NRA memberships make great gifts. In a way, you are giving them the gift of freedom. In addition to their political work, the NRA provides firearms education and publishes several excellent magazines. The magazines are a great way to get someone who does not support the NRA to learn what they really stand for.

2. Support Other National Second Amendment Organizations.

There are several other Second Amendment organizations that deserve our support. These organizations may have a slightly different approach from the NRA, but they are fighting for the same goal. These organizations include the Second Amendment Foundation and the USCCA (United States Concealed Carry Association).

However, some people argue that the NRA and other Second Amendment organizations compromise too much. That is one reason I would recommend also supporting a “No Compromise” Second Amendment organization. These organizations generally refuse to surrender any of our Second Amendment rights for any reason. I would recommend the GOA (Gun Owners Of America). You can investigate the different organizations by visiting their websites.

3. Support “Special Interest” Second Amendment Organizations.

Sometimes, it can be very hard to get some people to listen to pro-Second Amendment organizations. Many people blindly assume that the NRA, GOA, and other organizations are just crazy gun nuts. However, they might listen to a “Special Interest” Second Amendment organization before they would listen to the NRA or GOA. Many of these organizations are based on minority status, or some other special interest.

In most cases, you can join one of the “Special Interest” Second Amendment organizations even if you are not a minority or fall into whatever special category they represent. For example, I am not Jewish, but I support the JPFO (Jews For The Preservation Of Firearms Ownership). The JPFO is a “No Compromise” organization that tries to make people understand that gun control often leads to genocide.

I also support the LEAA (Law Enforcement Alliance of America). The LEAA is a police based organization that supports the Second Amendment for police officers and citizens. They were instrumental in getting the National Carry For Police passed. There are women-based organizations such as the Second Amendment Sisters and the Liberty Belles. One organization that people are surprised to learn about is the Pink Pistols. They are a pro-Second Amendment homosexual organization.

4. Support Your Local Second Amendment Organizations.

Many people fail to realize the importance of state level organizations. Because of their nature, they are usually more in touch with the grassroots than the big national organizations. Their power comes from their ability to organize many individuals to deliver a unified message to the legislature. They are also effective in taking many individual suggestions to national organizations like the NRA, who can lend immense political pressure.

It is not one or the other. You need to be involved in several organizations today. A good state organization will work together with the NRA. Unfortunately, the state and local organizations are easily neglected, because the national organizations can seem to take a greater precedence. Sometimes, the national organizations are often too busy on the national level to fight at the local and state levels.

This is where your state or local organization comes in. Find out who your local organizations are and support them. For example, I have recently become active with Buckeye Firearms Association. They are an Ohio-based organization that is solely concerned with the interests of Ohio's gun owners.

The local organizations are always in the need of volunteers to hand out information, make phone calls, or campaign for local pro-Second Amendment politicians, and other activities. Campaigning for a pro-gun candidate is probably the area where the local or state level organizations need the most help.

Jim Irvine, chairman of Buckeye Firearms Association, says, "If you have a person who is willing to go to the statehouse and fight for your rights for two years, you owe that person two days of your time for his/her campaign. Everyone is busy, but you make time for the important things. This is important. Contact your NRA EVC or a good statewide organization and help their endorsed candidates. Your help gives power to the organization, and builds respect in the legislature. Each new person makes a difference."

5. Contact Your Local, State, and National Representatives.

Write to your local, state, and national representatives and let them know how you feel about the Second Amendment. Send them a letter thanking them or asking for their support. If they are against the Second Amendment, write them a letter to ask them why. Challenge them. Frame your argument in terms of why are you against my (or my wife's/sister's/mother's/grandfather's) right to defend ourselves from a killer/rapist?

Discuss the benefits of gun ownership by giving them the facts, and use that information to discredit the anti-gun arguments. However, make sure that you are polite and DO NOT make any threats. All gun owners should consider campaigning for pro-Second Amendment candidates and vote on election day!

6. Get your Concealed Handgun License.

If you support the Second Amendment, you should get your CHL even if you never plan on carrying a firearm. It's sad to say, but it's a numbers game. The more people who have the permits, the more powerful our voices become. In the rare circumstance that a CHL-holder commits a crime with a firearm, the

media most likely make it sound like every CHL-holder is a future felon. The more law-abiding CHL-holders we have, the easier it becomes to show that the criminals are a rare exception. If you do decide to get your CHL, make sure you do it legally, and get the proper training.

7. Buy A Gun.

If you can afford it, help keep a firearm company in business by buying a new gun (or three) this year. Whenever you buy a gun, make sure that you know how to use it, and how to properly store it.

8. Support Your Local Shooting Ranges.

It is one of my dreams to own a shooting range. During my research, I was amazed to learn how expensive they are to build, maintain, and to manage the day to day operations. It is amazing that the commercial ranges make enough money to stay in business and still make a small profit.

One thing to think about is how many shooting ranges in your area have closed due to financial reasons, lawsuits, or eminent domain. We need to help keep commercial ranges open for the future of the Second Amendment. It may be cheaper to legally shoot on private land, but don't forget about us unfortunate people who live in the city. The commercial ranges are often the only place for us to shoot. Good places to shoot are getting harder to find. If you find one, help keep it in business.

9. Support Your Local Gun Store.

This may be the most surprising of all of my suggestions. Instead of saving money by buying a gun on the Internet, buy them at a local "mom and pop" gun store. Granted the stores can't meet the prices of an internet gun warehouse, but they give you the opportunity to handle firearms. They are also great places to "talk guns" and be surrounded by like minded people. Hopefully, their customer service will make up for the extra money that you spent on the item.

However, the gun stores have to take some responsibility here too. Too often, firearm businesses employ way too many "Ex Navy Seal Commandos" who chase away more customers than they keep. Employees and owners must be sensitive to the customer who is interested in learning about guns and becoming a gun owner. Too many times, gun store employees tend to make "rookie" gun enthusiasts feel incompetent and are unwilling to educate these potential customers in a friendly, welcoming manner. If a customer is treated right, they are often loyal.

For example, I continue to buy all of my guns at the same small gun store. I still buy off of them despite the fact that I can buy them cheaper on line. They have a customer for life, because they treated me great when I bought

my first gun. Keeping good stores in business helps us recruit new gun owners which are crucial in protecting our Second Amendment rights.

10. Support Gun Shows.

You don't know what you are missing if you haven't been to a gun show. They are often packed with table after table of guns, and other gun related merchandise. They are a great place to try to find a rare firearm, and to look at a large number of firearms that you don't get to see everyday.

If you have been paying attention to the fight for our Second Amendment rights, you know that gun shows are under attack. Some counties and cities are banning them or doing their best to make it an unpleasant experience for attendees. Start supporting the gun shows in your area or they will become a thing of the past. You may also bump into a pro-gun legislator. Is there a better time to talk to him/her about Second Amendment issues?

