

Episode 123-- the Haunting Problem of Ghost Guns

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SPEAKERS

Stephan Abrams, Steve Lindley, JJ Janflone, Kelly Sampson, Tanya Schardt



JJ Janflone 00:08

This is the legal disclaimer where I tell you that the views, thoughts, and opinions shared on this podcast belong solely to our guests and hosts, and not necessarily Brady or Brady's affiliates. Please note, this podcast contains discussions of violence that some people may find disturbing. It's okay, we find it disturbing too.



JJ Janflone 00:37

Welcome back everybody to another episode of Red, Blue and Brady. I'm JJ.



Kelly Sampson 00:41

And I'm Kelly.



JJ Janflone 00:42

And did you know that once again, this podcast is a finalist for a Shorty Award.



Kelly Sampson 00:47

The Shortys honor the best of social media and digital by recognizing influencers, creators, brands, and organizations across the world. And right now, Red, Blue, and Brady is up for best podcast.



JJ Janflone 01:00

And I think I can speak for both of us when I say we're also thankful to you, the listeners, for helping this podcast continue to bring weekly stories of, you know, survivors, activists, researchers, legislators, all of whom are striving to end gun violence. And now that you've made me get like, all emotional, you know, alone in my podcast closet, it's time to talk about something horrifying.



Kelly Sampson 01:21

Yeah, and it almost looks like this should be around Halloween, because we're going to be talking about ghost guns and make no mistake, these are far scarier than, you know, the story you might tell around your campfire. This is talking about a very real problem that has just terrifying implications for gun violence. And we're going to talk all about it today.



JJ Janflone 01:40

Yeah, the ghost gun. We're talking about what is a gun, not a firearm? How did it happen? Where did they come from? Who's buying them? You know, Kelly, I have so many questions.



Kelly Sampson 01:49

Yeah, same here. And luckily, we have some great people in our very own Brady, who can tell us all about it.



JJ Janflone 01:55

Yes. So we're joined by three amazing Brady and Team ENOUGH experts. We've got Stephan Abrams, Steve Lindley, and Tanya Schardt, you know, all of whom are here to explain not just why you the listener should be concerned about ghost guns, but what actions you can take to help prevent gun violence from occurring with them. And can we go ahead and have everyone introduce themselves. And I believe Tanya, since this is your

first time on the podcast, you should go first.



Tanya Schardt 02:21

Okay. hi, everybody. I'm Tanya Schardt. I'm Legal Counsel and Director of State and Federal Policy at Brady.



Steve Lindley 02:27

Good morning, I'm Steve Lindley. I'm the Program Manager for Brady in Los Angeles.



JJ Janflone 02:32

And last but certainly not least, our fantastic Team ENOUGH rep, Stephan Abrams, can you introduce yourself to everybody?



Stephan Abrams 02:37

Hi, everyone, I am the Team ENOUGH National Chapter Coordinator and I'm also a fellow here at Brady. I get to wear a lot of hats here with Team ENOUGH, but I basically get to manage all of its programming, author out and coordinate with Brady staff to make sure everything runs smoothly on the Team ENOUGH side. Thank you for having me, JJ, and Kelly.



JJ Janflone 02:58

Well, you know, we love to have you Stephan and, and I think you've left out of there ghost gun expert too.



Stephan Abrams 03:03

I'm trying, trying very hard.



JJ Janflone 03:06

Yeah, cuz I think one of the things that all of you left out from your intro is that I think at this point, Stephen and Tanya and Stephen, all of you, are aficionados, if you're comfortable, you know, I don't know if that's the title you want, of the ghost gun world.



Tanya Schardt 03:20

We'll take it. We're working hard on all different levels. But yeah, hopefully in a couple of years, we won't need ghost gun experts anymore.



JJ Janflone 03:27

Now to kick things off, let's go really basic here, define our terms. What is a ghost gun, exactly?



Steve Lindley 03:34

So, a ghost gun is really, if you look at the ATF regulations on what makes a firearm, and a ghost gun is more of a slang term for a firearm, or a firearm kit that is at the 80% or lower state of completion, which under ATF or current ATF regulations, does not require it to be serialized. And if the, if the firearm is not serialized, then it does not need to go through a background check. So in all intents and purposes for law enforcement, the gun doesn't really exist, hence a ghost gun.



JJ Janflone 04:09

Now, and I think this is an important distinction, how is a ghost gun different from say something like a 3d printed gun?



