#### Obama is coming to take your guns and it’s time to suit up in your red, white, and blues and use your weapons to protect your freedom and country. From drone strikes against brown bodies in the Middle East to the slaughter of black youth in the streets of Chicago, the military industrial complex controls our every move and thought – the symbolic power of guns shapes our epistemology and violence becomes normalized.

Giroux 1/10 (Henry, American scholar and cultural critic. One of the founding theorists of critical pedagogy in the United States, he is best known for his pioneering work in public pedagogy, “Gun Culture and the American Nightmare of Violence,” 10 January 2016, http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/34349-gun-culture-and-the-american-nightmare-of-violence)//ghs-VA

Gun violence in the United States has produced a culture soaked in blood - a culture that threatens everyone and extends from accidental deaths, suicides and domestic violence to mass shootings. In late December, a woman in St. Cloud, Florida, fatally shot her own daughter after mistaking her for an intruder. Less than a month earlier, on December 2, in San Bernardino, California, was the mass shooting that left 14 people dead and more than 20 wounded. And just two months before that, on October 1, nine people were killed and seven wounded in a mass shooting at a community college in Roseburg, Oregon.¶ **Mass shootings have become routine in the United States and speak to a society that** relies on violence to feed the coffers of the merchants of death. Given the profits made by arms manufacturers, the defense industry, gun dealers and the lobbyists who represent them in Congress, it comes as no surprise that **the culture of violence cannot be abstracted from either the culture of business or the corruption of politics**. Violence runs through US society like an electric current offering instant pleasure from all cultural sources, whether it be the nightly news or a television series that glorifies serial killers.¶ **At a** policy level, **violence drives the arms industry and a** militaristic foreign policy, **and is increasingly the punishing state's major tool to enforce its hyped-up brand of domestic terrorism, especially against Black youth**. The United States is utterly wedded to a neoliberal culture in which cruelty is viewed as virtue, while mass incarceration is treated as the chief mechanism to "institutionalize obedience." At the same time, a shark-like mode of competition replaces any viable notion of solidarity**, and a sabotaging notion of self-interest pushes society into the false lure of mass consumerism**. The increasing number of mass shootings is symptomatic of a society engulfed in racism, fear, militarism, bigotry and massive inequities in wealth and power.¶ Guns and the hypermasculine culture of violence are given more support than young people and life itself.¶ Over 270 mass shootings have taken place in the United States in 2015 alone, proving once again that the economic, political and social conditions that underlie such violence are not being addressed. Sadly, these shootings are not isolated incidents. For example, one child under 12 years old has been killed every other day by a firearm, which amounts to 555 children killed by guns in three years. An even more frightening statistic and example of a shocking moral and political perversity was noted in data provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which states that "2,525 children and teens died by gunfire in [the United States] in 2014; one child or teen death every 3 hours and 28 minutes, nearly 7 a day, 48 a week." Such figures indicate that too many youth in the United States occupy what might be called war zones in which guns and violence proliferate. In this scenario, guns and the hypermasculine culture of violence are given more support than young people and life itself.¶ **The predominance of a relatively unchecked gun culture and a morally perverse and politically obscene culture of violence is** particularly **evident in the power of the** gun lobby and its political advocates to pass laws in eight states to allow students and faculty to carry concealed weapons "into classrooms, dormitories and other buildings" on campuses. In spite of the rash of recent shootings on college campuses, Texas lawmakers, for instance, passed one such "campus carry bill," which will take effect in August 2016. To add insult to injury, they also passed an "open carry bill" that allows registered gun owners to carry their guns openly in public. Such laws not only reflect "the seemingly limitless legislative clout of gun interests," but also a rather irrational return to the violence-laden culture of the "Wild West."¶ As in the past, individuals will be allowed to walk the streets, while openly carrying guns and packing heat as a measure of their love of guns and their reliance upon violence as the best way to address any perceived threat to their security. This return to the deadly practices of the " Wild West" is neither a matter of individual choice nor some far-fetched yet allegedly legitimate appeal to the Second Amendment. On the contrary, **mass violence in the United States has to be placed within a broader historical, economic and political context in order to address the totality of the forces that produce it**. Focusing merely on mass shootings or the passing of potentially dangerous gun legislation does not get to the root of the systemic forces that produce the United States' love affair with violence and the ideologies and criminogenic institutions that produce it.¶ **Imperial policies that promote aggression all across the globe are now matched by increasing levels of lawlessness and state repression,** which mutually feed each other. On the home front, **civil society is degenerating into a military organization, a space of lawlessness** and warlike practices, **organized** primarily **for the production of violence**. For instance, as Steve Martinot observes at CounterPunch, **the police now use their discourse of command and power to criminalize behavior**; in addition, **they use military weapons and surveillance tools as if they are preparing for war, and create a culture of fear in which** militaristic principles replace legal principles. He writes:¶ This suggests that **there is an institutional insecurity that seeks to cover itself through social control ... the** cops act out this insecurity by criminalizing individuals in advance. **No legal principle need be involved. There is only the militarist principle**.... When police shoot a fleeing subject and claim they are acting in self-defense (i.e. threatened), it is not their person but the command and control principle that is threatened. To defend that control through assault or murderous action against a disobedient person implies that the cop's own identity is wholly immersed in its paradigm. **There is nothing psychological about this**. Self-worth or insecurity is not the issue. **There is only the military ethic of power, imposed on civil society through an assumption of impunity**. It is the ethos of democracy, of human self-respect, that is the threat.¶ The rise of violence and the gun culture in the United States cannot be separated from a transformation in governance in the United States. Political sovereignty has been replaced by economic sovereignty **as corporate power takes over the reins of governance**. The more money influences politics, the more corrupt the political culture becomes. Under such circumstances, holding office is largely dependent on having huge amounts of capital at one's disposal, while laws and policies at all levels of government are mostly fashioned by lobbyists representing big business corporations and financial institutions. Moreover, such **lobbying, as corrupt and unethical as it may be, is now carried out in the open by the** National Rifle Association (**NRA**) **and other** individuals, groups and **institutions invested in the militarization of US society**. This lobbying is then displayed as a badge of honor - a kind of open testimonial to the lobbyists' disrespect for democratic governance.¶ But money in politics is not the only major institutional factor in which everyday and state violence are nourished by a growing militarism. As David Theo Goldberg has argued in his essay "Mission Accomplished: Militarizing Social Logic," the military has also assumed a central role in shaping all aspects of society. **Militarization** is about more than the use of repressive power; it also **represents a powerful social logic that is constitutive of values, modes of rationality and ways of thinking**. According to Goldberg,¶ The military is not just a fighting machine.... It serves and socializes. **It hands down to the society, as big brother might, its more or less perfected goods,** from gunpowder to guns, computing to information management ... In short, while militarily produced instruments might be retooled to other, broader social purpose - the military shapes pretty much the entire range of social production from commodities to culture, social goods to social theory.¶ The militarization and corporatization of social logic permeates US society. The general public in the United States is largely depoliticized through the influence of corporations over schools, higher education and other cultural apparatuses. **The deadening of public values,** civic consciousness and critical citizenship **are also the result of the work of anti-public intellectuals representing right-wing ideological and financial interests**, a powerful set of corporate-controlled media agencies that are largely center-right and a market-driven public pedagogy that reduces the obligations of citizenship to the endless consumption and discarding of commodities. Military ideals permeate every aspect of popular culture, policy and social relations. In addition, a pedagogy of historical, social and racial amnesia is constructed and circulated through celebrity and consumer culture.¶ **A war culture now shapes every aspect of society as warlike values, a hypermasculinity and an aggressive militarism seep into every major institution** in the United States, including schools, the corporate media and local police forces. The criminal legal system has become the default structure for dealing with social problems. More and more **people are considered disposable because they offend the sensibilities of the financial elite**, who are rapidly consolidating class power. Under such circumstances, violence occupies an honored place.¶ **Militarism provides ideological support for policies that protect gun owners** and sellers rather than children.¶ It is impossible to understand the rise of gun culture and violence in the United States without thinking about the maturation of the military state. Since the end of the Cold War the United States has built "the most expensive and lethal military force in the world." The defense budget for 2015 totaled $598.5 billion and accounted for 54 percent of all federal discretionary spending. The US defense budget is both larger than the combined G-20 and "more than the combined military spending of China, Russia, the United Kingdom, Japan, France, Saudi Arabia, India, Germany, Italy and Brazil," according to an NBC report. Since 9/11, the United States has intensified both the range of its military power abroad while increasing the ongoing militarization of US society. The United States circles the globe with around 800 military bases, producing a massive worldwide landscape of military force, at an "annual cost of $156 billion," according to a report by David Vine in The Nation.¶ Moreover, Vine adds, "there are US troops or other military personnel in about 160 foreign countries and territories, including small numbers of Marines guarding embassies and larger deployments of trainers and advisers like the roughly 3,500 now working with the Iraqi army." Not only is the Pentagon in an unprecedented position of power, but also it thrives on a morally bankrupt vision of domestic and foreign policy dependent upon a world defined by terrorism, enemies and perpetual fear. Military arms are now transferred to local police departments, drone bases proliferate, and secret bases around the world support special operations, Navy SEALs, CIA personnel, Army Rangers and other clandestine groups, as Nick Turse has shown in Tomorrow's Battlefield. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising, as Andrew Bacevich points out, that "war has become a normal condition [and the] use of violence has become the preferred "instrument of statecraft."¶ **Violence feeds on corporate-controlled disimagination machines that celebrate it as a sport while upping the pleasure quotient for the public.