11. Share Your Gun Magazines.

I am a compulsive reader and I often hoard my old magazines. Every once in awhile (to keep the fiancée happy) I end up throwing away a bunch of my old Second Amendment, and gun related magazines. After dumping my last batch I thought of a better way to dispose of them. How about leaving them in the waiting room of various places that you visit? Hopefully, someone will thumb through a copy of a magazine like Concealed Carry Magazine and it will spark an interest.

If the magazine is from a subscription, don't forget to cut off your personal information before leaving it behind. Another way to share your magazines is to donate a subscription to the library. Some Libraries will gladly accept subscriptions to magazines. If yours does, donate a subscription to Concealed Carry Magazine, the various NRA magazines, or another gun related magazine such as "Guns and Ammo."

12. Advertise Your Right.

Buy and wear some outfits that tell others that you support the Second Amendment. The NRA has a great selection of high quality clothing. However, you should be careful not to wear any pro-Second Amendment clothing that has what can be perceived to be sexist, racist, or threatening. Avoid T-Shirts that have sayings such as "Trespassers Will be Shot, Survivors Will Be Shot Again" or similar messages. They may be funny to some, but they do nothing but add to the violent gun owner stereotype.

13. Write To Your Local Papers.

Don't let anti-gun biases go unchallenged. Write a letter to the editor whenever you see an anti-gun article or bias. Also, write letters to the editor explaining the benefits of CCW laws and the Second Amendment.

14. Stay Informed.

There are too many gun owners who do nothing to help fight for our Second Amendment rights. Before you can act, you have to know what is going on. Probably the best magazine to be informed of what is going with the Second Amendment politics is the NRA magazine “America’s First Freedom.” In addition, read magazines such as Concealed Carry, Combat Handguns, and American Handgunner. Frequent pro-gun websites such as Packing.org, and Keepandbeararms.com.

Don’t forget to listen to the NRA news show, Cam & Company, on Sirius Satellite radio. Cam & Company can also be heard on line at NRAnews.com. And, of course, subscribe to Buckeye Firearms News. All of these will help keep you informed of the different firearms, accessories, tactics, and other safety information.

15. Introduce Someone To The Shooting Sports.

Make it a yearly goal to introduce at least 3 people to the shooting sports and firearms every year. The most important area to concentrate is women and children. Women only make up a small percentage of shooters. Women are now the fastest growing segment of gun ownership. Educate the women in your life about using a gun for self-defense. It may save their life.

Also, going to the range can be a great bonding experience for you and your significant other. I really enjoy the time I spend on the range with my fiancée (even if she can almost outshoot me after only 3 trips to the range).

In addition to women, we need to teach children about their Second Amendment rights. I don’t think I need to explain how the schools and media are brain washing our children to be anti-gun. I know it’s an over used cliché, but the children are our future. One of the best ways to secure our Second Amendment rights for the future is to introduce firearms and shooting to children at an early age. Supervised trips to the range help teach marksmanship and responsibility.

Every gun owner should be doing as many of these suggestions as possible. Many do all of them, and more. Decide what you are capable of doing and start expanding your involvement from there. The anti-gunners do not have the power to beat us, but we are fighting back from losses suffered as a result of our complacency in the past.

It’s up to each of us to never again give up ground to those who would disarm us. We only have to look to the events that happened a few months ago to see that we have to worry about losing our Second Amendment rights.

I was horrified when I saw the reports of the gun confiscation in Louisiana

after Hurricane Katrina, and the passage of the handgun ban in San Francisco. Litigation may have stopped the gun confiscations in Louisiana, but we can't forget that it happened. If it happened there, it can happen in your home town. Its time to get serous about your Second Amendment rights before it's too late.

Become 500 Times More Powerful Politically

Although written from a partisan standpoint, this non-partisan PAC believes the tactical political information contained herein is important for ALL gun owners to consider, regardless of party. For the record, Buckeye Firearms Association has no stance on any issue other than gun rights.

The Most Powerful Office in the World is Not the Presidency of the United States!!

“I was a Precinct Committeeman for 16 years and I eagerly encourage others to do likewise.” - Phyllis Schlafly, President, Eagle Forum

“I hope this (essay) gets wide distribution.” - Hon. U.S. Rep. Phillip M. Crane

I admit it. The title of this essay is a little misleading. George W. Bush is the most powerful man in the world, so technically, the U.S. Presidency is the “Most Powerful Office in the World.” But what if I told you there is another public office that (ultimately) chooses who will be President plus virtually every other elected official in the U. S.? If that were true, wouldn’t that office (ultimately) be the “Most Powerful Office in the World?”

Conservatives take pride in their knowledge of the Constitution and the outward forms of American Government. Many can quote the Founding Fathers: “The least governed are the best governed” (Jefferson), “Government is like fire, a useful servant but a deadly master” (George Washington), etc. We work hard electing a few tokens (like Reagan). But the bottom line is, we know next to nothing about the real system of American government, which isn’t the fairy tale we’re taught in school.

That’s why years after the “Reagan Revolution” taxes (and tax-funded abortions) are up, the real Federal debt (with Social Security and other Federal pension liabilities) continues to skyrocket, government regulations and mandates multiply like rabbits. Public schools, the Second Amendment, gay rights — I dare you to find one public policy issue that isn’t worse from a conservative perspective!

If you are tired of seeing things continue to go down the drain, you must understand how liberals dominate our government. You must understand the seven laws of American government:

1. If you want to change things, change the laws.

Remember all the nonsense we learned in school about “Coequal Branches of Government”? Actually the Founding Fathers made Congress far and away

the most powerful branch because it was “closest to the people.” The President can’t spend a dime unless Congress authorizes it. Congress can reject treaties and Presidential appointments, mandate programs the President doesn’t want (by overriding vetoes) and even determine if the Supreme Court can rule on a case (Article III, section 2, “...the Supreme Court shall have original Jurisdiction...with such exceptions and under such Regulations as the Congress shall make.”)!

Because our state constitutions are modeled after the Federal Constitution, it’s the same story at the local level. Governors and State Supreme Court Justices have some influence, but ultimate power lies in the same legislature that passes the laws and determines what happen in our society. Unfortunately, most legislatures are dominated by liberals.

2. To change laws, change the lawmakers.

No citizens or group can possibly keep up with the thousands of laws passed each year by U.S. legislatures. Sure, a big protest campaign can change a vote or two. But after all the shouting is over, sometime down the road, liberal legislators quietly pass whatever they wanted in the first place. There’s really no substitute for legislators we can count on whether our eyes are on them or not.

3. Our people have to be on the ballot to get elected.

When was the last time you were really enthusiastic about a candidate? How often do you vote for the “lesser of two evils”? Ever wonder why, despite the rhetoric, both major parties promote anti-conservative policies after they are elected?

4. To get on the ballot, our people must win a major party primary.

Except in very rare cases, everyone we elect in the fall wins a major party primary. Because one party usually dominates a district, 90% of legislative seats are actually decided in the dominant party primary, not in the fall. Usually no more than 20% of registered voters bother to vote in these all important primaries.