Steve Lindley 04:15

So that's actually an excellent question. And I think the 3D printed gun is going to be our next issue when it comes to ghost guns. But the, a ghost gun, at least as it's kind of termed right now is something that you actually purchase from somewhat of a vendor, whether that's at a brick and mortar store, at a gun show, or as we've done, purchase it online. So it comes as a complete kit, or parts of the kit in order to put it together. A 3D printed gun is something that is actually constructed at home using a 3D printer. The, you can make ghost guns on the 3D printer right now, but they're not nearly as, I don't want to use a term safe, but I guess the, probably the best term would be reliable as something that you purchase from a brick and mortar store or a regular manufacturer. The 3D printed gun you can make at home with the printer, but it's really reliant on the substance that you're using for that 3d printing that, that plastic so that is not at the state right now really to make a fully semi automatic handgun or like an AR 15 platform frame. But, you know, in time, those two terms are going to be, are going to pretty much mean the same thing.



Tanya Schardt 05:36

Yeah, I would actually say like 3D printed guns are a type of ghost gun, and that's how I've described it. But I also want to make sure that we're prioritizing and focusing on what the real issue that's, you know, becoming exacerbated and proliferating right now around the country, and I kind of call those traditional ghost guns because they look, feel, and function like a regular gun once they're built. Whereas, as Steve laid out, 3D printed guns, they're not, they're not like a regular gun, they don't have the same features, or functions, or durability. So I do think we need to deal with 3D printed guns, absolutely. But I think right now, the priority is really to focus on traditional ghost guns.



JJ Janflone 06:10

Okay, and one more question and then I promise I'll let us move on here from from definitions and things. But you know, how is making a ghost gun or buying a ghost gun, how is this different from something that, you know, gunsmiths have been doing for a really long time in the US, you know, folks manufacturing their own guns.



Steve Lindley 06:25

First, I guess our friends at the NRA and the National Shooting Sports Foundation, always talk about that US citizens have always had a history of making their own guns. And I think that's probably true to a very, very small extent. But I think the real history is Americans buy guns at the gun store or from from each other, that have been manufactured by a company and is serialized. But it ghost gun kit is, is not a, really a, it's a, it's not a home built kit. It would be kind of the difference between buying a complete piece of furniture, and you have it delivered to your house compared to an Ikea piece of furniture, which it's complete, it just you have to put it together yourself or like a Lego set. All the parts are oftentimes there for you to to put it together. And the instructions are relatively simple. You know, cut here, drill there, put pieces together, you have a firearm, that's, I don't really consider that a historical history of, you know, having, building your own firearms because you're not building this from scratch. You're You're just putting together a Lego set.



JJ Janflone 07:36

Okay, so I get it. So it's sort of, you know, the, it's like three levels of differences here. You know, like a gunsmith is someone who's making like their own like Amish style furniture, right? Like they cut down the tree, there's, there's sanding involved, like they're doing the whole thing. Buying a firearm is sort of, you know, when you go to a store it's sort of like

walking in, having a, buying a bed and having it delivered to your house. And then, you know, a ghost gun is sort of like, you know, you're buying a premade bed set from IKEA that you then put together in your house. Is that, is that fair?



Steve Lindley 08:02

That's an excellent euphemism.



JJ Janflone 08:04

Only, only this bed can kill people.



Steve Lindley 08:06

Yes, yes,



Tanya Schardt 08:07

I think it's important to note too, like I, you know, we understand that hobbyists and other people who want to build replicas want to engage in that activity, and it is a valid activity, but they can use a finished receiver that they go and have to have a background check that is serialized to build guns that they want to and also in most legislation, replicas or antique firearms are excluded from any regulation. I think the key here is really how the, is how the industry has transitioned their marketing tactics with regards and how they package them. So again, these are not targeted at people who want to spend hours building guns, you know, this is targeted at people who want to be able to build a gun or guns very quickly. The whole industry has completely changed. So it's not targeting hobbyists, it's just targeting anybody who wants to get an unregulated firearm.



Stephan Abrams 08:49

Yeah. To add to that, it's also we don't know how many of these are out there either, because these are untraceable firearms, as Steven and Tanya both said, and also anyone technically can buy this kit at any age, as long as you have a credit card or prepaid credit card, or whatever it is, you can buy this online. The most websites typically don't ask you if you're 18 or older. And if you wanted to, you just click a box saying I am 18 or older, and continue as well. And they will ask you any questions, and they'll ship it right to your house. And I also do believe that some of these stores might even sell it. If you went into some of these brick and mortar cells they might sell to people who were under age as

well, because it's technically not a firearm in the eyes of the gun manufacturer industry. It's a Lego set, as Steve said, and it's, the assembly is dummy proof.



