

Philosophy Ripped From The Headlines!



Issue #14, 2 (November 2018)
Compiled & Edited by *Philosophy Without Borders*

***Philosophy Ripped From The Headlines!* is delivered online in weekly installments, month by month.**

Its aim is to inspire critical, reflective, synoptic thinking and discussion about contemporary issues--in short, *public philosophizing* in the broadest possible, everyday sense.

Every installment contains (1) excerpts from some articles, or full articles, that recently appeared in online public media, (2) some follow-up thoughts for further reflection or discussion, and (3) a link for supplementary reading.

1. “Do you know how many bullets I pull out of corpses weekly?’ – doctors to NRA”

By Vivian Ho

***The Guardian*, 10 NOVEMBER 2018**

Full article available at URL = https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/nov/09/nra-doctors-tweet-gun-control-deaths?CMP=share_btn_link

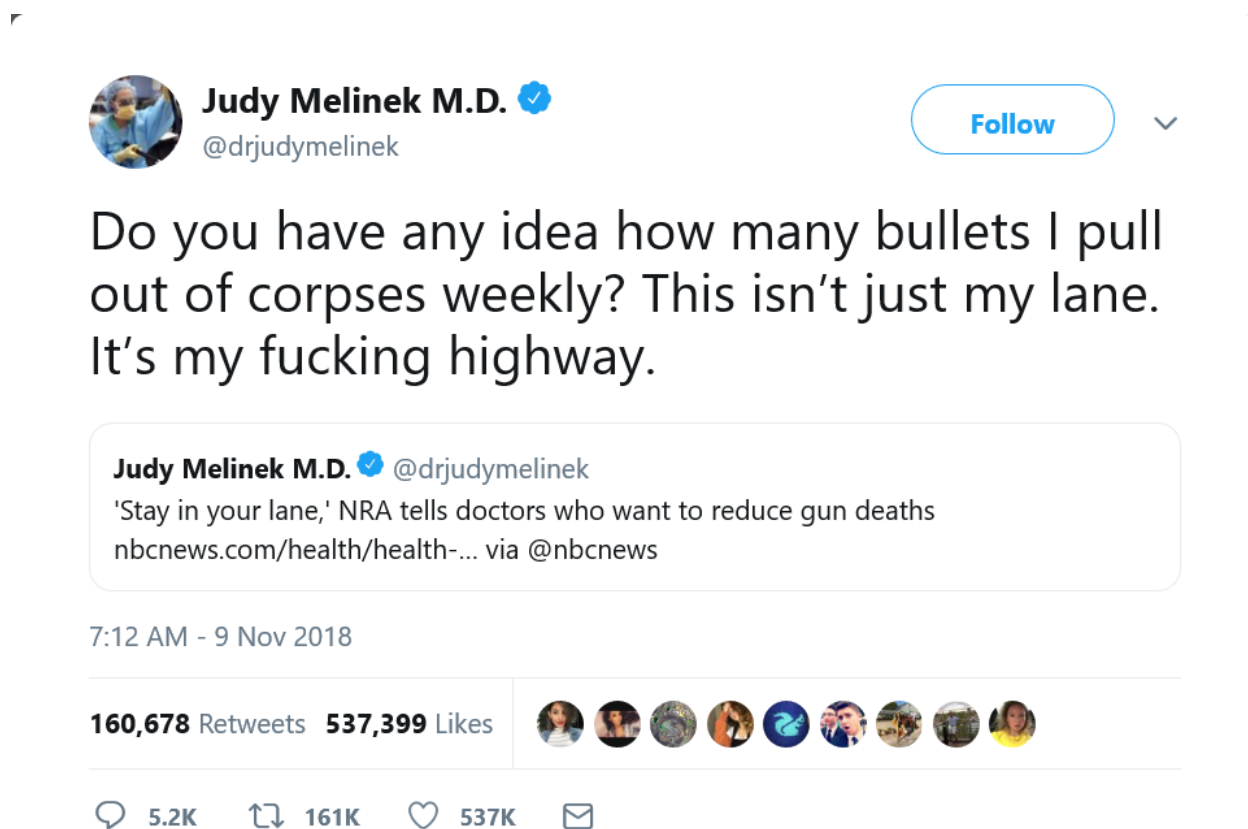


**An NRA cap and shirt on display at the Conservative Political Action conference in Maryland on 23 February.
Photograph: Joshua Roberts/Reuters**

Dr Judy Melinek, a San Francisco-based forensic pathologist, saw the headline on her way into work early Friday.

“‘Stay in your lane,’ NRA tells doctors who want to reduce gun deaths,” [it read](#). And though she has a personal policy to never tweet when angry, she couldn’t stop herself.