In dominant party primaries with multiple candidates (very common after an incumbent retires), less than 7% of registered voters determine who goes to the legislature (Campaigns and Elections magazine says 108 major-party nominations for governor or U.S. Senate in the 1990’s went to candidates who won with less than 50% of the primary vote). Since only about half of the eligible population bothers to register to vote, I estimate about 4% are telling all the rest of us what to do!

Some naive conservatives fall for third party appeals of “conservative” leaders who are more interested in fundraising than results. But our “winner take

all” system (like England and Canada) does not provide for proportional representation. Winning 10% of the votes in a general election gets us nothing. Winning 10% of the votes in the primary of the party that dominates a district usually wins a legislative seat.

5. Party endorsed candidates win the primary.

Sometimes candidates endorsed by local party organizations lose primaries, but it’s rare. Endorsements mean you get party money plus party workers who will pass out sample ballots with your name prominently endorsed. Primary voters are no different than anyone else. They don’t have a lot of time to study the qualifications of primary candidates and their stand on the issues. Usually they see the party endorsements, assume “the Party knows best,” and punch the appropriate holes.

There are state, ward and township party organizations, but the basic unit of U.S. government is the county. In nearly every case, the party endorsements the primary voter sees are made by a county executive committee. This executive committee is usually elected by the county’s precinct committeemen. These committeemen are elected in the party primary from every precinct (normally about 500 voters) in the county.

In some states, the office of precinct committeeman goes under another name (in Michigan, they are called precinct delegates; in Ohio, it is precinct executive). Sometimes (as in Illinois’ Cook County), the county executive committee is elected by primary voters from an entire ward, township or county. But such widespread voting for a major party’s county executive committee is the exception, not the rule. Normally it is the locally elected precinct committeemen who ultimately control endorsements.

Each state has slightly different rules for getting on the primary ballot for committeeman. For example, in Illinois (outside Cook County) you must file the signatures of any 10 registered voters in your precinct 90 days before the primary. In Ohio, you must file 5 signatures 75 days before the primary from voters who either voted in you party’s primary or didn’t vote in any primary in the last two years. The rules (and the name of the office) may differ slightly from state to state, but it’s usually easy to get on the ballot to run as a committeeman.

6. It’s not necessary to have a majority of the county committeemen to influence the endorsement process.

Here’s how it works in my home county, Lake County, Illinois. Lake is mostly Republican. To advance their agenda, liberals get elected as Republican committeemen. There are about 400 precincts in Lake. Normally about 100 are “vacant”, i.e., nobody ran for Republican committeeman in the last primary. Of the 300 or so elected committeemen, about 10% are conservatives, 15%

are liberals and the rest are “regulars” mainly interested in patronage and power who usually could care less about issues like abortion, gay rights, gun control, etc.

Say X and Y are running for Lake County’s executive committee. Each has half of the “regulars”. Where are they going to get the necessary voters to get a majority? From 45 liberals or 30 conservatives? And once elected, who do you think the winning candidate is going to endorse in the next primary — a liberal Republican or a conservative? That’s why most of Lake County’s officials vote liberal, despite an overwhelming Republican vote. That’s how 45 people in a county of 520,000 control the endorsement process. In my county, it’s not 4% telling all the rest us what to do, it’s less than one hundredth of 1%!!

Occasionally, some rich amateur will dump millions into a campaign and become a senator or governor overnight. But for the vast majority of politicians, it’s a long, slow grind to the top. Each step of the ladder, they need a party endorsement — endorsements which in both parties are dominated by liberals. Is it any wonder why we get the government we do?

In summary, to change things, we must change the laws. To change the laws, we must change the people making them. To get elected, our people must get on the ballot. To get on the ballot, they must win a major party primary. To win the primary, they should get endorsed by their party. To get a party endorsement, we must find, train, and elect precinct committeemen who will in turn elect the people who make party endorsements. Precinct committeeman is the most powerful office in the world because it is committeemen who ultimately determine who goes to Washington D.C. and our state capitol.

7. The most powerful office in the world is easy to get!

Lake is typical among U.S. counties. 25% of the committeeman spots of the dominant party are normally “vacant.” In these precincts, if you get on the primary ballot with no primary opponent, the only way you can lose is through an almost impossible write-in campaign.

In the other 75% of precincts, you will probably have to oust an incumbent committeeman (sometimes they withdraw rather than fight). But most incumbent committeemen are patronage hacks who do little besides drop off party literature and endorsements. (When was the last time any committeeman came to your door?). \$50 for literature, a few weekends visiting the hundred or so homes that might vote in your party’s primary and any dedicated conservative can win.

In my experience in Illinois, it’s very rare for a conservative who follows the formula above to lose to a “Regular” Republican committeeman — even a

“regular” who has had the office for decades. I’ve even seen one issue zealots who insisted on converting everyone to their cause (pro-life, gun rights, etc.) eke out wins. Those who follow our advice and say “I’d like to represent your views to the Republican Party. What do you think are the most important issues?” usually win 2 to 1.

Of course, being a conservative is harder in the Democratic party, but there are many “Reagan Democrat” areas where conservatives can win and the Democrat party is the only game in town. As the 1992 Presidential election proved, it’s a mistake to put all our conservative eggs in one party’s rickety basket. Believe me, liberals never make that mistake. They always join the dominant party of their area, no matter which it is. Voting for the Executive Committee and determining those critical primary endorsement is by far the most important power of precinct committeeman, but there are others:

Access to Neighbors. The media makes conservatives look like kooks. No wonder conservative politicians have problems. As the dominant party’s committeeman, you can reach people who would never come to your church, social club or home. Most voters are eager to know about their government and the people they elect. Even the most apathetic have some interest in an institution that is taking about half their income in taxes, mandates and fees.

Respect from Politicians. Committeemen represent 500 voters and those key party endorsements. Any call or letter from a committeeman is going to get a lot of attention from elected officials of their own party.

Launching point for other offices. Running for committeeman is the best place to start learning how to build winning coalitions. One of the big problems among conservatives is the notion that running for office is like running a business. Levelheaded businessmen, who wouldn’t dream of being their own lawyer in court, somehow think they can win against experienced, entrenched liberals without any prior political experience.

Control of party leaders and platforms. Committeemen influence or control most party matters. If the Republicans dump pro-life and other conservative positions from their party platform, it won’t be because of election results. It will be due to a handful of liberals who have patiently wormed their way to high party positions, starting as precinct committeeman.

Now you know how our Government actually works, just like the average liberal does. You can continue to picket, write letters to the editor and your Congressman or work in another losing, non endorsed primary campaign — all the things that have gotten conservatives nowhere the last 60 years. Or you can stop wasting time, run for precinct committeeman and start using the liberals’ secret weapon against them

Gun Rights Are About More Than Guns

by Dean Rieck

When proponents of gun control listen to the arguments made by proponents of gun rights, all they hear is “guns.” That’s what they think it’s all about — guns, guns, and more guns. And they couldn’t be more wrong.

That’s the frustrating part about this particular policy debate. Gun control activists are so focused on guns, they can’t see past the hardware. They’re so afraid of pistols, they can’t fathom why people own them. They’re so confounded by rifles, they don’t understand why hunters love them.

