



Written by [Thomas Sowell](#) on July 24, 2012

Aurora Shooting: News Versus Propaganda

Since so many in the media cannot resist turning every tragedy into a political talking point, it was perhaps inevitable that (1) someone would try to link the shooting rampage at the Batman movie in Colorado to the Tea Party, and that (2) some would try to make it a reason to impose more gun control laws.

Too many people in the media cannot seem to tell the difference between reporting the news and creating propaganda.



NBC News apparently could not resist doctoring the transcript of the conversation between George Zimmerman and the police after the Trayvon Martin shooting. Now ABC News took the fact that the man arrested for the shooting in Colorado was named James Holmes to broadcast to the world the fact that there is a James Holmes who is a member of the Tea Party in Colorado.

The fact has since come out that these are two different men, one in his 20s and the other in his 50s. But corrections never catch up with irresponsible news broadcasts. The James Holmes who belongs to the Tea Party has been deluged with phone calls. I hope he sues ABC News for every dime they have.

This is not the first time that the mainstream media have tried to create a link between conservatives and violence. Years ago, the Oklahoma City bombing was blamed on Rush Limbaugh, despite the absence of any evidence that the bomber was inspired by Rush Limbaugh.

Similar things have happened repeatedly, going all the way back to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, which was blamed on a hostile right-wing atmosphere in Dallas, even though the assassin had a long history of being on the far left fringe.

But, where the shoe is on the other foot — as when the Unabomber had a much marked-up copy of an environmentalist book by Al Gore — the media heard no evil, saw no evil and spoke no evil. If people in the media cannot decide whether they are in the business of reporting news or manufacturing propaganda, it is all the more important that the public understand that difference, and choose their news sources accordingly.

As for gun control advocates, I have no hope whatever that any facts whatever will make the slightest dent in their thinking — or lack of thinking. New York's Mayor Bloomberg and CNN's Piers Morgan were on the air within hours of the shooting, pushing the case for gun control laws.

You might never know, from what they and other gun control advocates have said, that there is a mountain of evidence that gun control laws not only fail to control guns but are often counterproductive. However, for those other people who still think facts matter, it is worth presenting some of those facts.

Do countries with strong gun control laws have lower murder rates? Only if you cherry-pick the data.

Britain is a country with stronger gun control laws than the United States, and lower murder rates. But Mexico, Russia and Brazil are also countries with stronger gun control laws than the United States —



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and their murder rates are much higher than ours. Israel and Switzerland have even higher rates of gun ownership than the United States, and much lower murder rates than ours.

Even the British example does not stand up very well under scrutiny. The murder rate in New York has been several times that in London for more than two centuries — and, for most of that time, neither place had strong gun control laws. New York had strong gun control laws years before London did, but New York still had several times the murder rate of London.

It was in the later decades of the 20th century that the British government clamped down with severe gun control laws, disarming virtually the entire law-abiding citizenry. Gun crimes, including murder, rose as the public was disarmed.

Meanwhile, murder rates in the United States declined during the same years when murder rates in Britain were rising, which were also years when Americans were buying millions more guns per year.

The real problem, both in discussions of mass shootings and in discussions of gun control, is that too many people are too committed to a vision to allow mere facts to interfere with their beliefs, and the sense of superiority that those beliefs give them.

Any discussion of facts is futile when directed at such people. All anyone can do is warn others about the propaganda.

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