

# The Long Night of Gun Violence

The well-organized anger of the Right in favor of guns has silenced many Americans who recognize the madness of letting mentally fragile human beings run around with assault rifles. Will the latest massacre in Colorado do anything to change this strange lethargy, asks Tom H. Hastings.

By Tom H. Hastings

According to Pew Research, white men care more about gun rights than keeping guns out of the hands of killers. What is our glitch, our spiritual void, my fellow white guys? Can nothing but our fear and lust for unearned power rule this land?

Will no amount of innocent blood touch our hearts enough to change? It is long overdue; time to feminize and colorize the gun debate in the US. Republicans desperately need to do some soul-searching. Where did they misplace theirs?

Gun nuts respond in three rhetorical ways whenever anyone has the temerity to suggest that perhaps getting guns is a bit too easy in our hyper-armed nation.

One: "If more people had been there carrying guns the shooter could have been stopped faster."

Right. The Wild West featured that ethos and yet it was found that the more guns were restricted, the safer citizens actually were.

There were reasons we progressed out of Tombstone Territory. We are seeing why again and again and again, daily with shootings of one or two, punctuated by occasional rampages like we saw in [Aurora, Colorado](#); [Tucson, Arizona](#); [Virginia Tech](#); [Littleton, Colorado](#); [Washington, DC](#); [Jonesboro, Arkansas](#); [Springfield, Oregon](#); and sadly, avoidably, many more

Two: "It's not the guns. Just look at the rate of gun ownership in places like North Dakota, yet there is little gun violence there. This is a people problem, not a gun problem."

True enough. So let states and local governments figure it out for themselves. Of course, the way to do that is to eliminate the stupid Second Amendment or change the makeup of the Supreme Court, since the dispositive ruling by the current majority took away states' rights in this regard.

Three: "See? These people want to take away your guns!" True. Time to melt them down and repurpose that material to plowshares. Long past time.

My real question here is: What happened to the spirits of those who are so

addicted to guns? What is wrong with these people's souls? What would Jesus do? Surely no one calling himself or herself a Christian would own a gun, an instrument which has one purpose, to kill or threaten to kill. Love your guns or love Christ, but the two are mutually exclusive. Make your choice.

At least the politicians are standing up. Not. One did, Michael Bloomberg, mayor of New York. Thank you, mayor. Perhaps a few more will buck the trend back toward Deadwood Gulch. Americans seem resigned to more guns, toward lawlessness.

Perhaps America is just too sick to recover, but that hopelessness, that defeatism, isn't an option. The gun lobby, the NRA, the armed Tea Party, may not care about the three-month-old baby who was shot in the movie theater, but more of us should wake up and get involved, get rid of these killing machines.

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## Batman in an Age of Polarization

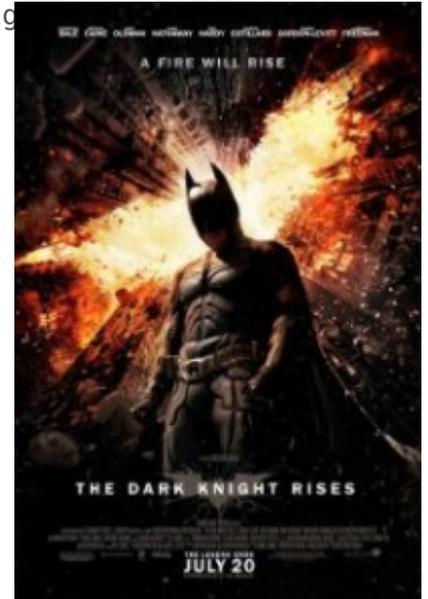
**Exclusive:** The last of Christopher Nolan's "Batman" trilogy may always be remembered for the mass murder of fans packed into a theater in Colorado to see an opening-night showing. But "The Dark Knight Rises" has been controversial for other reasons in a deeply polarized America, writes Lisa Pease.

By Lisa Pease

Before I review "The Dark Knight Rises," I wanted to share what writer/director Christopher Nolan posted on the official Web site for his latest Batman movie:

"Speaking on behalf of the cast and crew of 'The Dark Knight Rises,' I would like to express our profound sorrow at the senseless tragedy that has befallen the entire Aurora community. I would not presume to know anything about the

victims of the shooting but that they were there last night



“I believe movies are one of the great American art forms and the shared experience of watching a story unfold on screen is an important and joyful pastime. The movie theatre is my home, and the idea that someone would violate that innocent and hopeful place in such an unbearably savage way is devastating to me.