They just don’t get it. When those of us in the pro-gun camp talk about gun rights, we’re talking about more than guns. A lot more. We’re talking about ...

The spirit of independence.

The ideal of self-reliance.

The celebration of tradition.

The discipline of marksmanship.

The satisfaction of putting food on the table.

The obligation of protecting ourselves and our families.

The pride of collecting and smithing.

The camaraderie of friends, family, and team mates.

And the sheer joy that comes from the doing of something, and doing it well.

We’re talking about the history of a free country and how such a valuable prize requires such a high price and eternal vigilance.

We’re talking about the faith in our founders who knew all too well that no country or king can be trusted with too much power and that evil can overrun any government from within or without.

We’re talking about equality, not the feeble equality of words but the vigorous equality of citizens who stand firm in the face of adversity and refuse to be the helpless victims of predators, bigots, and madmen.

When we pay our dues to the NRA, and write our letters to the representatives, and cast our votes for the candidates who vow to protect the Second Amendment, we're talking about something that's far more than a gun, something that lives deep within us and puts a lump in our throats and brings tears to our eyes.

When former NRA President Charlton Heston held aloft a muzzle loader from the Revolutionary War and in a loud, firm voice declared to the world that it could only be taken from his "cold, dead hands," every gun rights supporter knew exactly what he was talking about. And it wasn't about that rifle.

It was a challenge. But it was also a prayer, a voice lifted up in steely resolve calling to Americans like you and me who hold in our hands something more powerful than a gun, something that must be cherished and guarded each day. It's something no one has ever invented a word for but which we all know to be true.

It's that something that "they" just don't get. And they never will. But they are not our enemies. They are simply people who don't understand. Our true enemy is us. We are the enemy of our own freedom and liberty if we forget what that something is. Because if we let that something wither and die, they will take it from our cold, dead hands. And our children will never hold it or even understand it. And America will never be the same.

Raging Against Self Defense — A Psychiatrist Examines The Anti-Gun Mentality

By Sarah Thompson, M.D.

“You don’t need to have a gun; the police will protect you.”

“If people carry guns, there will be murders over parking spaces and neighborhood basketball games.”

“I’m a pacifist. Enlightened, spiritually aware people shouldn’t own guns.”

“I’d rather be raped than have some redneck militia type try to rescue me.”

How often have you heard these statements from misguided advocates of victim disarmament, or even woefully uninformed relatives and neighbors?

Why do people cling so tightly to these beliefs, in the face of incontrovertible evidence that they are wrong? Why do they get so furiously angry when gun owners point out that their arguments are factually and logically incorrect?

How can you communicate with these people who seem to be out of touch with reality and rational thought?

One approach to help you deal with anti-gun people is to understand their psychological processes. Once you understand why these people behave so irrationally, you can communicate more effectively with them.

Defense Mechanisms

Projection

About a year ago I received an e-mail from a member of a local Jewish organization. The author, who chose to remain anonymous, insisted that people have no right to carry firearms because he didn’t want to be murdered if one of his neighbors had a “bad day”. (I don’t know that this person is a “he”, but I’m assuming so for the sake of simplicity.) I responded by asking him why he thought his neighbors wanted to murder him, and, of course, got no response. The truth is that he’s statistically more likely to be murdered by a neighbor who doesn’t legally carry a firearm^[1] and more likely to be shot accidentally by a law enforcement officer.^[2]

How does my correspondent “know” that his neighbors would murder him if they had guns? He doesn’t. What he was really saying was that if he had a

gun, he might murder his neighbors if he had a bad day, or if they took his parking space, or played their stereos too loud. This is an example of what mental health professionals call projection — unconsciously projecting one's own unacceptable feelings onto other people, so that one doesn't have to own them.[3] In some cases, the intolerable feelings are projected not onto a person, but onto an inanimate object, such as a gun,[4] so that the projector believes the gun itself will murder him.

Projection is a defense mechanism. Defense mechanisms are unconscious psychological mechanisms that protect us from feelings that we cannot consciously accept.[5] They operate without our awareness, so that we don't have to deal consciously with “forbidden” feelings and impulses. Thus, if you asked my e-mail correspondent if he really wanted to murder his neighbors, he would vehemently deny it, and insist that other people want to kill him.

Projection is a particularly insidious defense mechanism, because it not only prevents a person from dealing with his own feelings, it also creates a world where he perceives everyone else as directing his own hostile feelings back at him.[6]

All people have violent, and even homicidal, impulses. For example, it's common to hear people say “I'd like to kill my boss”, or “If you do that one more time I'm going to kill you.” They don't actually mean that they're going to, or even would, kill anyone; they're simply acknowledging anger and frustration. All of us suffer from fear and feelings of helplessness and vulnerability. Most people can acknowledge feelings of rage, fear, frustration, jealousy, etc. without having to act on them in inappropriate and destructive ways.

Some people, however, are unable consciously to admit that they have such “unacceptable” emotions. They may have higher than average levels of rage, frustration, or fear. Perhaps they fear that if they acknowledge the hostile feelings, they will lose control and really will hurt someone. They may believe that “good people” never have such feelings, when in fact all people have them.

This is especially true now that education “experts” commonly prohibit children from expressing negative emotions or aggression. Instead of learning that such emotions are normal, but that destructive behavior needs to be controlled, children now learn that feelings of anger are evil, dangerous and subject to severe punishment.[7] To protect themselves from “being bad”, they are forced to use defense mechanisms to avoid owning their own normal emotions. Unfortunately, using such defense mechanisms inappropriately can endanger their mental health; children need to learn how to deal appropriately with reality, not how to avoid it.[8]

(This discussion of psychological mechanisms applies to the average person who is uninformed, or misinformed, about firearms and self-defense. It does not apply to the anti-gun ideologue. Fanatics like Charles Schumer know the facts about firearms, and advocate victim disarmament consciously and willfully in order to gain political power. This psychological analysis does not apply to them.)

Denial

Another defense mechanism commonly utilized by supporters of gun control is denial. Denial is simply refusing to accept the reality of a given situation.[9] For example, consider a woman whose husband starts coming home late, has strange perfume on his clothes, and starts charging flowers and jewelry on his credit card. She may get extremely angry at a well-meaning friend who suggests that her husband is having an affair. The reality is obvious, but the wronged wife is so threatened by her husband's infidelity that she is unable to accept it, and so denies its existence.

Anti-gun people do the same thing. It's obvious that we live in a dangerous society, where criminals attack innocent people. Just about everyone has been, or knows someone who has been, victimized. It's equally obvious that law enforcement can't protect everyone everywhere 24 hours a day. Extensive scholarly research demonstrates that the police have no legal duty to protect you[10] and that firearm ownership is the most effective way to protect yourself and your family.[11] There is irrefutable evidence that victim disarmament nearly always precedes genocide.[12] Nonetheless, the anti-gun folks insist, despite all evidence to the contrary, that "the police will protect you", "this is a safe neighborhood" and "it can't happen here", where "it" is everything from mugging to mass murder.