** Americans do not merely engage in violence; they are also entertained by it. **This kind of toxic irrationality and lure of violence is mimicked in the** United States' **aggressive foreign policy, in the sanctioning of state torture and in the gruesome killings of civilians by drones**. As my colleague David L. Clark pointed out to me in an email, voters' support for " bombing make-believe countries [with Arab-sounding names] is not a symptom of muddled confusion but, quite to the contrary, a sign of unerring precision. It describes the desire to militarize nothing less than the imagination and to target the minutiae of our dreams." State repression, unbridled self-interest, an empty consumerist ethos and an expansive militarism have furthered the conditions for society to flirt with forms of irrationality that are at the heart of everyday aggression, violence and the withering of public life.¶ Pushback Against Gun Control Efforts¶ Warlike values no longer suggest a pathological entanglement with a kind of mad irrationality or danger. On the contrary, they have become a matter of common sense. For instance, the US government is willing to lock down a major city such as Boston in order to catch a terrorist or prevent a terrorist attack, but refuses to pass gun control bills that would significantly lower the number of Americans who die each year as a result of gun violence. As Michael Cohen observes, it is truly a symptom of irrationality when politicians can lose their heads over the threat of terrorism, even sacrificing civil liberties, but ignore the fact that "30,000 Americans die in gun violence every year (compared to the 17 who died [in 2012] in terrorist attacks)." It gets worse.¶ As **the threat of terrorism is used by the US government to construct a surveillance state, suspend civil liberties and accelerate the forces of authoritarianism**, the fear of personal and collective violence has no rational bearing on addressing the morbid acceleration of gun violence. In fact, **the fear of terrorism appears to feed a toxic culture of violence produced**, in part, **by the wide and unchecked** availability of guns. The United States' fascination with guns and violence functions as a form of sport and entertainment, while **gun culture offers a** false promise of security. **In this logic, one not only kills terrorists with drones, but also makes sure that patriotic Americans are individually armed so they can use force to protect themselves against the apparitions whipped up by right-wing politicians**, pundits and the corporate-controlled media.¶ Rather than bring violence into a political debate that would limit its production, various states increase its possibilities by passing laws that allow guns at places from bars to houses of worship. Florida's "stand your ground" law, based on the notion that one should shoot first and ask questions later, is a morbid reflection of the United States' adulation of gun culture and the fears that fuel it. This fascination with guns and violence has infected the highest levels of government and serves to further anti-democratic and authoritarian forces. For example, **the US government's warfare state is propelled by a military-industrial complex that cannot spend enough on weapons of death** and destruction. Super modern planes such as the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter cost up to $228 million each and are plagued by mechanical problems and yet are supported by a military and defense establishment. As Gabriel Kolko observes, such **warlike investments "reflect a pathology and culture that is expressed in spending more money**," regardless of how it contributes to running up the debt, and that thrives on what anthropologist João Biehl has described as "the energies of the dead."¶ Militarism provides ideological support for policies that protect gun owners and sellers rather than children. The Children's Defense Fund is right in stating, "Where is our anti-war movement here at home? Why does a nation with the largest military budget in the world refuse to protect its children from relentless gun violence and terrorism at home? No external enemy ever killed thousands of children in their neighborhoods, streets and schools year in and year out."¶ There is a not-so-hidden structure of politics at work in this type of sanctioned irrationality. **Advocating for gun rights provides a convenient discourse for ignoring what** Carl **Boggs has described as a "harsh neoliberal corporate-state order that routinely generates pervasive material suffering, social dislocation, and psychological despair** - worsening conditions that ensure violence in its many expressions."¶ As the United States moves from a welfare state to a warfare state, state violence becomes normalized. The United States' moral compass and its highest democratic ideals have begun to wither, and the institutions that were once designed to help people now serve to largely suppress them. Gun laws matter, social responsibility matters and a government responsive to its people matters, especially when it comes to limiting the effects of a mercenary gun culture. But more has to be done. The dominance of gun lobbyists must end; the reign of money-controlled politics must end; the proliferation of high levels of violence in popular culture, and the ongoing militarization of US society must end. At the same time, it is crucial, as participants in the Black Lives Matter movement have argued, for Americans to refuse to endorse the kind of gun control that criminalizes young people of color.¶ **Moderate calls for reining in the gun culture** and its political advocates do not go far enough **because they fail to address the roots of the violence** causing so much carnage in the United States, especially among children and teens. For example, Hillary **Clinton's much publicized call for controlling the gun lobby and improving background checks**, however well intentioned, **did not include anything about a culture of lawlessness and violence reproduced by the government, the financial elites and the defense industries, or a casino capitalism that is built on corruption** and produces massive amounts of human misery and suffering. Moreover, none of the calls to eliminate gun violence in the United States link such violence to the broader war on youth, especially poor youth of color.¶ A Culture of Violence¶ It would be wrong to suggest that the violence that saturates popular culture directly causes violence in the larger society. Nevertheless, it is arguable that depictions of violence serve to normalize violence as both a source of pleasure and as a practice for addressing social issues. **When young people** and others begin to **believe that a world of extreme violence,** vengeance**, lawlessness and revenge is the only world they inhabit, the culture and practice of real-life violence is more difficult to scrutinize, resist and transform**.¶ Many critics have argued that a popular culture that endlessly trades in violence runs the risk of blurring the lines between the world of fantasies and the world we live in. What they often miss is that when violence is celebrated in its myriad registers and platforms in a society, a formative culture is put in place that is amenable to the pathology of fascism. That is, a culture that thrives on violence runs the risk of losing its capacity to separate politics from violence. A.O. Scott recognizes such a connection between gun violence and popular culture, but he fails to register the deeper significance of the relationship. He writes:¶ ... it is absurd to pretend that gun culture is unrelated to popular culture, or that make-believe violence has nothing to do with its real-world correlative. Guns have symbolic as well as actual power, **and the practical business of hunting, law enforcement and self-defense has less purchase in our civic life than fantasies of righteous vengeance or brave resistance**.... [**Violent] fantasies have proliferated** and intensified **even as our daily existence has become more regulated** and standardized - and also less dangerous. Perhaps they offer an escape from the boredom and regimentation of work and consumption.¶ Popular culture not only trades in violence as entertainment, but also it delivers violence to a society addicted to a pleasure principle steeped in graphic and extreme images of human suffering, mayhem and torture. While the Obama administration banned waterboarding as an interrogation method in January 2009, it appears to be thriving as a legitimate procedure in a number of prominent Hollywood films, including Safe House, Zero Dark Thirty, G.I. Jane and Taken 3. The use of and legitimation of torture by the government is not limited to Hollywood films. Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump announced recently on ABC's "This Week" that he would bring back waterboarding because it "is peanuts compared to what they do to us." It appears that moral depravity and the flight from social responsibility have no limits in an authoritarian political landscape.¶ Gun Violence Is Just the Tip of the Iceberg¶ The United States is suffering from an epidemic of violence, and much of it results in the shooting and killing of children. In announcing his package of executive actions to reduce gun violence, President Obama singled out both the gun lobby and Congress for refusing to implement even moderate gun control reforms. Obama was right on target in stating that "the gun lobby may be holding Congress hostage right now, but they cannot hold America hostage. We do not have to accept this carnage as the price of freedom." Congress's refusal to enact any type of gun control is symptomatic of the death of US democracy and the way in which money and power now govern the United States. Under a regime of casino capitalism, wealth and profits are more important than keeping the American people safe, more worthwhile than preventing a flood of violence across the land, and more valued than even the lives of young children caught in the hail of gunfire.¶ **In spite of the empty bluster of** Republican **politicians claiming that Obama is violating the US Constitution** with executive overreach, threatening to take guns away from the American people or undermining the Second Amendment, **the not-so-hidden politics at work in these claims is one that points to the collapse of ethics**, compassion and responsibility **in the face of a militarized culture defined by the financial elite**, gun lobbies and big corporations. Such forces represent a take-no-prisoners approach and refuse to even consider Obama's call for strengthening background checks, limiting the unchecked sale of firearms by gun sellers, developing "smart gun" technologies, and preventing those on the United States' terrorist watch list from purchasing guns. These initiatives hardly constitute a threat to gun ownership in the United States.¶ Guns are certainly a major problem in the United States, but they are symptomatic of a much larger crisis: Our country has tipped over into a new and deadly form of authoritarianism. We have become one of the most violent cultures on the planet and regulating guns does not get to the root of the problem. Zhiwa Woodbury touches on this issue at Tikkun Daily, writing:¶ **We are a country of approximately** 300 million people with approximately **300 million firearms - a third of which are concealable handguns.** Each one of these guns is made for one purpose only - to kill as quickly and effectively as possible. The idea that some magical regulatory scheme, short of confiscation, will somehow prevent guns from being used to kill people is laughable, regardless of what you think of the NRA. Similarly, mentally ill individuals are responsible for less than 5% of the 30,000+ gunned down in the U.S. every year.¶ In the current historical conjuncture, gun violence makes a mockery of safe public spaces, gives rise to institutions and cultural apparatuses that embrace a deadly war psychology, and trades on fear and insecurity to undermine any sense of shared responsibility. It is no coincidence that the violence of prisons is related to the violence produced by police in the streets; it is no coincidence that the brutal masculine authority that now dominates US politics, with its unabashed hatred of women, poor people, Black people, Muslims and Mexican immigrants, shares an uncanny form of lawlessness with a long tradition of 20th century authoritarianism.¶ As violence moves to the center of American life, it becomes an organizing principle of society, and further contributes to the unraveling of the fabric of a democracy. Under such circumstances, the United States begins to consider everyone a potential criminal, wages war with itself and begins to sacrifice its children and its future. The political stooges, who have become lapdogs of corporate and financial interests, and refuse out of narrow self- and financial interests to confront the conditions that create such violence, must be held accountable for the deaths taking place in a toxic culture of gun violence. The condemnation of violence cannot be limited to police brutality. Violence does not just come from the police. In the United States, there are other dangers emanating from state power that punishes whistleblowers, intelligence agencies that encourage the arrests of those who protest against the abuse of corporate and state power, and a corporate-controlled media that trades in ignorance, lies and falsehoods, all the while demanding and generally "receiving unwavering support from their citizens," as Teju Cole has pointed out in The New Yorker.