JJ Janflone 09:43

Are you applying Stephan that people on the internet can lie?



Stephan Abrams 09:46

No,



JJ Janflone 09:46

How dare you. Who would do that? Go on the internet and tell lies.



Tanya Schardt 09:52

Well, here, here you don't even have to lie right because they don't ask how you are right, Stephen?



Stephan Abrams 09:56

Yes, on most websites, they wouldn't ask you.



Kelly Sampson 09:59

So it really is like going to IKEA. Except for with a deadly firearm. And I kind of want to pick up on something you just said Stephan. It was a perfect segway because you were saying, you know, these are not firearms. And so I'm wondering, you know, when is a gun that can act like a gun and kill and hurt like a gun, not a firearm.



Stephan Abrams 10:18

So since we purchased an 80% finished perceiver, once you finish sawing off the last 20%, that's when it technically is a firearm when you are able to use it for full assembly. And at that point, it is a functioning firearm that you can assemble. And I think there's a lot of, you can't really understand how easy it is until it's actually right in front of you. I honestly think that when I, when I saw the receiver in front of me, I was shocked about how little we actually had to saw off potentially, for us to have a final product. It's very simple. It's all

the parts are plastic besides the slide, which is metal. And of course, the firing things in some of the tools that are used for the functionality of the weapon. But this is a Lego set that requires you to mess with the top a little bit, just a little bit, to make sure that it's fully functional. But the thing is, you don't even have to sand it off perfectly for it to be able to work either. You also could use more advanced tools like a drill press to make it smoother as well. If you have that experience, which a lot of people do. It's not that hard to use drill, drill press. So it's shocking how easily that you can create the 80% finished receiver into something that is a functioning firearm.



JJ Janflone 11:42

So when we're talking about the receiver, though, that's, that's the section though that would have a serial number if it existed as a, as a quote unquote, real gun, right? Am I getting this terribly confused?



Steve Lindley 11:54

No, that's correct. Under ATF regulations, that's the part of the firearm that is the firearm is the receiver whether that's for a rifle or for a handgun. And that is the controlled piece of the firearm and the item that needs to be serialized.



JJ Janflone 12:11

I know and then the serial numbers those matter for law enforcement purposes or are there other reasons?



Steve Lindley 12:17

Well, the, the main point of the numbering system is to be able to trace back the firearm from the person who purchased it to the dealer to the wholesaler and ultimately back to the manufacturer. Although tracing it back to the manufacturer is usually relatively easy because it's coming from Smith and Wesson. It's coming from Ruger. It's coming from Beretta, but you can start seeing where there might be kinks in the, in the system. All crime guns start off as a legal firearm at some point, whether that's at, it's at the manufacturer or wholesaler, but we want to find out where that deviated from a legal firearm from a legal purchase, and then got into the, into the illegal market. And that's the main way that you can trace that back is through the serial number. Then you have a number of states, let's say for California, that actually retained sales data on firearms, and that is based on the make, model, and serial number of the firearm and then that firearm is tied to an

individual. And that, that helps identify that firearm, if it's ever located. And then just finally, it's also a way for us to identify stolen firearms. Lots of items have serial numbers on them, unless it has a serial number, whether it's a television, a computer, or a Rolex watch, or a firearm, you know, law enforcement really can't identify it unless there's something there, some type of number, in order to trace it back to, hey, that was stolen from my house, and I want my property back if it was located. For a firearm, that's easy enough for the serial number.

K

Kelly Sampson 13:44

Thank you so much for explaining that because one of the problems that we've seen is that because those guns don't have serial numbers, and don't kind of allow for that tracking, firearm traffickers, and people who can't get a gun, otherwise have started to prefer them. So I'm wondering if you know, any of you could talk a little bit about why firearm traffickers and prohibited purchasers are so drawn to ghost guns. And also what are some of the other risks of ghost guns in terms of public safety?