Anti-gun people who refuse to accept the reality of the proven and very serious dangers of civilian disarmament are using denial to protect themselves from the anxiety of feeling helpless and vulnerable. Likewise, gun owners who insist that "the government will never confiscate my guns" are also using denial to protect themselves from the anxiety of contemplating being forcibly disarmed and rendered helpless and vulnerable.

Reaction Formation

Reaction formation is yet another defense mechanism common among the anti-gun folks. Reaction formation occurs when a person's mind turns an unacceptable feeling or desire into its complete opposite.[13] For example, a child who is jealous of a sibling may exhibit excessive love and devotion for the hated brother or sister.

Likewise, a person who harbors murderous rage toward his fellow humans may claim to be a devoted pacifist and refuse to eat meat or even kill a cockroach.[14] Often such people take refuge in various spiritual disciplines and believe that they are “superior” to “less civilized” folks who engage in “violent behavior” such as hunting, or even target shooting. They may devote themselves to “animal welfare” organizations that proclaim the rights of animals take precedence over the rights of people.[15] This not only allows the angry person to avoid dealing with his rage, it allows him actually to harm the people he hates without having to know he hates them.

This is not meant to disparage the many wonderful people who are pacifists, spiritually inclined, vegetarian, or who support animal welfare. The key issue is not the belief itself, but rather the way in which the person experiences and lives his beliefs. Sincere practitioners seek to improve themselves, or to be helpful in a gentle, respectful fashion. They work to persuade others peacefully by setting an example of what they believe to be correct behavior. Sincere pacifists generally exhibit good will towards others, even towards persons with whom they might disagree on various issues.

Contrast the sincere pacifist or animal lover with the strident, angry person who wants to ban meat and who believes murdering hunters is justified in order to “save the animals” — or the person who wants to outlaw self-defense and believes innocent people have the obligation to be raped and murdered for the good of society. For example, noted feminist Betty Friedan said “that lethal violence even in self defense only engenders more violence.”[16] The truly spiritual, pacifist person refrains from forcing others to do what he believes, and is generally driven by positive emotions, while the angry person finds “socially acceptable” ways to harm, abuse, or even kill, his fellow man.

In the case of anti-gun people, reaction formation keeps any knowledge of their hatred for their fellow humans out of consciousness, while allowing them to feel superior to “violent gun owners”. At the same time, it also allows them to cause serious harm, and even loss of life, to others by denying them the tools necessary to defend themselves. This makes reaction formation very attractive from a psychological point of view, and therefore very difficult to counteract.

Defense Mechanisms Are Not Mental Illnesses

Defense mechanisms are normal. All of us use them to some extent, and their use does not imply mental illness. Advocates of victim disarmament may be misguided or uninformed, they may be stupid, or they may be consciously intent on evil, but that doesn’t necessarily mean they are “mentally ill”.

Some defense mechanisms, however, are healthier than others. A safe general rule is that a defense is healthy if it helps you to function better in your personal and professional life, and unhealthy if it interferes with your life, your relationships, or the well-being of others. Young children utilize projection and denial much more commonly than do healthy adults. On the other hand, “if projection is used as a defense mechanism to a very great extent in adult life, the user’s perception of external reality will be seriously distorted.”[17]

Defense mechanisms are also frequently combined, so that an anti-gun person may use several defense mechanisms simultaneously. For example, my unfortunate correspondent uses projection to create a world in which all his neighbors want to murder him. As a result, he becomes more angry and fearful, and needs to employ even more defense mechanisms to cope. So he uses projection to attribute his own rage to others, he uses denial that there is any danger to protect himself from a world where he believes he is helpless and everyone wants to murder him, and he uses reaction formation to try to control everyone else’s life because his own is so horribly out of control.

Also, it’s important to remember that not all anti-gun beliefs are the result of defense mechanisms. Some people suffer from gun phobia[18], an excessive and completely irrational fear of firearms, usually caused by the anti-gun conditioning they’ve been subjected to by the media, politicians, so-called “educators,” and others. In some cases, gun phobia is caused by an authentic bad experience associated with a firearm. But with all due respect to Col. Jeff Cooper, who coined the term “hoplophobia” to describe anti-gun people, most anti-gun people do not have true phobias. Interestingly, a person with a true phobia of guns realizes his fear is excessive or unreasonable,[19] something most anti-gun folks will never admit.

Defense Mechanisms Distort Reality

Because defense mechanisms distort reality in order to avoid unpleasant emotions, the person who uses them has an impaired ability to recognize and accept reality. This explains why my e-mail correspondent and many other anti-gun people persist in believing that their neighbors and co-workers will become mass murderers if allowed to own firearms.

People who legally carry concealed firearms are actually less violent and less prone to criminal activity of all kinds than is the general population.[20] A person who has a clean record, has passed an FBI background check, undergone firearms training, and spent several hundred dollars to get a permit and a firearm, is highly unlikely to choose to murder a neighbor. Doing so would result in his facing a police manhunt, a trial, prison, possibly capital punish-

ment, and the destruction of his family, job, and reputation. Obviously it would make no sense for such a person to shoot a neighbor — except in self-defense. Equally obviously, the anti-gun person who believes that malicious shootings by ordinary gun owners are likely to occur is not in touch with reality.[21]

The Common Thread: Rage

In my experience, the common thread in anti-gun people is rage. Either anti-gun people harbor more rage than others, or they're less able to cope with it appropriately. Because they can't handle their own feelings of rage, they are forced to use defense mechanisms in an unhealthy manner. Because they wrongly perceive others as seeking to harm them, they advocate disarming ordinary people who have no desire to harm anyone. So why do anti-gun people have so much rage and why are they unable to deal with it in appropriate ways? Consider that the largest and most hysterical anti-gun groups include disproportionately large numbers of women, African-Americans and Jews. And virtually all of the organizations that claim to speak for these "oppressed people" are stridently anti-gun. Not coincidentally, among Jews, Blacks and women there are many "professional victims" who have little sense of identity outside of their victimhood.

Identity as Victim

If I were to summarize this article in three sentences, they would be:

- (1) People who identify themselves as "victims" harbor excessive amounts of rage at other people, whom they perceive as "not victims."
- (2) In order psychologically to deal with this rage, these "victims" utilize defense mechanisms that enable them to harm others in socially acceptable ways, without accepting responsibility or suffering guilt, and without having to give up their status as "victims."
- (3) Gun owners are frequently the targets of professional victims because gun owners are willing and able to prevent their own victimization.

Thus the concept of "identity as victim" is essential. How and why do members of some groups choose to identify themselves as victims and teach their children to do the same? While it's true that women, Jews, and African-Americans have historically been victimized, they now participate in American society on an equal basis. And other groups, most notably Asian-Americans, have been equally victimized, and yet have transcended the "eternal victim" mentality.

Why, for example, would a 6'10" NBA player who makes \$10 million a year see himself as a "victim"? Why would a successful, respected, wealthy, Jewish physician regard himself as a "victim"? Conversely, why might a wheelchair bound woman who lives on government disability NOT regard herself as a victim?