#### Militarism permeates even the spaces we occupy and has killed democracy. Challenging its ideological stronghold on the academy is key to creating viable alternatives for change. Thus, the role of the ballot is to vote for the debater whose advocacy best breaks down our militaristic culture of violence.

Henry A. Giroux 15 [American scholar and cultural critic. One of the founding theorists of critical pedagogy in the United States, he is best known for his pioneering work in public pedagogy], “Beyond Dystopian Visions in the Age of Neoliberal Authoritarianism”, Truthout, 4 Nov 2015, BE

If neoliberal authoritarianism is to be challenged and overcome, it is crucial that intellectuals, unions, workers, young people and various social movements unite to reclaim democracy as a central element in fashioning a radical imagination. Such action necessitates interrogating and rupturing the material and symbolic forces that hide behind a counterfeit claim to participatory democracy. This requires rescuing the promises of a radical democracy that can provide a living wage, quality health care for all, public works and massive investments in education, child care, housing for the poor, along with a range of other crucial social provisions that can make a difference between living and dying for those who have been relegated to the ranks of the disposable.¶ The growing global threat of neoliberal authoritarianism signals both a crisis of politics and a crisis of beliefs, values and individual and social agency. One indication of such a crisis is the fact that the economic calamity of 2008 has not been matched by a shift in ideas about the nature of finance capital and its devastating effects on US society. Banks got bailed out, and those everyday Americans who lost their houses bore the brunt of the crisis. The masters of finance capital were not held accountable for their crimes, and many of them received huge bonuses paid for by US taxpayers. Matters of education must be at the heart of any viable notion of politics, meaning that education must be at the center of any attempt to change consciousness - not just the ways in which people think, but also how they act and construct relationships to others and the larger world. Americans seem to have forgotten that the fate of democracy is inextricably linked to the profound crisis of knowledge, critical thinking and agency. As education is removed from the demands of civic culture, it undermines the political, ethical and governing conditions for individuals and social groups to participate in politics. Under such circumstances, knowledge is commodified, contingent faculty replace full-time tenured faculty, governance is removed from faculty control, the culture of higher education is replaced by the culture of business and students are viewed as customers. Consequently, higher education no longer is viewed as a public good or a place where students can imagine themselves as thoughtful and socially responsible citizens, and furthers the destructions of the formative culture that makes a democratizing politics possible.¶ Politics is an imminently educative task, and it is only through such recognition that initial steps can be taken to challenge the powerful ideological and affective spaces through which market fundamentalism produces the desires, identities and values that bind people to its forms of predatory governance. The noxious politics of historical, social and political amnesia and the public pedagogy of the disimagination machine must be challenged and disassembled if there is any hope of creating meaningful alternatives to the dark times in which we live. Young people need to think otherwise in order to act otherwise, but in addition, they need to become cultural producers who can produce their own narratives about their relationship to the larger world, what it means to sustain public commitments, develop a sense of compassion for others, locally and globally.

#### Our approach to fighting militarism must begin with tangible action—theory absent real solutions is as useless as action divorced from theory.

Henry A. Giroux 14 [American scholar and cultural critic. One of the founding theorists of critical pedagogy in the United States, he is best known for his pioneering work in public pedagogy], “Neoliberalism's War on Democracy”, Truthout, 26 Apr 2014, BE

In this instance, understanding must be linked to the practice of social responsibility and the willingness to fashion a politics that addresses real problems and enacts concrete solutions. As Heather Gautney points out, ¶ We need to start thinking seriously about what kind of political system we really want. And we need to start pressing for things that our politicians did NOT discuss at the conventions. Real solutions—like universal education, debt forgiveness, wealth redistribution, and participatory political structures—that would empower us to decide together what's best. Not who's best.75¶ Critical thinking divorced from action is often as sterile as action divorced from critical theory. Given the urgency of the historical moment, we need a politics and a public pedagogy that make knowledge meaningful in order to make it critical and transformative. Or, as Stuart Hall argues, we need to produce modes of analysis and knowledge in which "people can invest something of themselves . . . something that they recognize is of them or speaks to their condition."76 A notion of higher education as a democratic public sphere is crucial to this project, especially at a time in which the apostles of neoliberalism and other forms of political and religious fundamentalism are ushering in a new age of conformity, cruelty, and disposability. But as public intellectuals, academics can do more.

#### Gun culture replicates patriarchal nationalism and neoliberalism—men get guns to “protect their families” from those marked as criminal.

Levi Gahman 14 [Centre for Social, Spatial, and Economic Justice, University of British Columbia], “Gun rites: hegemonic masculinity and neoliberal ideology in rural Kansas”, Gender, Place and Culture, 2014, BE

