

Gun Crazy: A Moral Argument For Gun Abolitionism

Robert Hanna



Original poster art for *Gun Crazy*, directed by Joseph H. Lewis (1950)

1. Introduction

The new school year has begun, and with it, the annual round of mass shootings at schools (NYT, 2025). As of 29 August 2025, 17, 999 people had been killed or wounded in 285 mass shootings in the USA this year—and more to come today, no doubt (Gun Violence Archive, 2025). The horrific Uvalde, TX mass shooting in May 2022 is merely a distant, faded, hazy memory (see, e.g., NYT, 2022a, 2022b, 2022c), not to mention even more distant, faded, hazy memories of lesser catastrophies like the King Soopers mass shooting in March 2021 (Pittenger, 2024). So I hereby share the September 2025 version of this essay in the rational and wholehearted hope that if this essay were carefully and seriously read, and if its imagistic companion pieces (Hanna and Heftler, 2023; Hanna and Paans, 2023) were also contemplated visually in tandem with reading the essay, then those taken together might produce a moral and sociopolitical effect comparable to Emile Zola's "J'Accuse" (Zola, 1898). Failing that, my stoical default hope is that it might simply do *some good for someone, somewhere, sometime*.

As part of the research for this essay, I read Michael Waldman's excellent book, *The Second Amendment: A Biography* (Waldman, 2014), for information about the historical context, evolution, and origins of the contemporary problem of guns and gun violence in the USA. On the basis of that, and other reliable evidence, I think it's clearly and distinctly true (i) that The 2nd Amendment to the US Constitution was intended by the Framers and those who ratified the Constitution to entrench the right of white men between 16 and 60 to own, carry, and/or use guns for *the specific purpose of forming state militias*, which were widely held to be a bulwark against the suspected tyranny of the executive branch and its ability to create and command a professional Federal army, and (ii) that the (for us) crucial question of constitutionally entrenching the individual US citizen's right to own, carry, and use guns *never actually arose during the Constitutional Convention* (Waldman, 2014: p. 27), simply because *this right was universally, unreflectively, and utterly taken for granted*.

In any case, in what follows, I argue (I strongly believe, soundly) that not only (i) owning, carrying, and/or using guns, but also (ii) The 2nd Amendment to the US Constitution, and (iii) their necessary consequence, gun violence, are all rationally unjustified and immoral on broadly Kantian ethical grounds, and that therefore, (iv) *Gun Abolitionism* is rationally justified, morally right, and what we ought to do, by means of (iva) repealing The 2nd Amendment, and then (ivb) universally banning owning, carrying, and/or using guns. This argument is specific to the contemporary USA, but, just like arguments for the abolition of slavery, the argument for Gun Abolitionism smoothly generalizes to an argument for Gun Abolitionism everywhere and everywhen, and indeed also to universal Nuclear Weapons Abolitionism.

I emphasize, re-emphasize, and re-re-emphasize that according to my view, what's rationally unjustified and immoral is *people* owning guns, *people* carrying guns, and/or *people* using guns, and *not* guns *as such*, considered as isolated pieces of technology, as it were lying around on the Moon, completely disconnected from their functionality. So all those who even only once or repeatedly think or utter the slogan, *it's not about guns, it's about people!*, are in fact *agreeing* with my view, although of course unintentionally.

2. Two Original Sins: Slavery and Gun Crazy

Framed in Biblical terms, the birth of the United States of America in 1776 was attended by *two original sins*. The first original sin was what John C. Calhoun later infamously called the "peculiar institution" of slavery in the USA (Wikipedia, 2025a). Here, in turn, are some things that Calhoun said about slavery:

I hold that in the present state of civilization, where two races of different origin, and distinguished by color, and other physical differences, as well as intellectual, are brought together, the relation now existing in the slaveholding States between the two, is, instead of an evil, a good — a positive good ... I may say with truth, that in few countries so much is left to the share of the laborer, and so little exacted from him, or where there is more kind attention paid to him in sickness or infirmities of age. Compare his condition with the tenants of the poor houses in the more civilized portions of Europe — look at the sick, and the old and infirm slave, on one hand, in the midst of his family and friends, under the kind superintending care of his master and mistress, and compare it with the forlorn and wretched condition of the pauper in the poorhouse ... I hold then, that there never has yet existed a wealthy and civilized society in which one portion of the community did not, in point of fact, live on the labor of the other. (Wikipedia, 2025b)

The “peculiar institution” of slavery was of course the primary cause of the US Civil War; and although it was abolished by Lincoln in 1865, its evil consequences have been experienced throughout US history right up to today — as the 159-year-old social fact of structural or systemic racism and the recent Black Lives Matter movement (Andersen, 2016; Wikipedia, 2025c) vividly demonstrate. From a broadly Kantian ethical standpoint (Hanna, 2018a), slavery is *fundamentally morally wrong*, (i) because it treats human persons as mere things, mere chattel and commodities, and thereby directly violates their human dignity (Hanna, 2023), and also (ii) because it is inherently coercive, insofar as it treats human persons as mere instruments to the masters/slave owners’ self-interested ends, and forces them to serve these ends by means of violence or the threat of violence, hence again it directly violates their human dignity.