I would argue it's because the basketball player and the physician believe that their identities are dependent on being victims — not because they have actually been victimized, but because they're members of groups that claim victim status. Conversely, the disabled woman was probably raised to believe that she is responsible for her own success or failure.

In fact, many people who have been victims of actual violent crime, or who have survived war or civil strife, support the right of self-defense. The old saying is often correct: "a conservative is a liberal who has been mugged."

Special Treatment and Misleading Leaders

Two reasons for these groups to insist on "victim" status seem likely. First, by claiming victim status, members of these groups can demand (and get) special treatment through quotas, affirmative action, reparations, and other preferential treatment programs.

Second, these people have been indoctrinated to believe that there is no alternative to remaining a victim forever. Their leaders remind them constantly that they are mistreated in every imaginable way (most imaginary!), attribute every one of life's misfortunes to "racism" or "sexism" or "hate crimes", and dream up ever more complex schemes for special treatment and favors.[22] These leaders are the ones who preach that the entire Black experience is slavery and racism, or that Jewish history before and after the Holocaust is irrelevant,[23] or that happily married women are really victims of sexual slavery.[24]

Likewise, the NAACP is suing firearms manufacturers to put them out of business,[25] and is especially opposed to the inexpensive pistols that enable the poor to defend themselves in gang-ridden inner cities. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) proposed evicting anyone who dares to keep a tool of self-defense in any of its crime-infested housing projects. Jewish leaders, especially those in the politically correct "Reform" branch, preach that gun control is "a solemn religious obligation",[26] contrary to the teachings of their sacred scriptures and their own history.[27] Law enforcement agencies falsely teach women that they are safest if they don't resist rapists and robbers,[28] while women's organizations advocate gun control, thus rendering women and their children defenseless.

Victimhood is good business for organizations that foster victim status. As victims, the members depend upon the organization to protect them, and the organization in turn relies on members for funding and political power. In the interest of self-preservation, these organizations work hard at preserving hatred and bigotry and at keeping their members defenseless — and therefore dependent.

Anti-Gun Groups Love Victims!

From my observations, pro-victimhood is a feature of all of the anti-gun special interest groups, not just the ones mentioned here. Every organization that supports gun control apparently wants its members to be helpless, terrified and totally dependent on someone else to control every aspect of their lives. It doesn't matter whether it's a religious, racial, ethnic, political, social, or charitable group. From Handgun Control, Inc. to the Anti-Defamation League to the Million Mom March, they all want you to live in fear. In this scheme, soccer moms are "victims" just as much as are inner-city minorities.

If these organizations truly cared about the people for whom they claim to speak, they would encourage safe and responsible firearms ownership. They would help people to learn how to defend themselves and their families so that they wouldn't have to live in fear. They would tell everyone that one of the wonderful things about being an American is that you have the right to keep and bear arms, the right to defend yourself, and how these rights preserve the right to be free.

The Psychological Price of Being a Victim

In our current society, victimhood has many perceived benefits, but there are some serious drawbacks. Victims tend to see the world as a scary and threatening place. They believe that others treat them differently, unfairly, and even maliciously — and that they are helpless to do anything about it. This belief, that they are being mistreated and are helpless to resist, generates tremendous rage, and often, serious depression.

But for victims to show rage openly can be dangerous, if not outright suicidal. For example, a battered woman who screams at or hits her attacker may provoke worse beatings or even her own murder. And a person who successfully defends himself loses his status as "victim." For someone whose entire identity is dependent on being a victim, the loss of victim status is just as threatening as loss of life.

So, unable psychologically to cope with such rage, people who view them-

selves as victims: (1) use defense mechanisms to displace it into irrational beliefs about neighbors killing each other, and the infallibility of police protection, and (2) attempt to regain control by controlling gun owners, whom they wrongly perceive as “the enemy”.

Say NO to Being a Victim!

But no one needs to be a victim! Quite simply, it's not very easy to victimize a person who owns and knows how to use a firearm. If most women owned and carried firearms, rapes and beating would decrease.[29] Thugs who target the elderly and disabled would find honest work once they realized they were likely to be looking down the barrel of a pistol or shotgun. It's nearly impossible to enslave, or herd into concentration camps, large numbers of armed people.

Communicating with Anti-Gun People

How can you communicate more effectively with an anti-gun person who is using unhealthy defense mechanisms? There are no quick and easy answers. But there are a few things you should keep in mind.

Anger and Attacks Do Not Work

Most gun owners, when confronted by an anti-gun person, become angry and hostile. This is understandable, because gun owners increasingly face ridicule, persecution and discrimination. (If you don't believe this, ask yourself if anyone would seriously introduce legislation to ban African-Americans, women, or Jews from post offices, schools, and churches. Even convicted felons aren't banned from such places — but peaceful armed citizens are!) But an angry response is counterproductive.

It's not helpful to attack the person you're trying to persuade. Anything that makes him feel more fearful or angry will only intensify his defenses. Your goal is to help the person feel safe, and then to provide experiences and information that will help him to make informed decisions.

Be Gentle

You should never try to break down a defense mechanism by force. Remember that defense mechanisms protect people from feelings they cannot handle. If you take that protection away, you can cause serious psychological harm. And because defense mechanisms operate unconsciously, it won't do any good to show an anti-gun person this article or to point out that he's using defense mechanisms. Your goal is gently and gradually to help the per-

son to have a more realistic and rational view of the world. This cannot be done in one hour or one day.

As you reach out to people in this way, you need to deal with both the illogical thought processes involved and the emotional reactions that anti-gun people have to firearms. When dealing with illogical thought processes, you are attempting to use reason and logic to convince the anti-gun person that his perception of other people and his perception of firearms are seriously inaccurate. The goal is to help him to understand that armed citizens and firearms are not threats, and may even save his life.

Reversing Irrational Thoughts

The Mirror Technique

One approach that can be helpful is simply to feed back what the anti-gun person is telling you, in a neutral, inquisitive way. So, when replying to my anonymous e-mail correspondent (above), I might respond, “So you fear if your neighbors had guns, they would use them to murder you. What makes you think that?” When you simply repeat what the person has said, and ask questions, you are not directly challenging his defenses. You are holding up a mirror to let him see his own views. If he has very strong defenses, he can continue to insist that his neighbors want to murder him. However, if his defenses are less rigid, he may start to question his position.

Another example might be, “Why do you think that your children’s school-teachers would shoot them?” You might follow this up with something like, “Why do you entrust your precious children to someone you believe would murder them?” Again, you are merely asking questions, and not directly attacking the person or his defenses.

Of course the anti-gun person might continue to insist that the teachers really would harm children, but prohibiting them from owning guns would prevent it. So you might ask how using a gun to murder innocent children is different from stabbing children with scissors, assaulting them with baseball bats, or poisoning the milk and cookies.

It’s important to ask “open-ended” questions that require a response other than “yes” or “no”. Such questions require the anti-gun person actually to think about what he is saying. This will help him to re-examine his beliefs. It may also encourage him to ask you questions about firearms use and ownership.