This valorization of the gun, and its association with exerting control over the rural frontier and ‘nation’, still resonates within the many men in Southeast Kansas. Over the span of a few generations, owning guns has produced a shared national identity that extols the virtues of defending individualism, freedom, property, and religion, and has thus become labelled ‘American’. Such discourses, while appearing noble and well intentioned, have paradoxically been used to carry out brutal assimilation projects and acts of war. In turn, the community members I spoke to in Southeast Kansas often noted that ‘doing the right thing’ and being a ‘good American’ was attained by making individual decisions that followed paternalistic moral traditions and adhered to market-based notions of personal work ethic in a fictive nation that is perceived to be meritorious.¶ Over the course of several interviews it became clear that the notion of being a ‘good American’ is a powerful influence for men in Southeast Kansas. From a feminist perspective, it is evident that these narratives are rife with patriarchal overtones; however, these hierarchical discourses often go unnoticed. Several participants performed their ‘American Pride’ by noting an acute distrust of the government. They often pointed to gun control laws, paying taxes, welfare programmes, and restrictions placed on Christian teaching in schools as ‘unfair’, ‘not right’, and being ‘discrimination against good, hardworking, Americans’.¶ A review of past literature shows that notions of white male victimization are quite prevalent when men seek to justify the oppressive and marginalizing practices they engage in (Kimmel and Ferber 2000; McIntosh 2003). These allegations of persecution, while simultaneously claiming innocence from the privileges that interlocking systems of masculinist white supremacy afford white men in settler nations, have been noted by many critical scholars and were present in many conversations that I had in Kansas (Collins 2005; Razack 1998). Harold, a 68-year-old participant, aptly summed up the widespread disillusionment and sense of victimization some men feel:¶ . . . I pay my fair share of taxes, and that is my hard earned money. I busted my ass for it and I need to feed my family with it. I don’t think it should be given to some lazy freeloaders on welfare who are working the system and looking for a handout . . . and the same people taking our money are the ones saying we shouldn’t have guns. Its in our Constitution, we have the right to bear arms, its what the Founding Fathers wanted . . . They were looking to freely practise their Christian beliefs. That’s why they came over here. And now you see ‘under God’ being taken out of the Pledge of Allegiance, you see the Ten Commandments being removed from schools, you see abortion, what I would call murder, being no big deal, and you see the government trying to take our guns – its communist . . . and don’t get me wrong, I love my country, but I don’t trust the government.¶ The emphasis on being a liberal subject, or being ‘individuals who are free to fail or succeed’ as described by one participant, thus serves as a guiding ideal for many men in the community. Such neoliberal subjectivities do not come without repercussions. As Foucault emphasized in his comprehensive analysis of technologies of the self and biopower, nothing is more suited to become influenced and molded by disciplinary power than extreme individualism (Foucault 1998, 1977). As a result, the productive capacities of the USA’ historical pillars of colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchal nationalism (that continue to be maintained predominantly by white, heterosexual, enabled, Christian, male, citizens) create ‘individuals’ who in perceiving themselves as such are paradoxically much more likely to unknowingly submit, conform, and obey. Such accounts can readily be seen in the comments of David, a 30-year-old single male, who when asked to describe his thoughts on the history of gun use in the area stated:¶ Well, the priests came here to help people – they built the church, started educating people, and shared their way of life. I’m sure the guns they had were mainly for protection and hunting. And its still like that to this day . . . we have a safe, tight-knit community. It’s a great place to raise kids and have a family. Its what our country was founded on. The pioneers that came over here were not being treated too well, they were looking for freedom, and they needed guns to protect themselves from some of the Indians and criminals that would attack them. And I know not all the Indians were dangerous, but you cannot say that some innocent Caucasian people were not attacked. Our ancestors were looking for a place to be free, work hard, and own some land to live off of. You can’t fault a guy for that.¶ . . . and when we got here its not like the Indians were all living peacefully with each other anyway . . . it’s a fact. There were tribes stealing and attacking other tribes, and if you look at how big the country is I think they could have done a better job of living with each other. It wasn’t like it was some paradise before our Founding Fathers got here. In the end, pioneers were protecting their families and defending what they believed in.¶ Several scholars have noted how the symbol of the gun is prominently woven into the historical tapestry of the USA (Brown 2008; Slotkin 1973, 1992; Wright 2001). The perceived threat of aggression from Indigenous people on the open plains meant that from its genesis, America was a society that depended upon a populace that was heavily armed (Cornell 2006). Recently, scholars have written how the conception of ‘frontier masculinity’ as a gendered narrative reinforces constructions of American nationalism by emphasizing the gun as a signifier of manhood (Melzer 2009; Via 2010). This point is particularly salient in Southeast Kansas as it was not uncommon to hear participants speak of playing ‘Cowboys and Indians’, or pretending to be admirable heroes from war movies and Westerns they watched growing up. Currently, there is an increase in research noting how the image of the gun is tied to power, security, and independence, and how such representations serve to perpetuate misleading historical accounts of white settlers conquering the frontier (Carrington, McIntosh, and Scott 2010; Melzer 2009; Via 2010).¶ Critical research also points out that the white settler myths of defending property, carrying out Manifest Destiny, and ‘civilizing Indians’ via homesteading, establishing churches and schools, and assimilation projects still permeate much of the cultural landscape of the Great Plains (Smith 2006, 2012; Via 2010). Additionally, recent discussions have suggested that the rationale behind promoting guns for community safety contradictorily erodes away a population’s sense of security (Cornell 2006). This is due to the fact that as gun possession rates increase, it creates a more defensive, heavily armed, and fractured populace that is governed by fear and suspicion, rather than by the free will it claims (Cornell 2006).¶ Despite the semantics that many participants used as being part of a ‘safe’ community, countervailing perspectives regarding the history of area suggests otherwise. The benevolent Christian narratives that dominate Southeast Kansas’ historical record, when viewed through a decolonial lens, show that ‘safe’ may not necessarily be the most accurate descriptor of the region. This can be recognized due to the region’s ongoing marginalization of historical perspectives from the Osage Nation, the chronological attempts at cultural assimilation that took place locally, and the fact that less than 0.03% of the county population identified as Native American (U.S. Census Bureau 2012). Given this information, it is apparent that the local community has been primarily exposed to masculinist narratives of colonial white supremacy at both institutional and cultural levels. Consequently, the practices and ideals that exist in the region reproduce hierarchies along lines of race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, ability, age, and nationality; which serve to covertly, and oftentimes unintentionally, shore up imperialistic discourses of disposses- sion, enclosure, and violence.¶ In looking at the gender regimes that are produced in Southeast Kansas, I borrow from Connell’s theory of hegemonic masculinity that suggests that the discourses surrounding manhood in local contexts produce marginalized, subordinated, and complicit masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Given the particular (local) version of hegemonic masculinity that permeates most spaces in the area (white, heterosexual, Christian, enabled, citizens), such marginalizing and subordinating processes can be readily observed in routine interactions.¶ Several scholars have noted that the processes of ‘othering’ that exist in settler societies serve to reinforce structural white supremacy and predominantly take place along lines of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality (de Leeuw, Greenwood, and Lindsay 2013; hooks 1989; Mohanty 1984; Pease 2010; Razack 2002; Smith 1999). Consequently, discursive formations of who are defined as ‘bad’ guys, and who are marked as ‘criminals’, operate as regulatory measures that allow certain men to attain hegemonic status while prohibiting others from doing so. This policing of masculine status can readily be seen in the statements made by Jeffrey, a 22-year-old participant, when asked about news stories pertaining to gun violence:¶ I mean hell, look at all these crazy people doing all these shootings here lately. The ones I hear about are done by guys from the city, you don’t see a bunch of farmers murdering each other. Most of the people doing the killing are psychopaths or terrorists who hate America. You can’t tell me they had good Christian upbringings. The guns ain’t the problem, it’s the criminals who get them that fuck things up. And think about it, if guns were outlawed, those crazy assholes would still find a way . . .¶ One interesting discursive formation to note in the statement above that is particularly salient to geographers is the positioning of violence being perpetuated by ‘guys in the city’ Jeffrey suggests that being ‘from the city’ is in direct opposition to what many participants referred to as ‘being from the country’. Several critical scholars have noted how the way in which ‘difference’ is constructed can lead to oppressive effects (Berg 2012; Goldberg 2009; Kobayashi 2013; Sibley 2002). While not explicitly stated outright, the connotation of what being ‘from the country’ versus being ‘from the city’ means is often times loaded with racialized undertones. This subordinating rhetoric is further highlighted by a follow- up statement Jeffrey made when asked to elaborate upon what type of people he thought were responsible for gun violence:¶ Its not that I’m a racist, but most those guys are niggers. The others are fucked up in the head, or Mexican drug dealers, or gang bangers from the ghetto. Probably grew up on welfare, came from broken homes, and were never really taught how to treat a gun . . . And when I say nigger I don’t mean all black guys, I’ve worked with some good black guys, so when I say nigger I mean that anyone can be a nigger. It’s more of how someone acts, you know? A white guy can be a nigger, a Mexican can be nigger, an Asian can be a nigger, its not just skin colour . . . its like when you hear the word faggot or bitch – those are not always about homos or women, they are just ways to describe how a guy goes about the way he acts.