T

Tanya Schardt 14:14

Yeah, so I mean, obviously, I think we're finding that those who are prohibited or those who want to avoid a background check or encounter with an FFL or who want to traffic firearms, have leaned into the idea of ghost guns because there's absolutely zero regulation and zero way to trace these firearms. So they are essentially we call them the perfect crime guns. So you know, any person, anybody can go to a gun show and purchase 10 kits, go home, build 10 guns, and then sell them. This is much easier than going to an FFL and having to purchase for 10 firearms and then having to sell them and in what you're seeing across the country, in fact, it's like in cities that have already been disproportionately impacted by trafficked firearms, you're now seeing ghost guns popping up. So you're talking about in DC, Baltimore, Oakland, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Philadelphia, cities that are disproportionally impacted by gun violence and especially the trafficked firearms are now being impacted by ghost guns. So it's very clear that ghost guns are the new trafficked firearm.

S

Steve Lindley 15:12

So one of the other differences between a regular serialized firearm and a ghost gun is, with a serialized firearm, there is a point where there's documentation that it originated from. So from the, from the factory of Ruger, then it went to a wholesaler and went to a dealer, there's, there's information there that law enforcement can trace back and potentially provide leads for them for other investigations. When it comes to the ghost

gun, there's just no leads whatsoever, you have the manufacturer of it, and that's it. There's no no other way to trace that firearm back to a owner or to a, to a dealer. And why not? If you're a prohibited person, why would you try and even to buy a serialized firearm these days? Just go to a ghost gun, you can get it at a brick and mortar store, you can get it online, you can go to a gun show, and there's, there's no paperwork, especially when you go to a gun show. At least at brick and mortar stores, oftentimes I'll have some type of a security system, you might be on camera, if you buy online, you know, although there's really no age verification, there's, there's paperwork, you probably used a credit card and use some type of shipping. They get it to you whether it's FedEx or UPS or the Postal Service. But going to a gun show, you know, it's very anonymous, cash and carry. And that's what we've done in the past. It's, it's a quick, simple transaction, and no one knows that you have that firearm. So if you are prohibited, if you have a mental health issue, if you have, if you're a felon, if you have a domestic violence history, ghost guns are perfect in order to arm you up. And they're quick and simple to put together. And oftentimes, they're cheaper than regular firearms, which is also a major concern. So you know, they're easy to get, they're easy to put together, and they're cheaper. That's, that's kind of a you know, a deadly cocktail right there.

S

Stephan Abrams 17:03

If you buy a Glock 17 ghost gun kit, it's a replica. It's the exact same functionality of a serialized legal Glock 17 that you could purchase. It's also roughly \$200 cheaper, I believe on average, Steve and Tanya, you can correct me on that. But that's why these, these kits are cheaper. And that's why these are the ones that are trafficked more often. Because why would people pay, especially in bulk, more when they can get it for \$200 lower? That's, that's what that's kind of the draw to it.

T

Tanya Schardt 17:38

I think the biggest incentive will always remain just the ease of access to these firearms, the lack of having to fill out forms, the lack of having to encounter people, being able to order it online, being able to go to a gun shop and they're displayed there. I will say it's like shoes, you could go buy however many you want. I think there's just for anybody who doesn't want anybody regulating them or doesn't want to have encounters with people or can't have background checks or doesn't want to have background checks. It's just so easy. It is a way around every single gun law that exists. So like in California, there's a 10 day waiting period, not with ghost guns, you know, in other states, there's a one gun a month law, not with ghost guns. So any impediment to buy a firearm is essentially undermined by the availability of ghost guns.



JJ Janflone 18:22

And maybe this is me being naive, but this seems really counterintuitive to what we've seen from a lot of responsible gun dealers and gun sellers. You know, FFLs, federally licensed firearm dealers, like they are for background checks. So have any gun lobby groups spoken out? You know, since substantively, they're speaking for these for, for these responsible gun owners have they spoken out against ghost guns at all?



Tanya Schardt 18:49

So that was kind of something that surprised me because it seems to, it would undermine the businesses of their normal membership, which is FFLs. But what I have found is that the ghost gun industry is just part of the broader gun industry. So a lot of the sellers or manufacturers are actually, manufacturers even though they don't have to comply with the rules with the unfinished receivers. But yeah, I think that we can now accept the fact that the ghost gun industry is part and parcel of the broader gun industry and hence the gun lobby.



Steve Lindley 19:20

I was surprised that the National Shooting Sports Foundation was very resistant to Nevada's Assembly Bill 286. And the ghost gun issue there. So, you know the industry, maybe it was two separate industries at one point, but they're, they're one now. So it, whether it's a ghost gun manufacturer or a regular fire manufacturer, it's the same industry now.