The “What Would You Do?” Technique

Once you have a dialogue going with an anti-gun person, you might want to insert him into a hypothetical scenario, although doing so is a greater threat to his defenses, and is therefore more risky. You might ask how he would deal with a difficult or annoying co-worker. He will likely respond that he would never resort to violence, but “other people” would, especially if they had guns. (Projection again.) You can then ask him who these “other people” are, why they would shoot a co-worker, and what the shooter would gain by doing so.

Don’t try to “win” the argument. Don’t try to embarrass the person you’re trying to educate. Remember that no one likes to admit that his deeply held beliefs are wrong. No one likes to hear “I told you so!” Be patient and gentle. If you are arrogant, condescending, hurtful or rude to the anti-gun person, you will only convince him that gun owners are arrogant, hurtful people — who should not be trusted with guns!

Defusing Emotional Reactions

The “You Are There” Technique

Rational arguments alone are not likely to be successful, especially since many people “feel” rather than “think”. You also need to deal with the emotional responses of the anti-gun person. Remember that most people have been conditioned to associate firearms with dead toddlers. So you need to change the person’s emotional responses along with his thoughts.

One way to do this is to put the anti-gun person (or his family) at a hypothetical crime scene and ask what he would like to have happen. For example, “Imagine your wife is in the parking lot at the supermarket and two men grab her. One holds a knife to her throat while the other tears her clothes off. If I see this happening and have a gun, what should I do? What would happen next? What if after five minutes, the police still haven’t arrived?”

Just let him answer the questions and mentally walk through the scenario. Don’t argue with his answers. You are planting seeds in his mind than can help change his emotional responses.

The Power of Empathy

Another emotion-based approach that is often more successful is to respond sympathetically to the plight of the anti-gun person.

Imagine for a moment how you would feel if you believed your neighbors and co-workers wanted to kill you and your family, and you could do nothing at all about it except to wait for the inevitable to occur.

Not very pleasant, is it?

This is the world in which opponents of armed self-defense live. All of us have had times in our lives when we felt “different” and had to contend with hostile schoolmates, co-workers, etc. So we need to invoke our own compassion for these terrified people. Say something like, “It must be awful to live in fear of being assaulted by your own neighbors. I remember what it was like when I was the only (Jew, Mormon, African-American, Republican) in my (class, football team, workplace) — and even then I didn’t think anyone was going to kill me.” It’s essential that you sincerely feel some compassion and empathy; if you’re glib or sarcastic, this won’t work.

Using empathy works in several ways. First, it defuses a potentially hostile interaction. Anti-gun people are used to being attacked, not understood, by advocates of gun rights. Instead of an “evil, gun-toting, extremist”, you are now a sympathetic, fellow human being. This may also open the door for a friendly conversation, in which you can each discover that your “opponent” is a person with whom you have some things in common. You may even create an opportunity to dispel some of the misinformation about firearms and self-defense that is so prevalent.

This empathy technique is also useful for redirecting, or ending, a heated argument that has become hostile and unproductive. It allows you to escape from the dead end of “guns save lives” vs. “the only reason to have a gun is to murder children.” With empathy you can reframe the argument entirely. Instead of arguing about whether more lives are saved or lost as a result of gun ownership, you can comment on how terrifying it must be to live in a country where 80 million people own guns “solely for the purpose of murdering children”.

You should not expect any of these approaches to work immediately; they won’t. With rare exceptions, the anti-gun person is simply not going to “see the light,” thank you profusely, and beg you to take him shooting. What you are doing is putting tiny chinks into the armor of the person’s defenses, or planting seeds that may someday develop into a more open mind or a more rational analysis. This process can take months or years. But it does work!

Corrective Experiences

Perhaps the most effective way to dissolve defense mechanisms, however, is

by providing corrective experiences[30]. Corrective experiences are experiences that allow a person to learn that his ideas about gun owners and guns are incorrect in a safe and non-threatening way. To provide a corrective experience, you first allow the person to attempt to project his incorrect ideas onto you. Then, you demonstrate that he is wrong by your behavior, not by arguing.

For example, the anti-gun person will unconsciously attempt to provoke you by claiming that gun owners are uneducated “rednecks,” or by treating you as if you are an uneducated “redneck.” If you get angry and respond by calling him a “stupid, liberal, socialist”, you will prove his point. However, if you casually talk about your M.B.A., your trip to the Shakespeare festival, your vegetable garden, or your daughter’s ballet recital, you will provide him with the opportunity to correct his misconceptions.

If you have used the above techniques, then you have already provided one corrective experience. You have demonstrated to the frightened, anti-gun person that gun owners are not abusive, scary, dangerous and sub-human monsters, but normal, everyday people who care about their families, friends and even strangers.

As many gun owners have already discovered, the most important corrective experiences involve actually exposing the fearful person to a firearm. It is almost never advisable to tell someone that you carry a concealed firearm, but there are ways to use your own experience favorably.

For example, if you’re dealing with an anti-gun person with whom you interact regularly and have a generally good relationship — a coworker, neighbor, church member, etc. — you might indirectly refer to concealed carry. You should never say anything like “I’m carrying a gun right now and you can’t even tell,” especially because in some states that would be considered illegal, “threatening” behavior. But you might consider saying something like, “I sometimes carry a firearm, and you’ve never seemed to be uncomfortable around me.” Whether to disclose this information is an individual decision, and you should consider carefully other consequences before using this approach.

First-hand Experience

Ultimately, your goal is to take the anti-gun person shooting. Some people will accept an invitation to accompany you to the range, but others are too frightened to do so, and will need some preliminary experience.

First, you want to encourage the anti-gun person to have some contact with a firearm in whatever way feels most comfortable to him. Many people seem to

believe that firearms have minds of their own and shoot people of their own volition. So you might want to start by inviting him simply to look at and then handle an unloaded firearm. This also provides you the opportunity to show the inexperienced person how to tell whether a firearm is loaded and to teach him the basic rules of firearms safety.

Encourage the newcomer to ask questions and remember that your role is to present accurate information in a friendly, responsible and non-threatening way. This is a good time to offer some reading material on the benefits of firearms ownership. But be careful not to provide so much information that it's overwhelming. And remember this is not the time to launch into anti-government rants, the New World Order, conspiracy theories, or any kind of political talk!

Next, you can invite your friend to accompany you to the shooting range. (And if you're going to trust each other with loaded guns, you should consider yourselves friends!) Assure him that no one will force him to shoot a gun and he's free just to watch. Let him know in advance what he will experience and what will be expected of him. This includes such things as the need for eye and ear protection, a cap, appropriate clothing, etc. Make sure you have a firearm appropriate for your guest should s/he decide to try shooting. This means a lower caliber firearm that doesn't have too much recoil. If your guest is a woman, make sure the firearm will fit her appropriately. Many rifles have stocks that are too long for small women, and double-stack semi-autos are usually too large for a woman's hand.

Remember that just visiting the range can be a corrective experience. Your guest will learn that gun owners are disciplined, responsible, safety-conscious, courteous, considerate, and follow the rules. He will see people of all ages, from children to the elderly, male and female, enjoying an activity together. He will not see a single "beer-swilling redneck" waving a firearm in people's faces.