“Do you have any idea how many bullets I pull out of corpses weekly?” she quickly typed. “This isn’t just my lane. It’s my fucking highway.”



“I was just so incensed,” Melinek said later. “I was so angry, thus the foul language. Here I was, going into work for a case that involved a gunshot wound. I had another one earlier this week. And I was just so incensed that anyone would put down doctors who try every single day to try and save people’s lives.”

She pushed send on the tweet without a second thought, and headed into the morgue. By the time she emerged, four hours later, her tweet had been retweeted more than 15,000 times and liked more than 47,000 times.

Melinek’s tweet may seem like a fairly uncontroversial viewpoint in a country plagued by [mass shootings](#), but her anger touched upon decades of conflict between the medical and scientific community, who have called the rise in gun violence [a public health crisis](#), and the powerful gun rights lobby.

In the 1990s, the National Rifle Association (NRA) lobbied to block the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) from conducting research on gun violence. Recent efforts to repeal this provision has [led to a clarification](#) passing in March that the CDC can now conduct such research, but is prohibited from using government funds to promote gun control.

“We aren’t against the second amendment,” Melinek said. “What we are against is not researching, not putting effort into researching, and not putting the funding into researching what can be used to prevent gun violence and death, whether it’s trigger locks, security, training or the idea of requiring insurance and having people have insurance in case their gun is used to kill someone else. We need to have the research and we need to have the data to back it up, and right now that’s not happening.”

Melinek’s tweet quickly received widespread support from other doctors and forensic pathologists – “This is our interstate,” wrote Dr Darin Wolfe, an Indiana-based pathologist – as well as its share of criticism.

“I’m pretty sure this is exactly what the [NRA](#) was talking about,” wrote one Twitter user. “Emotion is not an intelligent or recommended way to drive debate. Sound logic is the only way to go. Your tweet is stewing with emotion. This is why you can’t be allowed to drive policy debates.”

“You are absolutely right,” Melinek responded. “Evidence and research is needed before we make policy decisions. We should be funding research into what can prevent gun violence. Oh, wait a minute. NRA was against that too.”

Melinek said she conducts, on average, one autopsy a week involving a gunshot wound victim. Every single medical conference she’s attended in the past 10 years has had some presentation or discussion about responding to multiple fatality incident involving gun violence, she said.

“We need to do something, and telling doctors to stay in their own lane is not the way to do it,” she said. “We’re the ones who have to deal with the consequences. We’re the ones who have to testify in court about the wounds. We’re the ones who have to talk to the family members. It breaks my heart, and it’s just another day in America.”

2. “Doctors Revolt After N.R.A. Tells Them to ‘Stay in Their Lane’ on Gun Policy”

By Matthew Haag

The New York Times, 13 NOVEMBER 2018

Full article available at URL = <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/13/us/nra-stay-in-your-lane-doctors.html>



Doctors described gruesome stories of treating victims of gun violence in response to a tweet by the National Rifle Association that scolded “anti-gun doctors.” Credit Credit Justin Sullivan/Getty Images

Over 25 years in Bronx hospitals, Dr. Marianne Haughey has lost count of how many people she has seen die from gun violence. It doesn’t stop — a child who found a gun at home, a teenager caught in the middle of a gang shooting, a store owner ambushed at work.

The toughest part comes afterward, Dr. Haughey said. She sheds her blood-soaked scrubs, makes a mental note of the victim’s name and goes to tell the family.

“It’s impossible not to bring it home,” said Dr. Haughey, an emergency physician and the director of St. Barnabas Hospital’s emergency medicine residency program. “I never get used to it. It’s tiresome.”

Those experiences fueled angry responses from her and other doctors in recent days to [a tweet from the National Rifle Association](#) aimed at their profession: “Someone should tell self-important anti-gun doctors to stay in their lane.”

When Dr. Haughey saw it, she tapped out a reply on her cellphone. “I see no one from the @nra next to me in the trauma bay as I have cared for victims of gun violence for the past 25 years,” [she wrote](#). “THAT must be MY lane. COME INTO MY LANE. Tell one mother her child is dead with me, then we can talk.”

Since the N.R.A. posted its message on Nov. 7, the heavyweight gun rights group has been flooded with more than 21,000 responses. Some replies [expressed support](#) for the group, but the bulk resembled Dr. Haughey’s remarks, and many came from those in the medical community.



Dr. Vancbromicin
@BromoSouthern

Follow

Single GSW to the head as a drive by.
Surprisingly little blood, but plenty of blood curdling screams from this middle schoolers mother when we told her that her baby was dead.