And the second original sin was what I’ll call *the second “peculiar institution,”* or more simply, *Gun Crazy*, that is, the right to own, carry, and/or use guns,¹ entrenched in The 2nd Amendment to the US Constitution, ratified in 1788, which says this:

¹ I’m being slightly conceptually fussy about my interpretation of The 2nd Amendment’s fairly ambiguous phrase “to keep and bear arms.” Strictly speaking, it’s conceptually possible (i) for someone to own a gun without either carrying it or using it (say, a mere gun collector), (ii) for someone to carry a gun without either owning it or using it (say, a gun thief who gets a thrill from carrying a gun, but never uses it), and (iii) for someone to use a gun without either owning it or carrying it (say, another gun thief who snatches a gun from someone and then immediately uses it). In short, owning a gun, carrying a gun, and using a gun, strictly speaking, are each logically independent of one another, and conjoining any two of them is also logically independent of the third. So, fussily expressed, what I’m arguing in this essay is (i) that owning a gun, carrying a gun, and using a gun, are each, when considered independently, rationally justified and immoral, (ii) that every weak disjunction of owning, carrying, or using a gun is rationally unjustified and immoral, and also (iii) that they’re all within the broad scope of the 2nd Amendment’s fairly ambiguous phrase “to keep and bear arms.”

A well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.

Just as the necessary consequence of slavery is *treating people as mere instruments and mere things, and the direct violation of their human dignity via coercion*, so too the necessary consequence of Gun Crazy is *gun violence*.

Fast-forwarding now to 6am this morning, here are some contemporary facts and figures about gun violence. In the USA today, there are roughly 393 to 434 million civilian-owned guns—i.e., there are more guns than people in the country, with approximately 120.5 guns per 100 residents as of 2018—and 32% of the population own 393 million guns—i.e., 120 guns for every 100 Americans—and 44% of the population live in gun-possessing households. Moreover:

In 2016, a U.S. male aged 15–24 was 70 times more likely to be killed with a gun than a French male or British male.

In 2022, up to 100 daily fatalities and hundreds of daily injuries were attributable to gun violence in the United States. In 2018, the most recent year for which data are available, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Center for Health Statistics reported 38,390 deaths by firearm, of which 24,432 were suicides. The national rate of firearm deaths rose from 10.3 people for every 100,000 in 1999 to 11.9 people per 100,000 in 2018, equating to over 109 daily deaths (or about 14,542 annual homicides). In 2010, there were 19,392 firearm-related suicides, and 11,078 firearm-related homicides in the U.S. In 2010, 358 murders were reported involving a rifle while 6,009 were reported involving a handgun; another 1,939 were reported with an unspecified type of firearm. In 2011, a total of 478,400 fatal and nonfatal violent crimes were committed with a firearm. In 2023, 350 shootings occurred in K-12 schools with an additional 30 on college campuses. This marked the highest number of shootings recorded on school grounds. In 2023, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 46,728 firearm-related deaths in the United States, equivalent to a rate of 14.0 per 100,000 people. Suicides made up about 58 percent of these deaths (27,300), while homicides accounted for roughly 38 percent (17,927), with the remainder classified as accidental, law enforcement, or undetermined circumstances.

According to a Pew Research Center report, gun deaths among America's children rose 50% from 2019 to 2021.

Legislation at the federal, state, and local levels has attempted to address gun violence through methods including restricting firearms purchases by youths and other “at-risk” populations, setting waiting periods for firearm purchases, establishing gun buyback

programs, law enforcement and policing strategies, stiff sentencing of gun law violators, education programs for parents and children, and community outreach programs.

Some medical professionals express concern regarding the prevalence and growth of gun violence in America, even comparing gun violence in the United States to a disease or epidemic. Relatedly, recent polling suggests up to 26% of Americans believe guns are the number one national public health threat.

The Congressional Research Service in 2009 estimated that among US population of 306 million people, there were 310 million firearms in the U.S., not including military armaments. Of these, 114 million were handguns, 110 million were rifles, and 86 million were shotguns. (Wikipedia, 2025d)

3. A Short But Decisive Moral Argument Against Gun Crazy and The 2nd Amendment, and For Gun Abolitionism

Correspondingly, here's a short but decisive moral argument *against* Gun Crazy and The 2nd Amendment, and *for* Gun Abolitionism. (I'll also provide a longer, more fully detailed, and even more decisive version of this argument in section 6 below).

1. Coercion is forcing people to do things, by using violence or the threat of violence.
2. Coercion is always rationally unjustified and immoral, because it treats people as mere instruments and mere things, and directly violates their human dignity.
3. The primary function of guns is coercion and its necessary consequence is gun violence.
4. Therefore, owning, carrying, and/or using guns—i.e., Gun Crazy—is rationally unjustified and immoral.
5. But The 2nd Amendment to the US Constitution entrenches the individual right to own, carry, and/or use guns, i.e., the right to Gun Crazy.
6. Therefore, The 2nd Amendment is rationally unjustified and immoral, and should be repealed (see also Stevens, 2018).

7. Moreover, *Gun Abolitionism* is rationally justified, morally right, and what we ought to do, by means of (7i) repealing The 2nd Amendment, and then (7ii) universally banning owning, carrying, and/or using guns.

As I mentioned in section 1, this argument is of course specific to the contemporary USA, but, just like arguments for the abolition of slavery, the argument for Gun Abolitionism smoothly generalizes to an argument for Gun Abolitionism everywhere and everywhen, and also to universal Nuclear Weapons Abolitionism.

4. More Facts and Figures about Gun Violence, and the Analogy Between Slavery and Gun Crazy

Have you ever wondered how many people have been killed by guns within the borders of the USA since 1776? Since 1968, more than 1.5 million people have been killed by guns. Since the American Revolution, 1.4 million people have died in *wars on US soil*, most of them by means of guns. So that's close to 2.9 million people killed by guns over a discontinuous period spanning roughly only one-quarter of US political history, namely, a little over 60 years.