In my experience, most people who visit a range will decide they do want to try shooting. Remember to make sure your guest understands all the safety rules and range rules before allowing him to handle a firearm. If you don't feel competent to teach a newcomer to shoot, ask an instructor or range master to assist. Remember to provide lots of positive feedback and encouragement. If you're lucky, you'll recruit a new firearms enthusiast.

But even if your guest decides that shooting is "not for him", he will have learned many valuable lessons. He will know basic rules of firearms safety, and how to clear a firearm should he need to do so. This may well save his life someday. He will know that guns do not fire unless a person pulls the trigger. He will know that gun owners are friendly, responsible people, not

very different from him. Even if he chooses not to fire a gun ever again, he will be less likely to fear and persecute gun owners. And who knows, a few months or years later he may decide to become a gun owner.

Why These Techniques Do Not Always Work

You should remember that you will not be successful with all anti-gun people. Some people are so terrified and have such strong defenses, that it's not possible for someone without professional training to get through. Some people have their minds made up and refuse to consider opening them. Others may concede that what you say "makes sense," but are unwilling to challenge the forces of political correctness. A few may have had traumatic experiences with firearms from which they have not recovered.

You will also not be successful with the anti-gun ideologues, people like Charles Schumer and Dianne Feinstein. These people have made a conscious choice to oppose firearms ownership and self-defense. They almost always gain power, prestige, and money from their anti-gun politics. They are not interested in the facts or in saving lives. They know the facts and understand the consequences of their actions, and will happily sacrifice innocent people if it furthers their selfish agenda. Do not use these techniques on such people. They only respond to fears of losing the power, prestige and money that they covet.[31]

Conclusion

By better understanding advocates of civilian disarmament, and by learning and practicing some simple techniques to deal with their psychological defenses, you will be much more effective in your efforts to communicate with anti-gun people. This will enable you to be more successful at educating them about the realities of firearms and self-defense, and their importance to our liberty and safety.

Educating others about firearms is hard work. It's not glamorous, and it generally needs to be done one person at a time. But it's a very necessary and important task. The average American supports freedom of speech and freedom of religion, whether or not he chooses to exercise them. He supports fair trials, whether or not he's ever been in a courtroom. He likewise needs to understand that self-defense is an essential right, whether or not he chooses to own or carry a gun.

© 2000, Sarah Thompson.

Dr. Thompson is Executive Director of Utah Gun Owners Alliance, www.utgoa.org and also writes The Righter, www.therighter.com, a monthly column on individual rights.

Notes

- 1 Lott, John R., Jr. 1998. More Guns, Less Crime. University of Chicago Press. Pp. 11-12;
Proposition B: More Security Or Greater Danger?, St. Louis Post-Dispatch. March 21, 1999.
- 2 Lott 1998, Pp. 1-2.
- 3 Kaplan, Harold M. and Sadock, Benjamin J. 1990. Pocket Handbook of Clinical Psychiatry.
Williams & Wilkins. P. 20.
- 4 Brenner, Charles. 1973. An Elementary Textbook of Psychoanalysis (rev. ed.). Anchor
Books. Pp. 91-93; Lefton, Lester A. 1994. Psychology (5th edition). Allyn & Bacon. Pp. 432-
433.
- 5 Brenner 1973. P. 91.
- 6 Kaplan and Sadock 1990, p. 20; Lefton 1994, p. 432.
- 7 Talbott, John A., Robert E. Hales and Stuart C. Yudofsky, eds. 1988. Textbook of
Psychiatry. American Psychiatric Press. P.137.
- 8 "Kids Suspended for Playground Game." Associated Press. April 6, 2000.
- 9 Lightfoot, Liz. "Gun Return to the Nursery School Toy Chest." The London Telegraph. May
22, 2000. Kaplan and Sadock 1990, p. 20; Lefton 1994, p. 433.
- 10 Stevens, Richard W. 1999. Dial 911 and Die. Mazel Freedom Press. [Analyzes the law in
54 U.S. jurisdictions]; see, e.g., Bowers v. DeVito, 686 F.2d 616, 618 (7th Cir. 1982) [no fed-
eral constitutional right to police protection.]
- 11 Kleck, Gary and Gertz, Marc. 1995. Armed Resistance to Crime: The Prevalence and
Nature of Self- Defense with a Gun. Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology. Vol. 86 (Fall),
pp. 150-187.
- 12 Simkin, Jay, Zelman, Aaron, and Rice, Alan M. 1994. Lethal Laws. Jews for the
Preservation of Firearms Ownership.
- 13 Kaplan and Sadock 1990, p. 20; Lefton 1994, p. 433.
- 14 Brenner 1973, p. 85.
- 15 Veith, Gene Edward, Jr. 1993. Modern Fascism: Liquidating the Judeo-Christian
Worldview. Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing. Pp. 39-40 [fascism exalts nature, animals
and environment].
- 16 Japenga, A. 1994. Would I Be Safer with a Gun? Health. March/April, p. 54.
- 17 Brenner 1973, p. 92.
- 18 Kaplan and Sadock 1990, p. 219.
- 19 American Psychiatric Association. 1994. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental
Disorders, Fourth Edition. P. 410.

20 Lott 1998, pp. 11-12.

21 Most American gun owners are not violent criminals and will not be potential killers. "The vast majority of persons involved in life-threatening violence have a long criminal record and many prior contacts with the justice system." Elliott, Delbert S. 1998. Life Threatening Violence is Primarily a Crime Problem: A Focus on Prevention. University of Colorado Law Review. Vol. 69 (Fall), pp. 1081-1098, at 1093.

22 Sowell, Thomas. 2000. Blacks and bootstraps. Jewish World Review (Aug.14). <http://www.jewishworldreview.com>

23 Wein, Rabbi Berel. 2000. The return of a Torah scroll and confronting painful memories. Jewish World Review (July 12).

24 Dworkin, Andrea. "Terror, Torture and Resistance". <http://www.igc.org/Womensnet/dworkin/TerrorTortureandResistance.html>

25 Mfume, Kweisi, speech at the 90th annual NAACP meeting, July 12, 1999.

26 Yoffie, Rabbi Eric H. Speech supporting the Million Mom March, May 14, 2000. <http://urj.org/yoffie/archive/mmm/>

27 "If someone comes to kill you, arise quickly and kill him." The Talmud, Tractate Sanhedrin. 1994. The Schottenstein Edition. New York: Mesorah Publications. Vol. 2, 72a.

28 Rape and Sexual Assault, Dean of Students Office for Women's Resources and Services McKinley Health Education Dept., University Police, University of Illinois; Hazelwood, R. R. & Harpold, J. 1986. Rape: The Dangers of Providing Confrontational Advice, FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin. Vol. 55, pp. 1-5.

29 Lott 1998, pp. 78, 134-37.

30 Frank, Jerome D. 1961. Persuasion and Healing. The Johns Hopkins Press. Pp. 216-217.

31 Richardson, H. L. 1998. Confrontational Politics. Gun Owners Foundation. 1