Tell me @NRA how do I get her screams out of my head 4 years later? #ThisIsMyLane
#GunControlNow

A neurosurgeon in Indiana [shared a photo of a bloody bullet](#) she had removed from the brain of a 6-month-old. A trauma surgeon in New Jersey [posted a photo of a blue plastic chair](#) she said she

sits in when she tells parents that their child has died. An emergency care doctor in Louisville [sent a photo of blood covering the floor](#) beneath an operating table.

“This one made it ... not sure about the next one,” the Louisville doctor wrote. “Gun violence is a national public health issue.”

The uproar highlighted the decades-long tension between gun-lobbying groups and researchers on the topic of studying gun violence as a public health issue. Under intense lobbying from the N.R.A., [Congress in 1996 effectively barred](#) the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention from researching the public health effects of gun violence. That measure, which still exists, came three years after a landmark C.D.C. study undercut a key N.R.A. mantra with its finding: A gun in a home does *not* make everyone safer.

The N.R.A.’s scolding tweet to doctors this month came in a response to [a position paper on firearm injuries and deaths](#) by the American College of Physicians, which was published on Oct. 30 by the medical journal *Annals of Internal Medicine*.

“Firearm violence continues to be a public health crisis in the United States that requires the nation’s immediate attention,” members of the American College of Physicians wrote, adding that restrictions should be lifted on gun-violence research conducted by the C.D.C. and other government agencies.

In its tweet, the N.R.A. suggested that the journal — the peer-reviewed publication of the doctors’ group, which has about [154,000 members](#) — and doctors involved in the paper were biased.

“Half of the articles in *Annals of Internal Medicine* are pushing for gun control,” wrote the gun rights group, which did not respond to a request for comment on Tuesday. “Most upsetting, however, the medical community seems to have consulted NO ONE but themselves.”

Dr. Christine Laine, the editor in chief of *Annals of Internal Medicine*, disputed the N.R.A.’s statement.

“*Annals of Internal Medicine* is not anti-gun; we are anti-bullet holes in people,” Dr. Laine said in a statement to *The New York Times*. “And if we are biased, the bias is toward counseling our patients to reduce their risk of firearm injury and toward evidence-based solutions to the public health crisis that firearm injury has become.”

Many doctors [shared a similar message](#) to the N.R.A.: For physicians who treat gunshot victims, the topic of gun policy is absolutely “in their lane.” More than 35,000 people in the United States are killed in firearm-related deaths every year, according to an annual average [compiled from C.D.C. data](#) by Everytown for Gun Safety, a gun control group.

Dr. Robert Young, a New York psychiatrist who is the editor of the website for the group Doctors for Responsible Gun Ownership, said that the N.R.A.’s characterization of “anti-gun

doctors” is correct. He accused doctor specialty groups of holding an anti-gun bias that trickles down into their medical journals.

“Doctors are not the experts on gun safety,” Dr. Young, who is an N.R.A. member, said in an interview. “You have to be an experienced firearms owner and have some training to know about gun safety. Physicians don’t unless they have that training.”

For years, Dr. Haughey said she struggled to understand any upside to allowing people to have guns. In heavily populated areas like the Bronx, it is too easy for an innocent person to be caught in crossfire or for someone to shoot into a crowd, she said.

But at a recent conference for medical professionals, Dr. Haughey heard another [doctor speak about how her father](#), who lives in a rural area, was attacked and the police said they could not get there soon. He used his gun to keep the assailant at bay, the doctor said.

Dr. Haughey said she came away with a new understanding about gun ownership and the belief that the country could find middle ground between allowing guns and banning them. And to find a resolution, she said, doctors must be included.

“We have a front-seat window view that the N.R.A. is trying to close and say, ‘Ignore it,’” Dr. Haughey said.

3. Some Follow-Up Thoughts For Further Reflection and Discussion:

Is the following argument sound? If so, why? If not, why not?

1. People everywhere innately possess human dignity, and should always be treated with sufficient respect for that dignity.
2. The primary function of guns is to coerce people either by killing or seriously harming them, or by threatening to do so.
3. Coercion is rationally unjustified and immoral, because it treats people either as mere means to the coercer’s ends or as mere things, and directly violates the human dignity of those who are coerced.
4. Doctors in the USA who treat gunshot victims can provide direct, overwhelming evidence for the extremely bad, widespread human consequences of gun ownership-&-use.
5. Therefore, not only is gun ownership-&-use rationally unjustified and immoral, it also has extremely bad, widespread human consequences.