Now, how many people were killed by guns in the US during the 192 years between 1776 and 1968, but *not in wars*? Let's say, conservatively, 3 million people. That would mean that the total number of people killed by guns in the history of the USA is roughly the same as the number of people murdered by the Nazis during the Holocaust, that is, somewhere between 5 and 6 million. Therefore, if Gun Crazy is not a fundamental source of human oppression in the USA, *then nothing is*. So I'm saying not only that slavery is fundamentally morally wrong, but also, for logically independent but also highly analogous reasons, that Gun Crazy is fundamentally morally wrong too. Therefore, just as we abolished slavery, so we should abolish owning, carrying, and/or using guns too.

Moreover, the morally half-hearted and politically expedient 21st century so-called "liberal" doctrine of *gun-control* is strictly analogous to the morally half-hearted and politically expedient pre-Civil War so-called "liberal" doctrine of *abolishing slavery in all states except where it already existed*. If slavery and its necessary consequence, treating people like mere means and mere things, and coercing them, are morally wrong, then they are morally wrong always and everywhere, and should be abolished always and everywhere; if Gun Crazy and its necessary consequence, gun violence, are wrong, then owning, carrying, and/or using guns is wrong always and everywhere, and should be abolished always and everywhere. The fact that some gun-owners do not actually kill

other people or themselves with their guns no more morally counts against the abolition of guns than the fact that some masters/slave-owners actually treated their slaves fairly well morally counted against the abolition of slavery.

Indeed, so-called “commonsense gun-control” is precisely as morally absurd as “commonsense slavery-control” would be. “Commonsense gun-control” is just like addressing the moral scandal of slavery by banning certain kinds of especially vicious “semi-automatic” whips and chains, requiring “background checks” on prospective slave owners, and making it difficult for prospective slave owners with “mental health issues” to buy and keep slaves. Yes, “slavery reform” and “commonsense slavery-control” would “improve” the system of slavery. But the moral scandal of slavery would still exist just the same, essentially untouched. So too, “gun reform” and “commonsense gun-control” leave the moral scandal of Gun Crazy essentially untouched.

5. Trump, Gun Crazy, and Capitalism

Now here are some of the things that Donald Trump, the current President of the USA—and also, not altogether coincidentally, a billionaire, demagogue, and would-be dictator by virtue of fomenting a failed *coup d'état* in early January 2021, hence a perfect spokesman for Gun Crazy—has said about Gun Crazy.

No limits on guns; they save lives

Q: Are there any circumstances that you think we should be limiting gun sales of any kind in America?

TRUMP: No. I am a 2nd Amendment person. If we had guns in California on the other side where the bullets went in the different direction, you wouldn't have 14 or 15 people dead right now. If even in Paris, if they had guns on the other side, going in the opposite direction, you wouldn't have 130 people plus dead. So the answer is no.... (Fox Business, 2016)

Make concealed-carry permits valid across all states

TRUMP: I have a concealed-carry permit that allows me to carry a concealed weapon. I took the time and the effort to get that permit because the constitutional right to defend yourself doesn't stop at the end of your driveway. That doesn't apply just to me either. It applies to all our driveways or front doors.

That's why I'm very much in favor of making all concealed-carry permits valid in every state. Every state has its own driving test that residents have to pass before becoming

licensed to drive. Those tests are different in many states, but once a state licenses you to drive, every other state recognizes that license as valid.

If we can do that for driving — which is a privilege, not a right — then surely we can do that for concealed carry, which is a right, not a privilege. That seems logical to me. (Trump, 2015)

Now doesn't that vividly remind you of John C. Calhoun defending slavery? And here's something else about Trump's defense of Gun Crazy that's closely related to Calhoun's defense of slavery. The gun and ammunition industry in the US is an exceptionally big capitalist enterprise, with an annual revenue of \$13.5 billion USD in 2015 (Popken, 2015) and \$19.6 billion USD in 2025 (IbisWorld, 2025). And doesn't that make you wonder who *really* benefits from the continued existence of the second "peculiar institution," aka Gun Crazy?

But in any case, the crucial point here for my overall argument is this: Just as, if slavery is rationally unjustified and immoral, then acquiring, selling, or buying slaves (i.e., the slave trade) is also rationally unjustified and immoral, therefore so too, if owning, carrying, and/or using guns is rationally unjustified and immoral, then manufacturing, selling, and/or buying guns or ammunition (i.e., the gun trade) is also rationally unjustified and immoral. If a certain kind of activity is inherently wrong, then capitalist trade applied to that activity is also inherently wrong, even leaving aside classical Marxist or otherwise socialist worries about capitalism.

6. A Longer and More Fully Detailed and Even More Decisive Moral Argument Against Gun Crazy and For Gun Abolitionism

I'm now going to argue again, this time in a more fully detailed way, that not only (i) owning, carrying, and/or using guns, but also (ii) The 2nd Amendment, and (iii) their necessary consequence, gun violence, are all rationally unjustified and immoral, and that therefore, (iv) *Gun Abolitionism* is rationally justified, morally right, and what we ought to do, by means of (iva) repealing The 2nd Amendment, and then (ivb) universally banning owning, carrying, and/or using guns. Again, although it's obviously specific to the USA, this argument also smoothly generalizes to an argument for Gun Abolitionism everywhere and everywhen, and also to universal Nuclear Weapons Abolitionism. In order to do that, however, and for clarity's sake, I'll quickly introduce and explicate some terminology.