Kelly Sampson 19:47

So is there a way to regulate ghost guns, like is there some way that you might still be able to have that gun but also track it, keep a record of it, and be able to trace it?



Tanya Schardt 20:00

There are, so I think there's gonna, there's a couple different ways to regulate ghost guns and you're seeing different versions of these across the country. I think at the top end, I mean, I think the biggest asset would be for the ATF to redefine what a firearm is. And that would trickle down into all of the states. And certainly, these kits would then be regulated and treated like regular firearms, you know, you would have to have a background check, meaning they would be serialized, etc. There's also federal legislation that would essentially ban ghost guns until that happens, the sale of the unfinished

receivers essentially, and then states have taken action as well. California has a scheme. And right now there's actually a bill pending in California that would ban the sale of ghost gun kits at gun shows, because they are becoming so prevalent at gun shows, so much so that I know Steve has called gun shows ghost gun shows in California. So that's AB 311 from Chris Ward. We also have a bill in Maryland, which creates a licensing system to purchase a ghost gun because, because ghost gun parts and kits are not firearms, they cannot have a regular background check through the NICS system. So we have to create a licensing mechanism to make sure that background check is completed. So a few states have created those systems, New York has, New York has a bill that would do something similar. And then other states have taken a more drastic approach and been like, we're just going to ban the sale of these unfinished receivers, you know, until the federal government does something, we're going to make sure that these, these cannot be bought or sold or assembled in our state. So we've seen bills like that in Nevada, and recently just in Virginia, unfortunately, it didn't pass.



JJ Janflone 21:28

That's always the worst, isn't it? When you're like this could work so well and then we just can't seem to get it through or just doesn't seem to pull through all the way.



Tanya Schardt 21:36

And it's especially frustrating because, you know, we had a bill in Maryland last session. And I remember talking to the legislators and then saying, oh, but ghost guns aren't a problem. And I remember saying to them, just wait, because I promised you in one year you're gonna wish you're taking this action last year. And we've seen the meteoric, meteoric rise of the recovery of ghost towns in cities, in Baltimore. So, and this is happening all across the country, so waiting to take action on ghost guns is really accepting the fact that you're allowing 10s of 1000s of these unserialized, unregulated firearms into communities every single day.



Kelly Sampson 22:10

And I'm really struck on what Tanya and Stephen and I know, Steve alluded to it earlier, just shared about the fact that you, in your work, have talked to legislators and officials about this problem, and said, this is real, this is coming. And we need to be proactive and make sure that we get ahead of it. And you've sort of been faced with it sounds like some skepticism or some cynicism saying it's not that big a deal, which is really troubling because we could save lives, like those guns are not, you know, the name ghost guns can

sometimes seem like ephemeral, but it's a real thing. And it really does hurt people. And so you know, in case there's some legislators or officials or even other activists listening right now, could you just talk a little bit about how real the scope of this problem is? And, and the fact that this is happening, places where ghost guns are being increasingly recovered?

T

Tanya Schardt 23:05

Yeah. And Steve and Stephan feels free to jump in, but absolutely, I think, you know, the thing is, is we've been reaching out asking for data, like all kinds of data, getting this has been a little bit difficult. But what we have seen in certain cities, it's just kind of extraordinary. I'll lay this out by saying, you know, at the, at the outset, like ghost guns have been used in mass shootings, school shootings, domestic violence, incidents, violence against police, I think at least five police officers have been killed using ghost guns. They've been used by extremists. We've seen white supremacists use them. So, and then now we're seeing it in community violence. So it really is one of those things that now is being used in all different types of gun violence that plague the US. But again, in particular, in Los Angeles. Last year, they announced that they recovered 700 of just one brand of ghost gun in 2020, Polymer 80. We're hearing numbers from San Francisco and Oakland, which are problematic. We're hearing numbers from Baltimore, again, the numbers have just skyrocketed. DC, extremely high numbers and use in crime. And in Philadelphia as well, my expectation is that these numbers can be narrowed in many cities across the country, in particular, in cities that are in states that have strong gun laws, you know, and we continue to put pressure to get the information. But it's difficult because we don't have access to all of the information. So I think, you know, part of it is acting proactively and looking to other states and cities to see what's happening there. And I think the other the other thing that legislators should be doing is going out and asking law enforcement and state officials to be writing information about the number of ghost guns recovered.