6. Although for ideological reasons and/or for fear of being shot themselves, doctors in the USA may be afraid to say that they are against the 2nd Amendment and anti-gun, any other reasonable person would have to conclude from steps 1-5 that abolishing guns by means of repealing the 2nd Amendment is the right thing to do and that the NRA is profoundly wrong about guns, the 2nd Amendment, and the public role of doctors in emphasizing the extremely bad, widespread human consequences of gun ownership-&-use.

4. Two Links For Supplementary Reading:

Thoughtless Images, aka Guns R Us.

Against Guns.

BACK ISSUES

ISSUE #14, 2 (November 2018):

- CRIME-&-PUNISHMENT INC, USA

HERE: [PWB philosophy ripped from the headlines issue14-1 nov18](#)

ISSUE #13, 2 (September 2018):

- ABOLISH ICE!, AND HUNGARY'S STARVATION TACTICS

HERE: [PWB philosophy ripped from the headlines issue13-2 sept18](#)

ISSUE #13, 1 (September 2018):

- **UNIVERSAL BASIC INCOME AND THE FUTURE OF POINTLESS WORK**

HERE: [PWB philosophy ripped from the headlines issue13-1 aug18](#)

ISSUE #12, 3 (AUGUST 2018):

- **THE TRUTH ABOUT INCOME INEQUALITY, IN SIX AMAZING CHARTS**

HERE: [PWB philosophy ripped from the headlines issue12-3 aug18](#)

ISSUE #12, 2 (AUGUST 2018):

- **EPISTOCRACY, NOT DEMOCRACY?**

HERE: [PWB philosophy ripped from the headlines issue12-2 aug18](#)

ISSUE #12, 1 (AUGUST 2018):

- **THE QUANTIFIED HEART**

HERE: [PWB philosophy ripped from the headlines issue12-1 aug18](#)

ISSUE #11, JULY 2018:

- **RESISTING IMMIGRATION & CUSTOMS ENFORCEMENT (ICE), AUTHENTICITY, RECIPROCITY VS. TOLERANCE, HOMELESSNESS-&-US, & FREE SPEECH VS. JUST ACCESS**

HERE: [PWB philosophy ripped from the headlines issue11 july18](#)

ISSUE #10, June 2018:

- **JOBS-&-HAPPINESS, UBI IN FINLAND, THE SOCIAL VALUE OF ENVY, THE EDUCATED ELITE'S STRANGE FAILURE, & ARE WE JUST OUR BRAINS?**

HERE: [PWB philosophy ripped from the headlines issue10 june18](#)

ISSUE #9, May 2018:

- **DEFENDING LECTURING, CITIZENS OF THE WORLD, HYPER-LIBERALISM, NEO-ROMANTICISM, & PHYSICS-WITHOUT-TIME?**

HERE: [PWB philosophy ripped from the headlines issue9 may18](#)

ISSUE #8, APRIL 2018:

- **CONSCIOUSNESS-DENIAL, MINDS-&-SMARTPHONES, THE MORALITY OF ADDICTION, & RADICAL GUN REFORM**

HERE: [PWB philosophy ripped from the headlines issue8 apr18](#)

ISSUE #7, MARCH 2018:

- **THE MEANING OF LIFE & THE MORALITY OF DEATH**

HERE: [PWB philosophy ripped from the headlines issue7 mar18](#)

ISSUE #6, FEBRUARY 2018:

- **POVERTY IN THE USA, MARX REDUX, & THE SCOPE OF MINDEDNESS**

HERE: [PWB philosophy ripped from the headlines issue6 feb18](#)

ISSUE #5, JANUARY 2018:

- **BAKERS, BUDDHISTS, PLANT MINDS, & TOTAL WORK**

HERE: [PWB philosophy ripped from the headlines issue5 jan18](#)

ISSUE #4, DECEMBER 2017:

- **US POLITICS, ANIMAL MINDS, & REFUGEES**

HERE: [PWB philosophy ripped from the headlines issue4 dec17](#)

ISSUE #3, NOVEMBER 2017:

- **GUN VIOLENCE**

HERE: [PWB philosophy ripped from the headlines issue3 nov17](#)

ISSUE #2, OCTOBER 2017:

- **FREE SPEECH WARS**

HERE: [PWB philosophy ripped from the headlines issue2 oct17](#)

ISSUE #1, SEPTEMBER 2017:

- **BORDERS AND IMMIGRATION, CRIME AND PUNISHMENT, & CULTURAL CONFLICT**

HERE: [PWB philosophy ripped from the headlines issue1 sept17](#)

Philosophy Ripped From The Headlines! is a sub-project of the online mega-project [Philosophy Without Borders](#), which is home-based on Patreon [here](#).

Please consider becoming a patron!