All human persons, aka *people*, are (i) absolutely, non-denumerably infinitely, intrinsically, objectively valuable, beyond all possible economics, which means they have

dignity, and (ii) autonomous rational animals, which means they can act freely for good reasons, and above all they are (iii) morally obligated to respect each other and to be actively concerned for each other's well-being and happiness, as well as their own well-being and happiness. Therefore, it is rationally unjustified and immoral to undermine or violate people's human dignity, under any circumstances. People have dignity as an innate endowment of their humanity. Dignity is neither a politically-created right, nor an achievement of any sort. Nor can anyone lose their dignity by thinking, choosing, or acting in a very morally or legally bad way. By *coercion* I mean either (i) using violence (for example, injuring, torturing, or killing) or the threat of violence, in order to manipulate people according to certain purposes of the coercer (*primary coercion*), or (ii) inflicting appreciable, salient harm (for example, imprisonment, termination of employment, large monetary penalties) or deploying the threat of appreciable, salient harm, even if these are not in themselves violent, in order to manipulate people according to certain purposes of the coercer (*secondary coercion*). So all coercion is *manipulation*, and, as such, it directly violates human dignity by treating people as mere means and mere things. Therefore, whether it is primary or secondary, coercion should be carefully distinguished from what I will call *minimal sufficiently effective, last resort, defensive, protective, and preventive moral force*, which means that it is physical violence used only as a last resort, either using the smallest sufficiently effective level of violence or threat of violence, or deploying the smallest sufficiently effective threat of appreciable, salient harm, in order to defend against, protect against, or prevent, oneself or someone else being primarily or secondarily coerced, or having their human dignity directly violated.

Granting all that, then it's self-evident that the primary function of guns is for their owners/possessors or users to manipulate, threaten, and/or kill other people for self-interested or publicly beneficial reasons, namely, primary coercion. And it's also self-evident that the necessary consequence of owning, carrying, and/or using guns is gun violence. That primary coercion really and truly *is* the primary function of guns, is clearly proven by the history of firearms (Wikipedia, 2025e). Indeed, this is even explicitly admitted and stated by The American Firearms Institute (AFI, 2025), since in their historical timeline they trace the invention of the firearm back to its earliest origins as a weapon of conquest and warfare. Needless to say, The American Firearms Institute would of course be exceptionally unwilling to admit anything they thought would be somehow prejudicial to the pro-gun, pro-2nd Amendment movement. And *The Gun Violence Archive* proves my claim about gun violence (Gun Violence Archive, 2025).

Notice that I said that the *primary function* of guns is primary coercion. Please do not let the fact that guns can have secondary or tertiary functions, say, for hunting non-human animals, or for recreational shooting, or for holding doors closed on windy days, conceptually confuse you. Notice too, that if it turns out that owning, carrying, and/or

using guns according to their primary function is rationally unjustified and immoral, then owning, carrying, and/or using guns according to their secondary and tertiary functions will be equally rationally unjustified and immoral. If it's rationally unjustified and immoral for you to own, carry, or use a bomb that would could blow up the Earth, then it's equally rationally unjustified and immoral for you to own, carry, or use that bomb for hunting non-human animals, for recreational bombing, or for holding doors closed on windy days.

Now, primarily coercing other people is always rationally unjustified and immoral precisely because it undermines and violates their dignity. Notice that I said "*primarily* coercing other people": that means manipulating people by the use of violence or the threat of violence, for any self-interested or other instrumental reasons of the coercer, whatsoever. No such reason *ever* rationally and morally justifies primary coercion. Therefore, since it fully permits primary coercion, then owning, carrying, and/or using guns, i.e., Gun Crazy, and its necessary consequence, i.e., gun violence, are all rationally unjustified and immoral.

Moreover, please don't let the fact that under some special critical—in the sense of "involving a crisis"—circumstances, then minimal sufficiently effective, last-resort, defensive, protective, and preventive moral force is indeed rationally justified and morally permissible, perhaps even morally obligatory (Hanna and Paans, 2019), conceptually confuse you. More precisely, it's true that under some special critical circumstances, when other things are not equal, when all else has failed, and when the only way to stop bad people doing something horrendously immoral, and in direct violation of human dignity—for example, rape, torture, murder, mass murder, genocide—to you, to someone else, or to many other people, then you might be coerced by these bad people, as Hamlet says, to "take arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing, end them."² But your being coerced by bad people to take up firearms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing, end them, strictly for the purposes of deploying minimal sufficiently effective, last-resort, defensive, protective, and preventive moral force against those coercive bad people, is *not* your being "a gun user" (i.e., someone who freely chooses to shoot things or people), just as your being coerced by bad people—say, by threatening you with a gun—into taking opioids is *not* your being "an opioid user" (i.e., someone who freely chooses to ingest opioids).

Is owning, carrying, and/or using guns morally required for self-defense? *No*. Morally speaking, the right to self-defense flows from our obligation sufficiently to respect human dignity, including our own. But the primary function of guns is primary

² W. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, act 3, scene 1, lines 59-60.

coercion, and primary coercion is rationally unjustified and immoral. Moreover, since the late 1960s there's been a series of fascinating, but also very scary-&-troubling, studies in social psychology about what's called *the weapons effect*, whereby merely *presenting* or *representing* guns—even toy guns, or visual images of guns, including hard-copy based or internet-based images, cartoons, drawings, photographs, TV, movies, videos, video-games, and so-on—to people, causes the arousal of aggressive cognition in those people, and pre-reflectively primes them for gun violence. Here's an informative synopsis extracted from a 2021 article by the social psychologists Brad Bushman and Daniel Romer:

Guns not only permit violence, they can stimulate it as well. The finger pulls the trigger, but the trigger may also be pulling the finger.