S

Steve Lindley 24:37

Oftentimes, you know, politicians might not necessarily take what a gun violence prevention group like Brady is telling them, but if they don't believe us, just go talk to their law enforcement professionals and they'll say, hey, you know, three years ago, we recovered five, last year recovered 100 this year, this year, we're estimating recovering 1000. So this problem's been around since the, you know, about 2009, 2010, here in California, and it was identified as a growing problem. And a few politicians, Senator de Leon, at the time was one of the few politicians that really took up this issue. But we had a governor at the time who wanted to see the public safety impact. And we said, well, by the time you see the public safety impact, it's too late to really act. I mean, the, you know, the

patient's almost dead from the disease. So, and that's what we're seeing is there's some skepticism, but now law enforcement is getting involved. They're starting to release data on that, on the ghost gun issue. And it's astonishing, and people are now, especially politicians, are starting to take notice from the data coming from law enforcement agencies around the nation, not just in California.

T

Tanya Schardt 25:50

I actually think that when you have a conversation with anybody and explain what a big loophole this is, they are astonished and want to take action immediately. I think maybe the messaging gets a little bit lost in the broader context of shootings. Again, it's not that ghost guns are only being recovered in communities. I think that the impact of ghost trends is broad. Again, it has been used in a mass shooting, it has been used in a school shooting. I, I don't know, I think, again, I think the general public is supportive of taking action on ghost guns. I think the problem is, which is so often the case, I think that's the case for a lot of gun laws, is that the legislators don't actually always take that into account in terms of you know, what they push forward or not.

S

Steve Lindley 26:31

And I think and the other part of that is just the knowledge of the public, or the lack thereof, about ghost guns. When I tell people about the ghost gun issue, it's usually a WTF moment, right afterwards. They go, you're kidding me? No. And we pass all these laws. Oh, yeah. All those laws are meaningless for, for ghost guns. So it's, maybe it's marketing, maybe it's just knowledge. But one of the things that really brought the ghost gun issue to a broader spectrum of Americans, was last year with 60 Minutes running their episode about ghost guns. And that was really probably the first major news organization that brought this knowledge to the public. And it was, I think it was shocking to Americans that it's that easy to get these firearms, and they are feeding into the crime gun issues that we have across the nation.

K

Kelly Sampson 27:22

I mean, it is shocking what you and, you know, hearing about what you and Stephan worked on it is, again, like earlier, we were using this analogy about IKEA as sort of a metaphor, but it's not far off at all. And it is very shocking that you can get a firearm with the same ease, maybe even easier, than you can get a nice pillow for your sofa. And so, you know, we talked a lot about marketing and education. So, I'm wondering for all of you, what are some things that listeners can do if they want to learn more? Where can they go for resources? Or where can they go to get involved directly at preventing ghost

guns from being out on the streets?

T

Tanya Schardt 28:07

Well, we have a web page, and I'm going to have to find it, I could just Google ghost guns and Brady and it'll take you to that, which is just kind of a one pager laying out some more information. I think there are a lot of, there's a lot of content out of that, out there that can provide education, so you really understand what ghost guns are because it is a little bit wonky. I think in terms of taking action, I would look at your state legislature and see, you know, if there is a bill and see how you can support it. Again, the states have really had to take action here because there's been a failure on a federal level. Similarly, there, like I said, there is a federal bill from Cicilline, or there was last Congress and hopefully he reintroduces it, I think providing support for that. And then also, I think that there is a mechanism to ask Biden to take executive action here to ask the ATF to redefine what a firearm is.

S

Stephan Abrams 28:52

I also wanted to just quickly plug that there was an amazing Brady podcast episode where Steve explains the issue of ghost guns in depth a little more, and I would definitely want to plug that for a lot of people who want to learn more about the issue. And the thing about ghost guns is that you can you can learn a lot just even by going to their websites, and seeing how it really is a Lego set. It really is that easy to assemble, that easy to purchase. It's the same as going to any other website and buying anything else online. I also want to plug that Team ENOUGH has programs across this country that are actively fighting this problem through all the way down to level of local city ordinances to state laws. And if you are interested in joining one of our statewide lobby collective programs, go to our website and click on Lobby Collective it's right there, really easy to sign up. And we would love to have you. We need to make sure that we have people across this country in every community, working to spread awareness on this issue because the more city ordinances that we get passed, the more state laws we get passed, the more we can start putting putting pressure nationally, on this issue. It's important, and it should be something that's getting national attention. And we're really excited to work with the Biden administration on, on, on inspecting the ATF process and figure out how we can regulate these ghost guns and how the ATF can do better on making sure they crack down on these manufacturers who are trafficking these firearms, unfortunately, in these, these guns being poured into communities very vulnerable to gun violence, and unfortunately, increasing the rate of what, of how, how often gun violence happens in our communities.