“Nothing any of us can say could ever adequately express our feelings for the innocent victims of this appalling crime, but our thoughts are with them and their families.”

I’ve never considered it an act of courage to enter a movie theater before. This time, it was different. After the tragic shooting at the midnight screening in Aurora, Colorado, I felt just a tad nervous and almost guilty, because I knew I was going to survive a film that others had not.

The final film of Christopher Nolan’s trilogy about “the Batman” had already been the subject of strong emotions long before the tragic shooting. Rush Limbaugh thought it was too liberal. David Sirota thought it was anti-Occupy. Catwoman actress Anne Hathaway said in all seriousness that she thought it should win Best Picture at the Oscars, and not just because she was in it.

The movie review site “Rotten Tomatoes” had so many film fans throwing violent verbal volleys at the critics that the site took an unprecedented step and shut down all comments until the film was released.

So I really didn’t know what to expect. Halfway into the film, I still didn’t know what to expect. I’ll be honest. For me, it was a mixed bag. I loved the last 20 minutes or so the most, but it took a long time and a lot of exposition set-ups to get me there.

The film opens a couple of years or so after the previous film ended, with Bruce Wayne holed up in his mansion, ala Howard Hughes (there was even a reference to long yellow fingernails). Catwoman breaks into his “unbreakable” safe and steals something of value, arousing Wayne’s curiosity. Wayne, however, is drawn to an outspoken activist who wants him to give the world a clean energy source, which Wayne just happens to have.

But Wayne knows that one man’s energy source is another man’s weapon, and he wants to keep his invention far from any who would misuse it.

Christopher Nolan sure knows how to tell a story several stories, in fact, and at the same time. There are so many stories within stories you might feel you are watching “Inception” again, tracking bits and pieces of different realities, wondering where each thread will lead.

That’s both the beauty and, from one point of view, the problem with the film. For a film with so much action in it, it was surprisingly talky. There was so much that needed to be explained and tied up neatly from the two previous installments that it felt like I was being inundated with information. While it kept my attention – I didn’t realize until I left the theater that I’d been sitting for three hours – I also felt a bit worn out by the end of it all.

Rush Limbaugh’s anger probably started with the name of the arch villain in this story, Bane, or Bain, if you are hearing it and not seeing it. But Sirota’s is the more valid point in that Bane, who espouses some of the “99 percent vs. 1 percent” rhetoric, is portrayed as a violent terrorist hell-bent on destroying the people of Gotham because who can really be innocent in such a city. That he gains power through violence separates him from the actual Occupiers, who have vigilantly practiced nonviolence.

One of the things I’ve loved about Christopher Nolan’s past films was how fresh and original and authentic they felt. This one felt a tad derivative in spots. I saw an idea lifted from “Die Hard,” a character with a mask lifted from “Star Wars” (complete with the Scuba-like breathing gear), and more. They weren’t carbon copies, of course. But they were too similar. I’ve come to expect more from the bar Nolan has set with his previous work. This just wasn’t as good.

The film is worth seeing for a couple of reasons alone, however: Christian Bale and Anne Hathaway. I have never particularly been a Bale fan, but he brings a smoldering intensity to this role that I found compelling. That was one of my complaints with so many characters and such a large story, Bale didn’t get nearly enough screen time.

Anne Hathaway is the perfect Catwoman. Sexy and surly, creative and cocky. She’s

a hell of an opponent, or partner, depending on whose side you're on. She also had some of the funnier lines, so her appearances lightened the otherwise heavy dialog.

Gary Oldman has a lot of screen time as Commissioner Gordon, but his character didn't have much to do, emotionally or physically, which is a shame, as Oldman is so talented. Similarly, Michael Caine (Alfred) and Morgan Freeman (Fox) made what could almost be described as cameos, when they had been such huge parts of the earlier films.

The film is worth seeing, but it's nowhere near Best Picture material. I had hoped to really love it, to be blown away. But my thoughts as I left the theater were mirrored by a woman behind me, who responded to her male companion's question "What did you think?" with "Eh, it was okay." Parts of it were really interesting. But a lot of it was just, eh, okay.