— Leonard Berkowitz (Berkowitz, 1968: p. 22)

In discussions of gun violence, one factor that is rarely considered is the fact that merely seeing a gun can increase aggression. This effect, called “the weapons effect,” is conspicuously absent from debates about gun violence. Yet, the weapons effect is not a newly discovered phenomenon. It was first reported in a 1967 classic experiment conducted by Leonard Berkowitz and Anthony LePage... [Berkowitz and LePage, 1967]. Since 1967, the weapons effect has been replicated many times, including outside the lab. In a recent driving simulation experiment ..., for example, participants were seated in a car that had either a handgun or a tennis racket on the passenger seat. As in the Berkowitz and LePage experiment ..., participants were told that the object on the seat was part of a different experiment that the other experimenter forgot to clean up, and that they should ignore it. As in the Berkowitz and LePage experiment, they apparently could not ignore it. Participants were significantly more aggressive drivers when there was a gun on the passenger seat than when there was a tennis racket on the passenger seat. For example, they were more likely to speed, tailgate, pass drivers on the shoulder, crossing double yellow lines into oncoming traffic, swear at other drivers or use obscene gestures, or collide into other vehicles. These findings also mirror the results from survey studies. For example, one survey of a nationally representative sample of 2770 American drivers found that those with a gun in their vehicle, compared to those with no gun in their vehicle, were significantly more likely in the past year to make obscene gestures at other drivers (23% vs. 16%), tailgate (14% vs. 8%), or both (6.3% vs. 2.8%), even after controlling for several factors related to aggressive driving.... A 2018 meta-analysis integrated the results from all available weapons effect studies, which included 151 effect-size estimates from 78 independent studies involving 7668 participants.... A meta-analysis is a quantitative literature review that combines the statistical results from all studies conducted on a topic. The studies integrated in this weapons effect meta-analysis used a variety of operational definitions for key variables. This meta-analysis found a significant weapons effect when the results from all studies were integrated. The weapons effect was significant for provoked and unprovoked participants, for males and females, for

participants of all ages, for college students and nonstudents, and even for toy weapons. The weapons effect was also positively correlated with the year the study was conducted, indicating that the weapons effect is getting larger over time. In the meta-analysis, all average effect sizes were in the predicted direction, with weapons having a positive impact on aggression-related outcome variables.... As we have seen, people are sensitive to the appearance of weapons, and these experiences can introduce hostile perceptions that would otherwise not exist.... The National Rifle Association notes, "Guns don't kill people; people kill people." But guns are not just neutral stimuli either. As Professor Len Berkowitz noted, although the finger pulls the trigger of a gun, "the trigger may also be pulling the finger." Research on the weapons effect shows that the mere sight of a weapon can make people more aggressive. (Bushman and Romer, 2021: pp. 29, 30, 35-36)

So, scientific psychological research on the weapons effect shows that simply seeing a weapon or a representation of a weapon primes aggressive cognitions—for example, aggressive thoughts and aggressive appraisals—and increases aggressive action. Since the initial studies were conducted in the late 1960s, these experimental results have been replicated many times, both in the laboratory and in the field. Otherwise put, these results show that "the finger pulls the trigger, but the trigger may also be pulling the finger" (Berkowitz, 1968: p. 22). Therefore, in diametric opposition to those who believe or at least claim that guns are required for self-defense, the weapons effect shows that in fact even only *carrying* a gun, whether concealed or openly, actually significantly *increases* the risk of gun violence, or even itself *precipitates* gun violence, thereby endangering the gun-carriers themselves and others significantly *more* than if they had *not* been carrying a gun. In other words, it's significantly safer *not* to own, carry, and/or use a gun, than actually to own, carry and/or use a gun—a bitter irony.

Aside from this already very significant implication of the weapons effect, there are two other equally important things about the weapons effect studies that are worth repeating. **First**, the studies have been reconfirmed and replicated many times since 1967, so they're in very good shape as regards empirical scientific methods and results. **Second**, the weapons effect holds up across *all* kinds of people, not merely young men.

One very important moral and political consequence of the preceding argument is its direct bearing on The 2nd Amendment to the US Constitution, already quoted above but worth repeating, which says this:

A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, **the right of the people to keep and bear Arms**, shall not be infringed. (Boldfacing added)

In other words, focusing on the material in boldface, The 2nd Amendment says that "the people," that is, *all Americans*, have the moral and legal right "to keep and bear arms,"

that is, the moral and legal right to own, carry, or use guns, unconditionally. This means that The 2nd Amendment fully morally and legally permits primary coercion by means of guns. The further historical question of whether the original intention of The 2nd Amendment was to establish a legal right to own, carry, and/or use guns for state militias only, or instead for all American citizens *including* state militias—as I think is clearly and distinctly either explicitly stated or implicitly entailed by The 2nd Amendment (Waldman, 2014)—is irrelevant. And in any case, if The 2nd Amendment really had been intended to hold for state militias *only*, and *not* for all Americans, then the Framers of The 2nd Amendment would have stated that *explicitly*. But of course, they *didn't* state that explicitly, because they were simply taking the individual right to own, carry, and/or use guns universally, unreflectively, and utterly for granted. In any case, primary coercion in general, and primary coercion by means of guns in particular, are rationally unjustified and immoral. Therefore, The 2nd Amendment is rationally unjustified and immoral, and Gun Abolitionism is rationally justified, morally right, and what we ought to do, by means of repealing The 2nd Amendment, and then universally banning owning, carrying, and/or using guns.