Tanya Schardt 30:50

One thing I'll just add, just for context, I think is important is, you know, gun violence in America is, I will say, it's not singular, it's all these different types of violence that are exacerbated by the availability of firearms. So the common thread between domestic violence, suicide, mass shootings, police violence, community violence, is access to firearms or easy access to firearms. The other solutions are complex and different for each of these types of violence. But, you know, regulating, or, you know, ensuring the firearms don't end up in the hands of those who shouldn't have them is something that would prevent all these different types of violence. That's why background checks is so important, right? But ghost guns is another important thing that we need to handle immediately, because they go around all of these laws that work to ensure that firearms do not get, end up in the hands of those who shouldn't have them. So it's really important that we take action. And you know, we can pass other laws, we can do all, all our due diligence, but until we do something about ghost guns, people are always going to have another way to get a gun that's unregulated and unserialized.



JJ Janflone 31:51

Yeah, I think the thing that scares me about ghost guns is we have these checks in place, right? So you know, you have to do a background check when you when you buy a gun from a licensed firearm dealer. But if you get denied, you can just walk out into the parking lot, get on Wi Fi, and now buy a firearm through, through this other avenue, with no one even seeing you face to face. And that's very concerning.



Tanya Schardt 32:11

Yeah, no, I have nightmares about that often. So it's very true. It's very real. It's not even something to joke about it's, yeah, it's a reality. And I think the implications are being felt drastically by people and communities all over the country now, already, and it will just, it will continue to get worse.



Kelly Sampson 32:32

And one important subtext, I think, in this conversation that I just want to bring to the surface, is that, for as discouraging as it is, I also see ghost guns and the proliferation as evidence that gun laws work, right, like so often when we talk about background checks or other sorts of regulations, people who are skeptical say, well, criminals don't follow laws, so what's the point? They're just going to get around it anyway. And I think the fact that ghost guns in many places, but not everywhere, are a workaround that's quote,

unquote, lawful and people are turning to them shows that if we cut off access, then that will have a real impact. So it's, in a weird way, it's like an encouragement to regulate ghost guns. You know, we have background checks, and we regulate ghost guns. And we really work on the demand side and the entry side can make a huge difference. So that's just something I'm taking away from everything that you all are saying.



Steve Lindley 33:26

No, that's an excellent point, Kelly. And it's very truthful. And if we want to expand the background check process, the Brady background check process, and to minimize trafficking, we really do have to deal with the ghost gun issue on a national level. I know cities and states are dealing with it on individual levels, but it really needs to be a national solution. And that comes from the Biden administration and through ATF regulations. So if we want to expand background checks, we need to also deal with ghost guns at the same time. If not, it's kind of meaningless.



Stephan Abrams 33:59

And we are really excited we put it putting out this video project, issue of what Steve and I went through in purchasing a ghost gun. And I really, I really do believe that this is an issue that the Biden administration can and hopefully will act on this term, because it is so prevalent, especially right now after we just had a year of record high gun violence, and we're going to be continuously seeing more data coming out about how bad this issue is. And please, when the video does come out, we really hope that you do tune in for our live events, they'll likely be towards the end of April. This is the time to put pressure on all legislatures at all levels of government to take action on this issue. Because you should be fed up and angry that a youth in America was able to purchase a ghost gun, purchase a functioning firearm with ease, in his laptop, in his garage. And that was only one of the ways that I could have done it.



JJ Janflone 35:06

Well, I want to thank you all so, so much for working in this field, for continuing to try to educate folks about ghost guns to try and limit the harm that they can do. And again, since Tanya, first time on the podcast, is there any final thing you want to share to take us home?



Tanya Schardt 35:20

No, I just want to thank you both. And I also want to say thanks, Stephan and Steve, for working so diligently on this issue. It's hard. And you know, we've been working really hard, like I said, on so, in so many different ways through legislation, advocacy, our litigation to really highlight the risk of ghost guns and the proliferation of ghost guns across the country. I feel confident that we're going to get there. But I hope everybody who's listening decides to take action on this and that we can all work together to get to a place where ghost guns are regulated.



JJ Janflone 35:48

Amen. So Kelly, it's almost prom season, which prompts me to ask, do you have a favorite prom memory?



