



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on June 11, 2022

## If McConaughey Wants Gun Control, Should He Start With Hollywood Film Violence?

Actor Matthew McConaughey has become a powerful voice for gun control in the wake of the horrid school shooting in his birth city of Uvalde, Texas. In response, some conservatives have essentially accused him of hypocrisy because, as the argument goes, he glorifies firearm violence in movies. In response to this, some commentators have scoffed, with one calling the criticism “irrational.”

Yet now none other than liberal actor, comedian, and commentator Bill Maher has struck this allegedly irrational note. While not naming or focusing on McConaughey, the *Real Time* host lambasted Hollywood for the woke hypocrisy of getting “on the politically correct side of every issue” — except “gun violence.” What’s more, there is good but mostly ignored research indicating that, yes, violence in fantasy does help breed it in reality.



AP Images  
Matthew McConaughey

The entity calling the McConaughey criticism “irrational,” and also “nonsensical,” is WWL Radio New Orleans. As it [opined](#) Thursday, one social media post read,

*“Yeah sure but it’s ok when you are shooting a movie and making lots of money to glorify gun use. I know it’s just TV and not real life but still, all these years to make a difference but now?”* The ultra-right network Breitbart quoted information from the Internet Movie Firearms Database to point out that McConaughey has used 19 guns in 11 movies over 25 years.

Wait — should actors be criticized for playing parts in movies and TV shows where they display violent behavior? Does an actor need to only play roles that reflect who they are in real life? When did we stop understanding the difference between fantasy and reality?

(Note: WWL’s second question above is irrelevant to this discussion; it should rather be addressed to the wokesters who’ll accuse a white actor playing a “minority” character of “cultural appropriation.”)

In truth, WWL’s stance cuts across ideological lines; if there’s one thing conservatives, liberals, and libertarians join in scoffing at, it’s the idea that entertainment violence plays a role in actual violence. But here’s the reality:

Few of these people actually believe the underlying principle they’re espousing.



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The proof?

They readily sing the *opposite* tune when their *own* sacred cows are slaughtered on screen.

Just consider, for instance, that when James Cameron's film *Avatar* was released (2009), there was much talk in the conservative blogosphere about its containing environmentalist, anti-corporate, and anti-American propaganda. At the spectrum's other end, liberals wanted the old show *Amos 'n' Andy* taken off the air because it contained what they considered harmful stereotypes. Or think of how critics worried that Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* would stoke anti-Jewish sentiment or that Martin Scorsese's *The Last Temptation of Christ* would inspire anti-Christian feelings, and how the Catholic League complained that *The Da Vinci Code* was anti-Catholic. Now, whatever one thinks of these particular claims' validity, the point is that when our own ox is being gored, few of us will say, "Well, yeah, the work attacks my cause, but I don't care because it's the values taught at home that really matter."

As mentioned earlier, Bill Maher gets this. As he said on his show last night, "When liberals scream, 'Do something!' after a mass shooting, why aren't we also dealing with the fact that the average American kid sees 200,000 acts of violence on screens before the age of 18 and that according to the FBI, one of the warning signs of a potential school shooter is 'a fascination with violence-filled entertainment?'"

"It's funny, Hollywood is the wokest place on Earth in every other area of social responsibility," he continued. "They have intimacy coordinators on set to chaperone sex scenes, they hire sensitivity readers to go through and edit scripts...but when it comes to the unbridled romanticization of gun violence, crickets. Weird. The only thing we don't call a trigger is the one that actually has a trigger" (must-watch video below).

In reality, what reason tells us (the above) has long been vindicated by research. Just consider a definitive 1990s study published by the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (now known as *JAMA*). It found that in *every* society in which TV was introduced, there was an explosion in violent crime and murder within 15 years. For example, TV had been banned in South Africa for internal security reasons until 1975, at which point the nation had a lower murder rate than other lands with similar demographics. The country's legalization of TV prompted psychiatrist Dr. Brandon Centerwall to predict "that white South African homicide rates would double within 10 to 15 years after the introduction of television...."

By 1987 they'd more than doubled.

By the way, one possible exception to the above rule is tiny Bhutan. In 1999, it became the world's last nation to introduce TV — and suffered a crime wave just *four* years later, [reported](#) *The Guardian* in 2003.

The truth? Entertainment is powerful. This is why all modern regimes (e.g., the Nazis) at times create propaganda films. It's why the ancient Greeks saw fit to censor the arts and American localities traditionally had obscenity laws. It's why corporate America spends literally billions a year on advertising to influence behavior. It is also why, while "The pen is mightier than the sword" and a picture mightier still, being worth a "thousand words," we have to wonder how many words moving footage coupled with sound would be.

This isn't to say that entertainment violence is *solely* responsible for the real world variety; our problems are, to use a fashionable term, systemic. But while guns may not transmit values, how we use guns — and knives, fists, words, and everything else — on screen certainly does. And all behavior starts



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with a thought.

In the 1940s and '50s, boys would carry rifles on NYC subways because they had school-associated shooting clubs; in the early 1900s, you could buy a firearm no questions asked out of a Sears catalog. Given this, is today's Americans' problem greater access to guns — or greater access to evil influences?

It would be sadly ironic if due to our lust for violence in fantasy, we lost our right to armed self-defense in reality.



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