More generally, *no one, anywhere in the USA, under any circumstances*, which obviously includes all Americans, and which especially includes all members of the police and the army, namely, the “Militia,” has the moral right “to keep and bear arms,” that is, to own, carry, and/or use guns. This recognition, in turn, will have profound implications for the USA’s legal justice system, aka *The Crime-&Punishment System* (Hanna, 2018b: section 3.10, pp. 160-165).

In the devolutionary period after the repeal of The 2nd Amendment, particularly, it might be necessary, in certain communities, to create small public caches of guns that are owned, carried, or used by no one, for special, critical circumstances, when some coercive bad people are coercing some brave good people, who have freely volunteered to help others as their duly-appointed guardians, into taking up firearms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing, end them, strictly for the purposes of deploying minimal sufficiently effective, last-resort, defensive, protective, and preventive moral force against those coercive bad people. But eventually, even these would not be needed, and then they too could be phased out and abolished.

7. Gun Abolitionism: Imagine a World Without Gun Crazy

So I’m proposing *Gun Abolitionism*, which says:

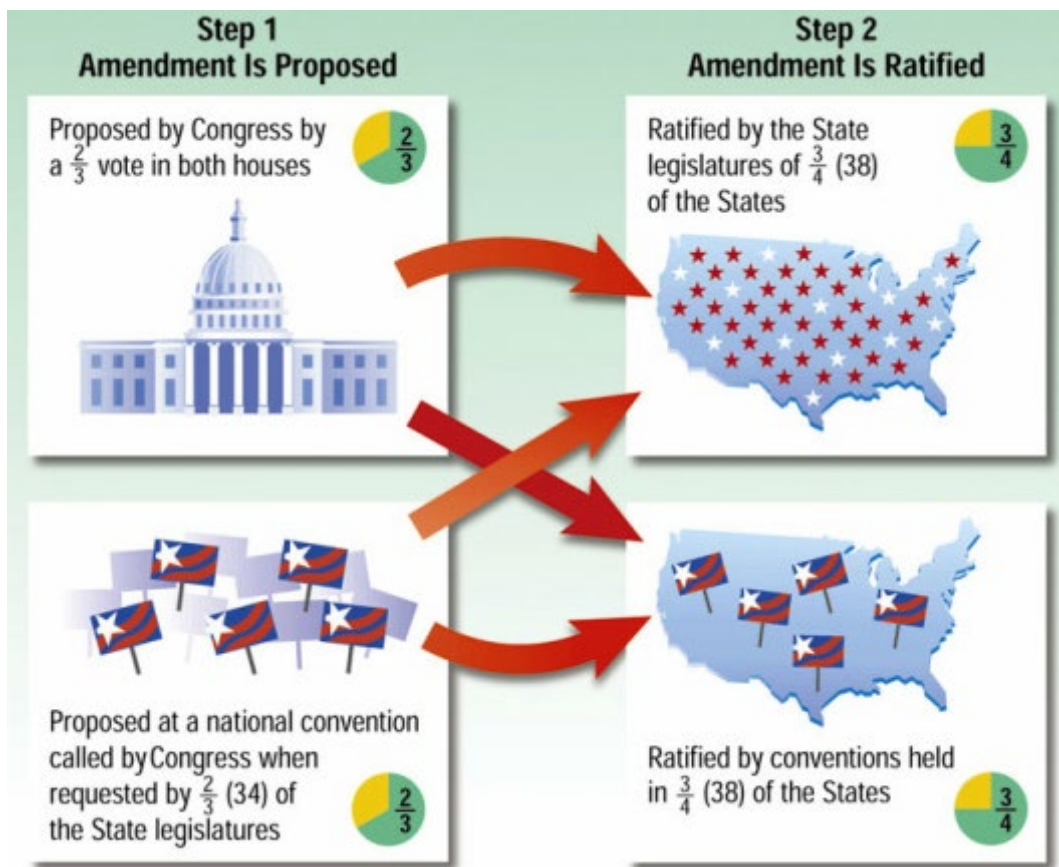
No one in the USA, under any circumstances, including police, internal security forces of all kinds, armies, and intelligence forces of all kinds, has the moral right to own, carry, and/or use guns of any kind, for any purpose whatsoever, because the primary function of guns is primary coercion, which produces gun violence as a necessary consequence, and primary coercion is rationally unjustified and immoral; therefore, we should repeal The 2nd Amendment to the US Constitution, and then universally ban owning, carrying, and/or using guns.

Many countries already seriously restrict owning, carrying, and/or using guns, even by the police, with significant benefits for all involved (Noack, 2015; NYT, 2022b); therefore Gun Abolitionism would radically extend and increase those benefits. It is of course obvious that Gun Abolitionism would have to be implemented in very carefully-designed stages, so as to ensure a non-violent, safe transition from gun-free sub-zone1 to gun-free sub-zone2, etc. And as I mentioned above, in the devolutionary period immediately after the repeal of The 2nd Amendment, particularly, it might be necessary, in certain communities, to create small public caches of guns, owned, carried, or used by no one, for special, critical circumstances, when some coercive bad people are coercing some brave good people, who have freely volunteered to help others as their duly-appointed guardians, into taking up firearms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing, end them, strictly for the purposes of deploying minimal sufficiently effective, last-resort, defensive, protective, and preventive moral force against those coercive bad people. *But these would be designed to wither away.* In any case, I hereby emphasize and re-emphasize what I said earlier, namely, that Gun Abolitionism would be implemented by, **first**, repealing The 2nd Amendment and then, **second**, universally banning owning, carrying, and/or using guns thereafter, in a step-by-step, zone-by-zone way, by combining the process of civilian gun abolition with a step-by-step, zone-by-zone police, internal security, military, and intelligence force disarmament, and “the end of policing” (Vitale, 2017).