#### Gun rights fuel suspicion of the collective—they atomize individuals and amplify fear and prejudice.

Firmin DeBrabander 15 [associate professor of philosophy at Maryland Institute College of Art, has written social and political commentary for numerous publications, including the Baltimore Sun, Common Dreams, Counterpunch, and the New York Times] “Do Guns Make Us Free?: Democracy and the Armed Society”, Yale University Press, 19 May 2015, BE

Rousseau and Tocqueville maintain that democracies, like all states, devolve through political concentration. Viewing the young American democracy, Tocqueville deduces that extreme individualism greases the wheels of this process. Materialism sharpens our individualism and makes us devoted to personal gain, as opposed to personal glory, which is more amenable to civic participation. Egalitarianism ironically urges us to dissociate from others, Tocqueville suggests; if my neighbors and compatriots are neither above me nor below me, what need do I have for them? In the ancien régime, people in different stations relied on one another, and the pieces of society fit together into a seamless whole. Not so in the new world: here, I may be self-determining and self-sufficient. Tocqueville offers a vision of aristocracy that is too rosy. He suggests that the masses should rely on the expertise of the nobility, who are bred and trained for leadership. But the American instinct to reject expertise and authority in favor of self-reliance is, for Tocqueville, at least equally disastrous. It is wonderful so long as it inspires the political attention and interest he witnessed in New England town meetings, but civic involvement is ultimately bound to lose out to capitalistic endeavors and the seductive joys of consumerism. Civic involvement has become a casualty in our own era, when we suffer from “time poverty,” as sociologist Juliet Schor put it: Americans put in long work days, combined with increasingly long commutes, and have little time or energy to interact with their peers, work for their communities, or even think much about politics. 88 This state of affairs is fueled by personal ambition, but also by plain greed. As Tocqueville presciently saw, Americans have little interest, and are left with little energy, to be political creatures, and to devote time to thoughtful and concerted political action and interaction. This fragmentation of society into atomistic individuals, each pursuing his or her own endeavor in isolation or in contention with others, renders us vulnerable and ripe for oppression: “What resistance can be offered to tyranny in a country where each individual is weak and where citizens are not united by any common interest?” 89 There is perhaps no individualism more extreme than that put forth by the contemporary gun rights movement. The NRA argues against the collective reading of the Second Amendment and insists instead upon the individual citizen’s right to amass a colossal private arsenal. The organization toils on behalf of individuals’ right to shoot intruders in their private abodes without accountability or social judgment. It works to ensure that individuals can act impulsively in private arguments, according to their personal whims, passions, and prejudices. It demands that they be permitted ammunition capable of piercing bulletproof vests worn by police. None of these advances a collective right or concern. It is to further the interests of each individual in being armed to the teeth, with whatever tools, for whatever purpose (provided it is within the law), and to have greater leeway in wielding and employing them. These arms represent a suspicion of the collective, and of the government that would represent the collective good. I argued in the previous chapter how these weapons are a mark of suspicion, and deepen the suspicion of the armed. A gun fundamentally severs its bearer from the community of his peers; it causes others to treat [them] him with trepidation and fear— if they approach him at all. As open carry proponents proudly assert, their weapons are intended to serve as a warning. Saul Cornell chides contemporary gun rights ideology for promoting gun ownership primarily as “a means for repulsing government or other citizens, not a means for creating a common civic culture.” 90 This, he argues, is at odds with the aims and intentions of our Founders. He believes they did envision an individual right to bear arms, but it was never meant to be a right in isolation. It was to be linked to a civic function and to collective obligation. Cornell writes, The original version of a well-regulated militia was premised on the notion that rights and obligations were inseparable. Arms bearing was a public activity, a way of nurturing and demonstrating one’s capacity for virtue. The militia was viewed by the Founders as a vital political and social institution, part of a seamless web that knit the locality, the state, and the national government together into a cohesive political community. 91 Cornell’s argument aptly depicts how the current gun rights movement undermines civic life. Gun rights, as they are currently conceived and championed by the NRA, are the ultimate go-it-alone rights. If our Founders felt that the Second Amendment would help oppose tyrannical government, it is reasonable to wonder how such opposition was ever to be mobilized. It could hardly happen in a nation of armed, isolated individuals, each in charge of a private arsenal. This purpose requires a trained, organized— regulated— force; it implies collective action, purpose, will, and commitment. George Washington grew tired of militias to the extent that they were loose collections of individuals. He wanted a fighting force with cohesion, identity, and organization because he was a warrior, and he knew what war— or the toppling of tyrannical regimes— required. The gun rights movement pits the individual against society. Collectives are suspect, groups weak, their members sheeplike, obedient, pliant, and ultimately subservient. Collectives breed collective behavior, which is reprehensible to the movement’s bold, assertive, fearless, and morally certain adherents. People mired in collective sensibilities wait for the police to bail them out of threatening situations. Free, confident, strong individuals go it alone. Collectives are corruptible, their members easy to manipulate and herd. Only the independent individual is pure and inviolate. Political freedom thus stems from the uncorrupted and incorruptible sovereign individual. To gun rights advocates, that is the center and foundation of liberty. This much is clear from the political vision put forth by Napolitano and LaPierre: the principal political battlefield, anticipated by the Founding Fathers who knew tyranny firsthand, is between the individual fighting to retain his sovereignty, and the collective that would strip it away. This stripping-away takes place through, among other things, government efforts to regulate guns, abetted by those who would cede their freedom for the short-term prospect of personal safety. In the process, such people unwittingly empower tyranny. Dan Baum writes Guns are the perfect stand-in for one of the fundamental, irresolvable, and recurring questions we face: to what extent should Americans live as a collective, or as a nation of rugged individuals? We have the same fight over health care, welfare, environmental regulations, and a hundred other issues. The firearm, though, is the ultimate emblem of individual sovereignty, so if you’re inclined in that direction, protecting gun rights is essential. And if you’re by nature a collectivist, the firearm is the abhorrent idol on the enemy’s altar. 92 Baum articulates the dichotomy aptly, at least as it is viewed by the gun rights movement. Tyranny has also been invoked in recent debates over health care and environmental regulation. It follows from, and is symptomatic of, collectivism and anything that points in that direction. The gun rights movement offers us radical individualism— the sovereign individual— as the requisite remedy. But its advocates do not perceive, or refuse to admit, how politically debilitating their agenda is. Contrary to what they assert, their sovereign individuals, even armed to the teeth, are no match for the brute power of tyrants. Instead, the NRA and company unwittingly assist tyrants with their (as Cornell puts it) radically “anti-civic vision.” 93 The gun rights movement undermines the collective or popular organization that alone might prove effective in countering a government bent on oppression.

#### Thus, the plan: The state governments of the United States ought to ban the private ownership of handguns.

Kleck 86 (Gary, criminologist and is the David J. Bordua Professor of Criminology at Florida State University,” 1986, http://scholarship.law.duke.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3824&context=lcp)//ghs-VA

Yet, many advocates of federal controls go far beyond such measures. In their report to the National Violence Commission, Newton and Zimring recommended a federal restrictive licensing standard amounting to a virtual ban on private ownership of handguns. 67 Rather than simply supplementing state measures and thus making it possible for states effectively to apply whatever gun control measures they regard as necessary, such a far-reaching proposal is a substitute for state controls, a way of overriding state legislatures' unwillingness to pass more restrictive laws of their own. There are several good reasons to reject this approach. First, the concept of federalism implies that the states should have as much autonomy as possible in drafting their criminal law and other statutes. Second, federal controls are less satisfactory because traditionally there has been a very limited federal law enforcement apparatus in the area of ordinary crime. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) regards itself more as an investigatory than a law enforcement agency. Nothing at the federal level corresponds to a street police force, and local police agencies, where most law enforcement personnel are concentrated, have generally been reluctant to devote their limited resources to the enforcement of federal laws. Third, the need for gun control differs sharply from one state to another. Some states have almost no violent crime, with or without guns, while others have a great deal. For example, in 1981 South Dakota had only twelve murders and nonnegligent manslaughters and 122 robberies (1.8 and 17.8 per 100,000 population, respectively), while Nevada, with only twenty-three percent more people, had 148 homicides and 3,867 robberies (17.5 and 64.9 per 100,000, respectively). 68

#### Gun control is the only solution to our pathological, militaristic culture predicated on violence and individualism.