Kelly Sampson 35:56

I feel like prom was so underwhelming. But the one thing that I do remember specifically is that I got a ride there with like a bunch of friends and I all went together. And my friend's date was driving and we got lost like for a while. It was, it was in the same city, it's just Detroit is big in terms of land. And so we got really lost and so we were like super late and not by design, but just because we literally could not find the right freeway exit.



JJ Janflone 36:29

Yeah, I have to give a shout out to my high school boyfriend and apologize. His mom purchased me some flowers for prom that were dipped in glitter. They were a very pretty bouquet but that glitter, I had glitter on me for months. I believe his car had glitter on it for the rest of all time. So I apologize. It was not my choice. But I did carry it with me and glitter everyone.



Kelly Sampson 36:49

There are worse things.



JJ Janflone 36:50

There are worse things too, but, but glitter is hazardous and you might be thinking, what else is hazardous? You know, why is JJ asking me about prom or talking about prom at a section where normally we're like debunking or talking about things that are unbelievable.

Well, surprise, I got something terrifying.



Kelly Sampson 37:06

Yeah, this is all bad cuz I'm like proms is giving me teenagers and youth. And just, I just thinking about the ways that that could possibly intersect with guns is not great. So just lay it on.



JJ Janflone 37:21

Yep. So there's a Twitter account @SarahYork. And she tweeted out it's almost prom season, which means another round of posts by thoroughly unhinged men holding a gun next to their teen daughter and her date, followed just by a sea of reader set in photos of dads and their daughters where the fathers are posing with firearms next to their teens in formal wear.



Kelly Sampson 37:38

Oh, yeah, I saw this earlier this week when you sent it around. And for listeners it is truly, it's very chilling, like some of these photos and one of them that dad had the barrel actually pointed at the young man like the barrel was pointed at him.



JJ Janflone 37:53

Yes, and that photo in particular reminded me of something that went viral a few years ago. In 2018, which, you know, a lifetime ago, there was a former professional football player who also tweeted a photo of himself, his daughter, and her prom date. They look lovely. But next is very sweet dad message of you know, quote, wishing my beautiful daughter and her date a great time at prom, there was something really conspicuous and that was he was, he was pointing a gun.



Kelly Sampson 38:14

Yeah, I mean, we've had experts and activists come on this podcast, a lot and talk about the intersection between gun culture and toxic masculinity and sexism and racism. And a lot of these images that were going around are just that. And if a picture's worth 1000 words, you can look at these pictures and just gather so much about the links between guns and all those cultural forces, but it's also so disgusting.



JJ Janflone 38:40

Well, yeah, and missing from this conversation, right? Because, you know, on one hand, you have people talking, saying, you know, it's just a joke. And then on the other hand, you have people saying, well, no, this is a sexist stereotype that young women need protection with a gun that goes against everything we actually know about domestic violence rates. But missing from this conversation is what you brought up earlier, Kelly, which is a fundamental rule of gun safety, which is never ever point a firearm at someone or something unless you're intending to shoot, like guns aren't props for a weird Facebook photo op. It's weird. Don't do it.



Kelly Sampson 39:11

Yeah, and I mean, especially, you know, when I think about this segment, where so often, we're dealing with an unintentional shooting, like we're lucky that we're just talking about photos, because in those instances where those dads were pointing the barrel, I cannot emphasize that enough of a firearm at another human person that could have easily turned into a much worse type of Unbelievable But or even worse a tragedy. And good news not at all related to proms. President Biden has included 5 billion, that's billion with a B, dollars of funding over eight years for evidence-based community violence prevention programs in the American Jobs Plan. This funding long sought by community gun violence prevention organizations, many of them led by black and brown people working on the frontlines of this crisis will help to prevent violence and mediate conflict, helping and healing communities most affected by gun violence. These programs not only help to resolve conflict, but also assist members of impacted communities to seek new opportunities including new employment. This investment will target both the increase in gun violence and homicides and unemployment that every community across the country has seen over the past year.



JJ Janflone 40:31

Hey, want to share with the podcast? Listeners can now get in touch with us here at Red, Blue, and Brady via phone or text message. Simply call or text us at 480-744-3452 with your thoughts, questions, concerns, ideas, whatever. Kelly and I are standing by.



Kelly Sampson 40:46

Thanks for listening. As always, Brady's life saving work in Congress, the courts, and communities across the country is made possible thanks to you. For more information on Brady or how to get involved in the fight against gun violence, please like and subscribe to

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