**Lisa Pease is a writer who has examined issues ranging from the Kennedy assassination to voting irregularities in recent U.S. elections. She is also a movie buff.**

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## Lamenting the Dead, Not the Laws

Politicians and pundits are again lamenting the latest slaughter in Colorado, where a dozen moviegoers were murdered by a troubled young man who had no trouble buying an assault rifle and other guns. But the horror will be transient while the NRA's clout has permanence, write Bill Moyers and Michael Winship.

By Bill Moyers and Michael Winship

You might think Wayne LaPierre, executive vice president of and spokesman for the mighty American gun lobby, the National Rifle Association, has an almost cosmic sense of timing. In 2007, at the NRA's annual convention in St. Louis, he warned the crowd that, "Today, there is not one firearm owner whose freedom is secure." Two days later, a young man opened fire on the campus of Virginia Tech, killing 32 students, staff and teachers.

Just last week LaPierre showed up at the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty in New York and spoke out against what he called "anti-freedom policies that disregard American citizens' right to self-defense."

Now at least 12 are dead in Aurora, Colorado, gunned down at a showing of the

new film, "The Dark Knight Rises," a Batman movie filled with make-believe violence. One of the guns the shooter reportedly used was an AK-47 type assault weapon that was banned in 1994. The NRA pressured Congress to let the ban run out in 2004.

Obviously, LaPierre's timing isn't cosmic, just coincidental and unfortunate; as Shakespeare famously wrote, the fault is not in our stars, but in ourselves. In other words, people – people with guns. There are some 300 million guns in the United States, one in four adult Americans owns at least one and most of them are men.

According to the British newspaper *The Guardian*, over the last 30 years, "the number of states with a law that automatically approves licences to carry concealed weapons provided an applicant clears a criminal background check has risen from eight to 38."

Every year there are 30,000 gun deaths and perhaps as many as 300,000 gun-related assaults in the U.S. Firearm violence costs our country as much as \$100 billion a year. Toys are regulated with greater care and safety concerns than guns.

So why do we always act so surprised? Violence is our alter ego, wired into our Stone Age brains, so intrinsic its toxic eruptions no longer shock, except momentarily when we hear of a mass shooting like this latest in Colorado. But this, too, will pass as the nation of the short attention span quickly finds the next thing to divert us from the hard realities of America in 2012.

We are a country which began with the forced subjugation into slavery of millions of Africans and the reliance on arms against Native Americans for its westward expansion. In truth, more settlers traveling the Oregon Trail died from accidental, self-inflicted gunshot wounds than Indian attacks we were not only bloodthirsty but also inept.

Nonetheless, we have become so gun loving, so gun crazy, so blasphemous about home-grown violence that far more Americans have been casualties of domestic gunfire than have died in all our wars combined. In Arizona last year, just days after the Gabby Giffords shooting, sales of the weapon used in the slaughter a 9 millimeter Glock semi-automatic pistol doubled.

We are fooling ourselves. Fooling ourselves that the law could allow even an inflamed lunatic to easily acquire murderous weapons and not expect murderous consequences. Fooling ourselves that the Second Amendment's guarantee of a "well-regulated militia" be construed as a God-given right to purchase and own just about any weapon of destruction you like, a license for murder and mayhem.

A great fraud has entered our history.

Maybe you remember a video you can still see on YouTube. In it, Adam Gadahn, an American born member of al Qaeda, the first U.S. citizen charged with treason since 1952, urges terrorists to carry out attacks on the United States.

Right before your eyes he says, "America is absolutely awash with easily obtainable firearms. You can go down to a gun show at the local convention center and come away with a fully automatic assault rifle without a background check, and most likely, without having to show an identification card. So what are you waiting for?"

The gunman in Colorado waited only for his opportunity. So there you have it the arsenal of democracy has been transformed into the arsenal of death. And the NRA? The NRA is the enabler of death paranoid, delusional and as venomous as a scorpion. With the weak-kneed acquiescence of our politicians, the National Rifle Association has turned the Second Amendment of the Constitution into a cruel and deadly hoax.

**Bill Moyers is managing editor and Michael Winship is senior writer of the weekly public affairs program, "Moyers & Company," airing on public television. Check local airtimes or comment at [www.BillMoyers.com](http://www.BillMoyers.com).**

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