Henry A. Giroux 15 [American scholar and cultural critic. One of the founding theorists of critical pedagogy in the United States, he is best known for his pioneering work in public pedagogy], “Murder, Incorporated: Guns and the Growing Culture of Violence in the US”, Truthout, 7 Oct 2015, BE

Nine people were killed and seven wounded recently in a mass shooting at a community college in Roseburg, Oregon. Such shootings are more than another tragic expression of unchecked violence in the United States; they are symptomatic of a society engulfed in fear, militarism, a survival-of-the-fittest ethos and a growing disdain for human life. Sadly, this shooting is not an isolated incident. Over 270 mass shootings have taken place in the United States this year alone, proving once again that the economic, political and social conditions that underlie such violence are not being addressed.¶ To read more articles by Henry A. Giroux and other authors in the Public Intellectual Project, click here.¶ In the United States, calls for liberal, Band-Aid reforms do not work in the face of the carnage taking place. "The United States sees an average of 92 gun deaths per day - and more preschoolers are shot dead each year than police officers are killed in the line of duty." (1) Mass violence in the United States has to be understood within a larger construction of the totality of the forces that produce it. Focusing merely on the more dramatic shootings misses the extent of the needless violence and murders that are taking place daily.¶ State repression, unbridled self-interest, an empty consumerist ethos and war-like values have become the organizing principles of US society, producing an indifference to the common good, compassion, a concern for others and equality. As the public collapses into the individualized values of a banal consumer culture and the lure of private obsessions, US society flirts with forms of irrationality that are at the heart of everyday aggression and the withering of public life. US society is driven by unrestrained market values in which economic actions and financial exchanges are divorced from social costs, further undermining any sense of social responsibility.¶ In addition, a wasteful, giant military-industrial-surveillance complex fueled by the war on terror, along with the United States' endless consumption of violence as entertainment and its celebration of a pervasive gun culture, normalizes the everyday violence waged against Black youth, immigrants, children fed into the school-to-prison pipeline and others considered disposable. US politicians now attempt to govern the effects of systemic violence while ignoring its underlying causes. Under such circumstances, a society saturated in violence gains credence when its political leaders have given up on the notion of the common good, social justice and equality, all of which appear to have become relics of history in the United States.¶ In the face of mass shootings, the public relations disimagination machine goes into overdrive claiming that guns are not the problem, and that the causes of such violence can be largely attributed to people living with mentally illness. When in actuality, as two Vanderbilt University researchers, Dr. Jonathan Metzl and Kenneth T. MacLeish, publishing in the American Journal of Public Health, observed that:¶ Fewer than 6 percent of the 120,000 gun-related killings in the United States between 2001 and 2010 were perpetrated by people diagnosed with mental illness. Our research finds that across the board, the mentally ill are 60 to 120 percent more likely than the average person to be the victims of violent crime rather than the perpetrators.... There are 32,000 gun deaths in the United States on average every year, and people are far more likely to be shot by relatives, friends or acquaintances than they are by lone violent psychopaths. (2)¶ It may not be an exaggeration to claim that the US government has blood on its hands because of the refusal of Congress to rein in a gun lobby that produces a growing militarism that sanctions a love affair with the unbridled corporate institutions, financial interests and mass-produced cultures of violence. The Oregon community college shooting is the 41st school shooting this year while there have been 142 incidents of violence on school properties since 2012. Yet, the violence continues unchecked, all the while legitimated by the cowardly acts of politicians who refuse to enact legislation to curb the proliferation of guns or support measures as elementary as background checks - which 88 percent of the American people support - or for that matter, ban large-capacity ammunition magazines and assault rifles.¶ In part, this cowardly refusal on the part of politicians is due to the fact that gun lobbyists pour huge amounts of money into the campaigns of politicians who support their interests. For example, in 2015, the gun lobby spent $5,697,429 while those supporting gun control paid out $867,601. In a New York Times op-ed, Gabrielle Giffords pointed out that the National Rifle Association (NRA) in the 2012 election cycle "spent around $25 million on contributions, lobbying and outside spending." (3) Outside money does more than corrupt politics; it is also responsible for people being shot and killed.¶ Many Americans are obsessed with violence. They not only own nearly 300 million firearms, but also have a love affair with powerful weaponry such as 9mm Glock semiautomatic pistols and AR-15 assault rifles. Collective anger, frustration, fear and resentment increasingly characterize a society in which people are out of work, young people cannot imagine a decent future, everyday behaviors are criminalized, inequality in wealth and income are soaring and the police are viewed as occupying armies. This is not only a recipe for both random violence and mass shootings; it makes such acts appear routine and commonplace.¶ Fear has become a public relations strategy used not only by the national security state but also by the gun industry. When you live in a country in which you are constantly bombarded by the assumption that the government is the enemy of democracy and you are told that nobody can be trusted, and the discourse of hate, particularly against Black youth, immigrants and gun control advocates, spews out daily from thousands of conservative radio stations and major TV networks, a climate of fear engulfs the country reinforcing the belief that gun ownership is the only notion of safety in which people can believe in order to live as free human beings. Under such circumstances, genuine fears and concerns for safety are undermined. These include the fear of poverty, lack of meaningful employment, the absence of decent health care, poor schools, police violence and the militarization of society, all of which further legitimate and fuel the machinery of insecurity, violence and death. Fear degenerates into willful ignorance while any semblance of rationality is erased, especially around the logic of gun control. As Adam Gopnik observes:¶ Gun control ends gun violence as surely an antibiotics end bacterial infections, as surely as vaccines end childhood measles - not perfectly and in every case, but overwhelmingly and everywhere that it's been taken seriously and tried at length. These lives can be saved. Kids continue to die en masse because one political party won't allow that to change, and the party won't allow it to change because of the irrational and often paranoid fixations that make the massacre of students and children an acceptable cost of fetishizing guns. (4)¶ President Obama is right in stating that the violence we see in the United States is "a political choice we make that allows this to happen." While taking aim at the gun lobby, especially the NRA, what Obama fails to address is that extreme violence is systemic in US society, has become the foundation of politics and must be understood within a broader historical, economic, cultural and political context. To be precise, politics has become an extension of violence driven by a culture of fear, cruelty and hatred legitimated by the politicians bought and sold by the gun lobby and other related militaristic interests. Moreover, violence is now treated as a sport, a pleasure-producing form of commerce, a source of major profits for the defense industries and a corrosive influence upon US democracy. And as such it is an expression of a deeper political and ethical corruption in US society. As Rich Broderick insists, US society "embraces a soulless free-market idolatry in which the value of everything, including human beings, is determined by the bottom line" and in doing so this market fundamentalism and its theater of cruelty and greed perpetuate a spectacle of violence fed by an echo chamber "of paranoia, racism, and apocalyptic fantasies rampant in the gun culture." (5) The lesson here is that the culture of violence cannot be abstracted from the business of violence.¶ Murdering children in schools, the streets, in jails, detention centers and other places increasingly deemed unsafe has become something of a national pastime. One wonders how many innocent children have to die in the United States before it becomes clear that the revenue made by the $13.5 billion gun industry, with a $1.5 billion profit, are fueling a national bloodbath by using lobbyists to pay off politicians, wage a mammoth propaganda campaign and induct young children into the culture of violence. (6) What is clear is that as more guns are on the streets and in the hands of people a savage killing machine is unleashed on those who are largely poor, Black and vulnerable.¶ The widespread availability of guns is the reason for the shooting and killing of children and adults in Chicago, Boston, Ferguson, New York City and in other major cities. The Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence reports that "in 2010, guns took the lives of 31,076 Americans in homicides, suicides and unintentional shootings. This is the equivalent of more than 85 deaths each day and more than three deaths each hour. [In addition], 73,505 Americans were treated in hospital emergency departments for non-fatal gunshot wounds in 2010." (7) And the toll of gun violence on young people is truly heartbreaking with almost 30,000 young people killed in a 10-year period, which amounts "to nearly 3,000 kids shot to death in a typical year." (8) According to a Carnegie-Knight News21 program investigation,¶ For every US soldier killed in Afghanistan during 11 years of war, at least 13 children were shot and killed in the United States. More than 450 kids didn't make it to kindergarten. Another 2,700 or more were killed by a firearm before they could sit behind the wheel of a car. Every day, on average, seven children were shot dead. A News21 investigation of child and youth deaths in the United States between 2002 and 2012 found that at least 28,000 children and teens 19-years-old and younger were killed with guns. Teenagers between the ages of 15 and 19 made up over two-thirds of all youth gun deaths in the United States. (9)¶ Even worse, the firearms industry is pouring millions into recruiting and educational campaigns designed to both expose children to guns at an early age and to recruit them as lifelong gun enthusiasts. Reporting on such efforts for The New York Times, Mike McIntire writes:¶ The industry's strategies include giving firearms, ammunition and cash to youth groups; weakening state restrictions on hunting by young children; marketing an affordable military-style rifle for "junior shooters" and sponsoring semiautomatic-handgun competitions for youths; and developing a target-shooting video game that promotes brand-name weapons, with links to the Web sites of their makers.... Newer initiatives by other organizations go further, seeking to introduce children to high-powered rifles and handguns while invoking the same rationale of those older, more traditional programs: that firearms can teach "life skills" like responsibility, ethics and citizenship. (10)¶ As the United States moves from a welfare state to a warfare state, state violence becomes normalized. The United States' moral compass and its highest democratic ideals have begun to wither, and the institutions that were once designed to help people now serve to largely suppress them. Gun laws, social responsibility and a government responsive to its people matter. We must end the dominance of gun lobbyists, the reign of money-controlled politics, the proliferation of high levels of violence in popular culture and the ongoing militarization of US society. At the same time, it is crucial, as many in the movement for Black lives have stated, that we refuse to endorse the kind of gun control that criminalizes young people of color.¶ Gun violence in the United States is inextricably tied to economic violence as when hedge fund managers invest heavily in companies that make high-powered automatic rifles, 44-40 Colt revolvers, laser scopes for semiautomatic handguns and expanded magazine clips. (11) The same mentality that trades in profits at the expense of human life gives the United States the shameful title of being the world's largest arms exporter. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "Washington sold 31% of all global imports during the 2010-2014 period." (12) This epidemic of violence connects the spreading of violence abroad with the violence waged at home. It also points to the violence reproduced by politicians who would rather support the military-industrial-gun complex and arms industries than address the most basic needs and social problems faced by Americans.¶ Rather than arming people with more guns, criminalizing every aspect of social behavior, militarizing the police and allowing the gun lobby to sanction putting semiautomatic weapons in the hands of children and adults, the most immediate action that can be taken is to institute effective gun control laws. As Bernardine Dohrn has argued:¶ We want gun control that sanctions manufacturers, distributors and adults who place, and profit from, deadly weapons in the possession of youth. We want military-style weaponry banned. We want smaller schools with nurses and social workers, librarians and parent volunteers - all of which are shown to contribute to less disruption and less violence. Let's promote gun-control provisions and regulations that enhance teaching and learning as well as justice and safety for children, not those that will further incarcerate, punish and demonize young people of color. We've been there before. (13)