Now, whenever I describe the very idea of Gun Abolitionism to American acquaintances and friends—including the most thoughtful, open-minded, left-leaning, or politically radical among them, and even immediately after the most recent horrific mass shooting, say, the one at Uvalde, TX in 2022 (Wikipedia, 2025f)—they initially or typically get a wide-eyed, horrified look on their faces, shake their heads convulsively, and say that repealing The 2nd Amendment is “impossible.” As they do this, I am vividly reminded of the mind-controlled characters in John Frankenheimer’s 1962 political thriller, *The Manchurian Candidate* (Wikipedia, 2025g) who, when questioned, automatically intone that “Raymond Shaw is the kindest, bravest, warmest, most wonderful human being I’ve ever known in my life,” *even when they know in their heart-of-hearts that this is completely false.* In other words, they’re so completely in the mind-

manacled grip of Gun Crazy, that they think *I'm* crazy for defending Gun Abolitionism. So it's exceptionally important to point out explicitly what every reasonably well-informed American already pre-reflectively knows in their heart-of-hearts, namely, that there's a perfectly clear and effective democratic procedure for repealing Constitutional amendments; and that other Constitutional amendments have actually been repealed: so in that sense, repealing The 2nd Amendment is actually easy and sane, not in any way "impossible" or "crazy." The people of the USA created and instituted The 2nd Amendment; and the repeal process is written into the Constitution itself; therefore, the people of the USA can repeal The 2nd Amendment.

Here's what I mean: please look at the following diagram—



In this way, The Constitution of the USA *was originally made to be amended*; and in order to see that claim proved, please also read the following description provided by the USA National Archives (US National Archives, 2025).

Constitutional Amendment Process

The authority to amend the Constitution of the United States is derived from Article V of the Constitution. After Congress proposes an amendment, the Archivist of the United States, who heads the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), is charged with responsibility for administering the ratification process under the provisions of 1 U.S.C. 106b. The Archivist has delegated many of the ministerial duties associated with this function to the Director of the Federal Register. Neither Article V of the Constitution nor section 106b describe the ratification process in detail. The Archivist and the Director of the Federal Register follow procedures and customs established by the Secretary of State, who performed these duties until 1950, and the Administrator of General Services, who served in this capacity until NARA assumed responsibility as an independent agency in 1985.

The Constitution provides that an amendment may be proposed either by the Congress with a two-thirds majority vote in both the House of Representatives and the Senate or by a constitutional convention called for by two-thirds of the State legislatures. None of the 27 amendments to the Constitution have been proposed by constitutional convention. The Congress proposes an amendment in the form of a joint resolution.

Since the President does not have a constitutional role in the amendment process, the joint resolution does not go to the White House for signature or approval. The original document is forwarded directly to NARA's Office of the Federal Register (OFR) for processing and publication. The OFR adds legislative history notes to the joint resolution and publishes it in slip law format. The OFR also assembles an information package for the States which includes formal "red-line" copies of the joint resolution, copies of the joint resolution in slip law format, and the statutory procedure for ratification under 1 U.S.C. 106b.

The Archivist submits the proposed amendment to the States for their consideration by sending a letter of notification to each Governor along with the informational material prepared by the OFR. The Governors then formally submit the amendment to their State legislatures or the state calls for a convention, depending on what Congress has specified. In the past, some State legislatures have not waited to receive official notice before taking action on a proposed amendment. When a State ratifies a proposed amendment, it sends the Archivist an original or certified copy of the State action, which is immediately conveyed to the Director of the Federal Register. The OFR examines ratification documents for facial legal sufficiency and an authenticating signature. If the documents are found to be in good order, the Director acknowledges receipt and maintains custody of them. The OFR retains these documents until an amendment is adopted or fails, and then transfers the records to the National Archives for preservation.

A proposed amendment becomes part of the Constitution as soon as it is ratified by three-fourths of the States (38 of 50 States). When the OFR verifies that it has received the required number of authenticated ratification documents, it drafts a formal proclamation for the Archivist to certify that the amendment is valid and has become part of the Constitution. This certification is published in the Federal Register and U.S. Statutes at Large and serves as official notice to the Congress and to the Nation that the amendment process has been completed.

Moreover, the US Constitution *has actually been amended many times*; and in order to prove this, here is a brief summary of the 27 ratified amendments (Wikipedia, 2025h).

Ratified amendments

Synopsis of each ratified amendment

No.	Subject	Date submitted for Ratification ^[4]	Date ratification completed ^[4]	Ratification time span
1st	Prohibits Congress from making any law respecting an establishment of religion , impeding the free exercise of religion , abridging the freedom of speech , infringing on the freedom of the press , interfering with the right to peaceably assemble or prohibiting the petitioning for a governmental redress of grievances .	September 25, 1789	December 15, 1791	2 years 2 months 20 days
2nd	Protects the right to keep and bear arms .	September 25, 1789	December 15, 1791	2 years 2 months 20 days
3rd	Places restrictions on the quartering of soldiers in private homes without the owner's consent, prohibiting it during peacetime.	September 25, 1789	December 15, 1791	2 years 2 months 20 days
4th	Prohibits unreasonable searches and seizures and sets out requirements for search warrants based on probable cause as determined by a neutral judge or magistrate.	September 25, 1789	December 15, 1791	2 years 2 months 20 days
5th	Sets out rules for indictment by grand jury and eminent domain , protects the right to due process , and prohibits self-incrimination and double jeopardy .	September 25, 1789	December 15, 1791	2 years 2 months 20 days
6th	Protects the right to a fair and speedy public trial by jury , including the rights to be notified of the accusations , to confront the accuser , to obtain witnesses and to retain counsel .	September 25, 1789	December 15, 1791	2 years 2 months 20 days
7th	Provides for the right to trial by jury in certain civil cases , according to common law .	September 25, 1789	December 15, 1791	2 years 2 months 20 days
8th	Prohibits excessive fines and excessive bail , as well as cruel and unusual punishment .	September 25, 1789	December 15, 1791	2 years 2 months 20 days
9th	Protects rights not enumerated in the Constitution.	September 25, 1789	December 15, 1791	2 years 2 months 20 days