#### Handgun bans are key—Americans view them as the quintessential weapon—the 1AC is a stand against a culture of violence.

Eugene Volokh 9 [American law professor, the Gary T. Schwartz Professor of Law at the UCLA School of Law], “IMPLEMENTING THE RIGHT TO KEEP AND BEAR ARMS FOR SELF-DEFENSE: AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK AND A RESEARCH AGENDA”, UCLA LAW REVIEW 1443, 2009, BE

And the Court’s explanation of why the handgun ban is unconstitutional even if long guns are allowed is likewise consistent with an inquiry into how substantially a law burdens the right to bear arms:¶ It is no answer to say, as petitioners do, that it is permissible to ban the possession of handguns so long as the possession of other firearms (i.e., long guns) is allowed. It is enough to note, as we have observed, that the American people have considered the handgun to be the quintessential self-defense weapon. There are many reasons that a citizen may prefer a handgun for home defense: It is easier to store in a location that is readily accessible in an emergency; it cannot easily be redirected or wrestled away by an attacker; it is easier to use for those without the upper-body strength to lift and aim a long gun; it can be pointed at a burglar with one hand while the other hand dials the police. Whatever the reason, handguns are the most popular weapon chosen by Americans for self-defense in the home, and a complete prohibition of their use is invalid.49¶ The Court is pointing out that handguns are popular for a reason: For many people, they are the optimal self-defense tool, and bans on handguns make self-defense materially more difficult. The handgun ban, then, is a material burden on the right to bear arms in self-defense.

#### Mere possibility of concealed guns chills discourse on controversial issues in schools—halting democracy.

Firmin DeBrabander 15 [associate professor of philosophy at Maryland Institute College of Art, has written social and political commentary for numerous publications, including the Baltimore Sun, Common Dreams, Counterpunch, and the New York Times] “Do Guns Make Us Free?: Democracy and the Armed Society”, Yale University Press, 19 May 2015, BE

Freire and Dewey remind us that democracy takes root in our schools. As we render them forbidding places, we are likely to see the results in the kind of citizens— and human beings— we produce. We must not take this prospect lightly. What is especially disturbing about this development is that it is not necessary— our schools don’t need to be fortresslike. We are choosing to take this route rather than regulate gun ownership, limit the number of weapons out there, and make it harder for people to acquire them. We have chosen instead to turn our schools into bunkers, at great expense— while education funding dwindles— in order to accommodate an alleged absolute right to own guns. It is also a key feature of democracy, a guiding principle of our Founding Fathers, that rights that unduly infringe upon the lives and interests of some, or many, must be curtailed. People may engage in the pursuit of happiness however they like, provided that whatever they deem necessary to that pursuit does not inflict harm or intrude forcefully on the lives of others. Guns do that. Gun rights, as the NRA currently champions them, are greatly intrusive. The proliferation of guns in our society leads to much collateral damage— innocent bystanders are literally killed. Further, as is evident in their schools, their proliferation alters the way all of us must live. It is necessary to consider, as well, the impact of guns on college campuses. While it is true that guns on campus would be concealed, their legalized presence, perhaps in great numbers, would change things, and not for the better. Their presence certainly won’t help advance the goals of the college classroom and may well hinder them. The mission of the liberal arts college is to foster creativity and intellectual courage among students; it is to make them open, curious, outgoing citizens. Accordingly, the college classroom is a refuge of sorts— alternatively, a laboratory— where controversial, sometimes incendiary ideas are aired. Ideally, there are no banned books in the college classroom. If someone endorses a reprehensible idea, he or she must be defeated in argument and persuasion. College classrooms are supposed to be lively, sometimes raucous, though I realize that is less often the case than it should be. Nevertheless, colleges remain specially zoned places for intellectual experimentation, and moral and political questioning. Guns are inimical to this project and spirit. Sometimes emotions run high in the college classroom, when ideas are tested and opinions championed or disputed. Sometimes offense is taken, and given. Is it outrageous to consider that some individuals might reach for a gun? One college in Texas recently witnessed a gunfight between arguing students. 70 Perhaps it is not such an outrageous concern after all. Guns in the classroom might encourage professors to keep the conversation tepid, or incite students to watch what they say, how they say it, and to whom. To that extent, guns reveal a troubling ability to chasten speech.

#### The 1AC ruptures the mindset of guns as necessary for self-defense—people are no longer constantly reminded of guns as a means of solving problems.

John Donohue 15, “Ban guns, end shootings? How evidence stacks up around the world”, CNN 27 Aug 2015, BE

In the wake of the massacre, the conservative federal government succeeded in implementing tough new gun control laws throughout the country. A large array of weapons were banned -- including the Glock semiautomatic handgun used in the Charleston shootings. The government also imposed a mandatory gun buy back that substantially reduced gun possession in Australia.¶ The effect was that both gun suicides and homicides (as well as total suicides and homicides)fell. In addition, the 1996 legislation made it a crime to use firearms in self-defense.¶ When I mention this to disbelieving NRA supporters they insist that crime must now be rampant in Australia. In fact, the Australian murder rate has fallen to close to one per 100,000 while the U.S. rate, thankfully lower than in the early 1990s, is still roughly at 4.5 per 100,000-- over four times as high. Moreover, robberies in Australia occur at only about half the rate of the U.S. (58 in Australia versus 113.1 per 100,000 in the U.S. in 2012).¶ How did Australia do it? Politically, it took a brave prime minister to face the rage of Australian gun interests.¶ John Howard wore a bullet-proof vest when he announced the proposed gun restrictions in June 1996. The deputy prime minister was hung in effigy. But Australia did not have a domestic gun industry to oppose the new measures so the will of the people was allowed to emerge. And today, support for the safer, gun-restricted Australia is so strong that going back would not be tolerated by the public.¶ That Australia hasn't had a mass shooting since 1996 is likely more than merely the result of the considerable reduction in guns -- it's certainly not the case that guns have disappeared altogether.¶ I suspect that the country has also experienced a cultural shift between the shock of the Port Arthur massacre and the removal of guns from every day life as they are no longer available for self-defense and they are simply less present throughout the country. Troubled individuals, in other words, are not constantly being reminded that guns are a means to address their alleged grievances to the extent that they were in the past, or continue to be in the US.