10th	Reinforces the principle of federalism by stating that the federal government possesses only those powers delegated to it by the states or the people through the Constitution.	September 25, 1789	December 15, 1791	2 years 2 months 20 days
11th	Makes states immune from suits from out-of-state citizens and foreigners not living within the state borders; lays the foundation for sovereign immunity .	March 4, 1794	February 7, 1795	11 months 3 days
12th	Revises presidential election procedures.	December 9, 1803	June 15, 1804	6 months 6 days
13th	Abolishes slavery , and involuntary servitude , except as punishment for a crime.	January 31, 1865	December 6, 1865	10 months 6 days
14th	Defines citizenship , contains the Privileges or Immunities Clause , the Due Process Clause , the Equal Protection Clause , and deals with post- Civil War issues.	June 13, 1866	July 9, 1868	2 years 0 months 26 days
15th	Prohibits the denial of the right to vote based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude.	February 26, 1869	February 3, 1870	11 months 8 days
16th	Permits Congress to levy an income tax without apportioning it among the states or basing it on the United States Census .	July 12, 1909	February 3, 1913	3 years 6 months 22 days
17th	Establishes the direct election of United States Senators by popular vote.	May 13, 1912	April 8, 1913	10 months 26 days
18th	Prohibited the manufacturing or sale of alcohol within the United States. (<i>Repealed December 5, 1933</i>)	December 18, 1917	January 16, 1919	1 year 0 months 29 days
19th	Prohibits the denial of the right to vote based on sex .	June 4, 1919	August 18, 1920	1 year 2 months 14 days
20th	Changes the date on which the terms of the President and Vice President (January 20) and Senators and Representatives (January 3) end and begin.	March 2, 1932	January 23, 1933	10 months 21 days
21st	Repeals the 18th Amendment and makes it a federal offense to transport or import intoxicating liquors into US states and territories where such transport or importation is prohibited by the laws of those states and territories.	February 20, 1933	December 5, 1933	9 months 15 days
22nd	Limits the number of times that a person can be elected president: a person cannot be elected president more than twice, and a person who has served more than two years of a term to which someone else was elected cannot be elected more than once.	March 24, 1947	February 27, 1951	3 years 11 month 6 days
23rd	Grants the District of Columbia electors (the number of electors being equal to the least populous state) in the Electoral College .	June 16, 1960	March 29, 1961	9 months 12 days
24th	Prohibits the revocation of voting rights due to the non-payment of a poll tax or any other tax.	September 14, 1962	January 23, 1964	1 year 4 months 27 days
25th	Addresses succession to the Presidency and establishes procedures both for filling a vacancy in the office of the Vice President, as well as responding to Presidential disabilities.	July 6, 1965	February 10, 1967	1 year 7 months 4 days
26th	Prohibits the denial of the right of US citizens, eighteen years of age or older, to vote on account of age.	March 23, 1971	July 1, 1971	3 months 8 days
27th	Delays laws affecting Congressional salary from taking effect until after the next election of representatives .	September 25, 1789	May 5, 1992 ^[5]	202 years 7 months 10 days

Again: the US Constitution was originally made to be amended and has actually been amended many times. Now, *why* has the Constitution been amended? I draw your special attention to the 13th, 14th, 18th, 19th, and 21st amendments. These amendments abolished slavery, introduced Prohibition of the manufacture or sale of alcohol, abolished the denial of the right to vote based on gender or sex, and repealed Prohibition. In other words, the US Constitution has been amended *whenever* the American people collectively deem that the existing Constitution is rationally unjustified and immoral, and must be changed for the morally better. So (a sufficient number of) the American people must learn to *imagine* a world without Gun Crazy: *Videre aude!*, dare to see for yourself!, and then freely *enact* that vision (Hanna, 2024).

8. Conclusion

I know full well that pro-gun, pro-2nd Amendment people are highly apt to fulminate against those who disagree with them, in an attempt to silence their anti-gun “Enemies of The People,” even to the point of threatening to shoot them, or actually shooting them (Zucchini, 2016). But that these pro-gun, pro-2nd Amendment people would threaten to shoot or actually shoot other people merely for *disagreeing* with them and rationally defending the contrary view, in view of *The 1st Amendment*, which politically encodes the moral freedom of speech or expression, only provides a further self-evident proof of the moral rightness of Gun Abolitionism, by means of the valid logical inference rule of *reductio ad absurdum*, which entails the necessary falsity of any proposition (i.e., in this case, Gun Crazy) that entails a contradiction. Moreover, for many or even most pro-gun, pro-2nd Amendment people, the farcical favored “solution” to the problem of gun violence is—of course!—owning, carrying, and using *more and more guns*, including arming teachers in schools, especially elementary schools, in order to protect themselves, their loved ones, or (if you’re the police) society at large, from all the *other* people who are already owning, carrying, and using guns.

So the moral scandal of Gun Crazy really *is* crazy, not to mention rationally unjustified and immoral; and Gun Abolitionism, in direct opposition to Gun Crazy, is rationally justified, morally right, and soberly sane.

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