#### The gun debate is a question of culture—not empirics.

Dan M. Kahan 3 [Professor of Law, Yale Law School], “The Gun Control Debate: A Culture-Theory Manifesto”, Washington and Lee Law Review Vol 60 Issue 1, 1 Jan 2003, BE

Oftentimes, disputes in criminal law that seem empirical or instrumental are really expressive in nature. In such disputes, citizens care less about how a particular law will affect behavior than they do about what the adoption of that law will say about the authority of contested moral values and about the relative status of the social groups and cultural styles associated with those values. The century's long dispute over temperance, for example, can be understood as an attempt by America's traditional agrarian elite to repel the challenge to their cultural preeminence posed by a commercial ethos associated primarily with immigrant, urban Catholics.' Today's dispute over the death penalty has been described as an essentially "symbolic" one, too, on which citizens "choose sides" consistent with their cultural allegiances,9 and on which legislators vote consistent with their desire to apportion status amongcompetingculturalstyles."0 Proposals to ban flag desecration ignite intense passions because they are understood to be tests of the national commitment to patriotism and, accordingly, of the status of those for whom patriotism is an unproblematic virtue." The rule affording mitigation to cuckolds who kill their unfaithful wives, a staple of criminal law for centuries, now provokes intense disagreement because of the contemporary contest over the patriarchal norms that the rule expresses. 2¶ Gun control fits the same expressive pattern. As one southern Demo- cratic senator recently put it in urging his party to back off the issue, the gun debate is "about values ... about who you are and who you aren't." 3 Those who share an egalitarian and solidaristic world view, on the one hand, and those who adhere to a more hierarchical and individualistic one, on the other, both see the extent of gun regulation as a measure of their (and their social groups') relative status in American society. 4 What makes the gun control debate so intense is not a disagreement about the facts-does private owner- ship of guns promote or deter violent crime?—but a disagreement about "alternative views of what America is and ought to be."' 5¶ Of course, to all of this the econometricians might simply demur. Sure, they might say, the gun controversy reflects a conflict in cultural world views. But they cannot hope to make the two sides agree about the nature of a good society. They do both profess, however, to agree about the value of protecting¶ innocent persons from harm. So let us continue to focus our attention on the empirical issue-whether more guns produce more crime or less-as our best¶ hope to negotiate a peace between the cultural combatants.¶ The problem with this reasoning, I want to suggest, is that it misconceives the relationship between cultural orientations and beliefs about empirical facts, such as whether gun control reduces or in fact increases crime. Beliefs about the causes and effective responses to societal risks, I want to argue, derive from cultural world views. As a result, we cannot reach agreement about the consequences of gun control unless we have first come to some common ground about what values gun laws ought to express.¶ This is the lesson of the cultural theory of risk perception, a model of belief formation first used to explain differences in opinion relating to environ- mental regulation. 6 As with gun control, members of the public disagree intensely with one another about the hazards posed by various forms oftech- nology, like nuclear power, and the merits of trying to abate them through government regulation. The cultural theory of risk perception relates these differences in view to individuals' allegiance to competing clusters of values, which construct alternative visions-egalitarian and hiearchist, individualist and communitarian-of how political life should be organized. The selection of certain risks for attention and the disregard of others affirm (symbolically as much as instrumentally) certain of these visions over others. Thus, in line with their commitment to fair distribution of resources, egalitarians are predict- ably sensitive to environmental and industrial risks, the minimization of which reinforces their demand forthe regulation of commercial activities that produce disparities in wealth and status. In contrast, individualists, precisely because they are dedicated to the autonomy of markets and other private orderings, tend to see environmental risks as low-as do hiearchists, in line with their confi-¶ dence in and deference to institutions of social authority. Hiearchists and individualists have their own distinctive anxieties-the dangers of social deviance, the risks of foreign invasion, or the fragility of economic institu- tions-which egalitarians predictably dismiss. These conclusions are based on sophisticated survey techniques that show that differences in cultural orientations explain differences in individual risk perception more completely than any other set of factors, including wealth, education, personality type, and even political ideology.17¶ It turns out that the gun control debate maps perfectly onto the cultural- theory-of-risk framework. Like debates over dangers of various environmen- talhazards,the gun control debate turns on competing perceptions of risk: the risk that too many of us will become the victims of lethal injury in a world that fails to disarm the vicious (or the merely careless), on the one hand, versus the risk that too many of us will be unable to defend ourselves from violent predation in a world that disarms the virtuous, on the other. Just like divergent perceptions of environmental risk, these competing perceptions of gun risk correlate with opposing clusters of values: egalitarianism and social solidarity, on the one hand; honor, deference to lawful authority, and individ- ual self-sufficiency, on the other. These competing values construct alterna- tive visions of the good society. And in advancing policy positions in line with their respective perceptions of risk, individuals involved in the gun control debate-like citizens involved in the environmental debate-promote their preferred vision and discredit that of their cultural adversaries.¶ These, at least, were the hypotheses that anthropologist Don Braman and I decided to investigate. We designed our own study to determine whether cultural orientation measures can explain attitudes toward gun control. And we found that they do-the more egalitarian and communitarian a person's outlook, the more supportive of control, but the more hierarchical and individ- ualistic a person is, the more opposeed to it. Indeed, it turned out that individuals' cultural orientations furnished stronger predictions of their attitudes toward guns than any other facts about them, including whether they were male or female, black or white, Southern or Eastern, urban or rural, and even liberal or conservative."'¶ Insofar as individual attitudes toward gun control fit the psychological profile associated with the cultural theory of risk, there is essentially no prospect that econometric and other forms of empirical data will buy us peace in the American gun debate. The vast majority of individuals lack the exper- tise to evaluate conflicting statistical studies on gun control for themselves. Confronted with competing factual claims and supporting empirical data that they are not in a position to verify on their own, ordinary citizens will natu- rally look to those whom they trust to tell them what to believe about the consequences of gun control laws. The people they trust, unsurprisingly, will be the ones who share their cultural outlooks and who, as a result of those outlooks, are more disposed to credit one sort of gun-control risk than the other. In this sense, what one believes about consequences of gun control will be cognitively derivative of one's cultural world views.

#### The aff is a war against propaganda—vote aff because banning handguns is the right thing to do.

Nicholas Dixon 99---1999 (“Handguns, Violent Crime, and Self-Defense,” *International Journal of Applied Philosophy*, 13.2 (1999):239-260

To allow considerations of realpolitik to influence our judgments about the morality of a practice or policy would effectively lock us into the status quo, and sabotage the role of applied ethics as a vehicle for proposing social change. Absurd consequences are easy to find. For instance, when the abolitionist¶ movement first began, little doubt exists that it had no realistic chance *at that time* of persuading Congress to abolish slavery. Does this mean that its members were wrong to morally condemn slavery and call for its abolition? Similar comments apply to the suffragette movement in its early days. Worse¶ still, if applied ethicists are to confine themselves to defending positions that have a realistic chance of currently being legally enacted, prolife philosophers will have to stop writing papers in which they condemn abortion, since, given the current composition of the Supreme Court, legislation banning¶ "regular" abortion is virtually impossible to enact and defend against constitutional challenges. ¶ Granted, the abolitionist movement did indeed take heed of political realities and worked incrementally to restrict slavery to certain states before finally pushing for its complete abolition. This is because it, like the suffragette movement, was a political movement, whose goal was to bring about concrete social change. Nonetheless, underlying both movements were moral arguments that made no compromise for political realities in their condemnation of slavery and the oppression of women. And this is precisely the role that applied ethicists should play in discussing handgun control: providing a moral¶ vision of the handgun policy that would best reduce violence and respect rights. How to realize that moral vision is an important question, but a secondary one, and one that is best left to political organizations that are more knowledgeable about political realities. It may well tum out that Handgun Control, Inc.'s strategy of proposing moderate restrictions on handgun ownership is a shrewd first step that is a necessary prelude to the more radical proposal advanced here. But moral arguments for handgun prohibition are¶ needed to guide and motivate even incremental change to achieve that goal.¶ Nor is guiding and motivating those who already share a movement's goal the only role for applied ethicists. Even more important is the ability of cogent moral arguments to convince opponents and the uncommitted of the desirability of social change. The abolitionist, suffragette, and civil rights¶ movements all illustrate this phenomenon. So another error made by those who reject as unrealistic my proposal to ban handguns is to regard one of the realities that do indeed make it difficult to achieve at present-i.e., the widespread belief that handguns make law-abiding citizens safer against crime as¶ engraved in stone. They overlook the power of striking empirical evidence and clearly presented arguments to persuade the American public that the widespread ownership of handguns is a major cause of violent crime. We need to continue to present this evidence and these arguments until we convince¶ enough people that handgun prohibition is desirable that it will eventually become eminently attainable (256-257).