

# Journalist Explains Why Media Fails on Gun Control

[Slate senior editor Rachael Larimore last week offered](#) one of the smarter takes I've seen on why the media can never get the "healthy conversation" it wants on gun control:

*Gun-control advocates and their allies in the media will attack the gun-rights crowd as cold-hearted, stubborn, and out of touch. They will complain that no new legislation will result from the tragedy, and they will be right.*

*There are many reasons that this cycle repeats as it does. We live in a divided society where people cocoon with like-minded allies, and we've stopped listening to the other side. The NRA is powerful. We get distracted and move on to the next shiny thing. But one important point: The mainstream media lobbies hard for gun control, but it is very, very bad at gun journalism. It might be impossible ever to bridge the divide between the gun-control and gun-rights movements. But it's impossible to start a dialogue when you don't know what the hell you are talking about.*

Larimore hits the nail on the head. Gun fans love their hardware, and they scorn publications [like Rolling Stone](#) and [Mother Jones](#) that apparently don't care to distinguish an assault rifle (which is banned by [the National Firearms Act of 1934](#)) from a semi-automatic rifle like the Sig Sauer MCX used by Orlando night club attacker Omar Mateer. (Reporters [who claim PTSD](#) after firing an AR-15 are a whole different story.)

Larimore also called out pundits who employ specious logic to argue why today's weapons really don't fall under the Bill of Rights. Take Eugene Robinson:

*In the Washington Post this week, [Eugene Robinson wrote](#), “When the framers wrote of ‘arms,’ they were thinking about muskets and single-shot pistols. They could not have foreseen modern rifles or high-capacity magazines.” A few problems with this. First, gun enthusiasts will be only too happy to educate you on the existence of the Girandoni air rifle, which dates back to 1779, 12 years before the Second Amendment was ratified. It used compressed air, not gunpowder, and [could hold 20 bullets](#) at once. Lewis and Clark [had one with them](#) when Thomas Jefferson sent them out to explore the West. Second, we can argue all day about what the Framers—all now dead for 200 years or so—intended with the Second Amendment. But it seems disingenuous to argue that, in crafting a document that has largely served us well for more than 220 years, they couldn’t imagine improvements in gun technology.*

Using Robinson’s logic, the article I’m writing for publication doesn’t deserve First Amendment protection because neither computers nor the internet existed in 1787.

Reasonable people can disagree on the level to which guns need to be regulated, but Larimore is right when she says the media’s [reflexive](#) and often erroneous reporting inhibit constructive conversation. (I recently engaged in a ~~thoughtful~~ relatively civil email exchange with a friend—a journalist for a major national newspaper who has never fired a gun—on the idea of restricting magazine capacity on semi-automatic rifles. He made some good points, but I won of course.)

My question is not whether Americans (reporters included) are capable of dialing back some of the rhetoric, false narratives, and finger-pointing on guns. My question is, *Do they even want to?*

My hunch is that the caustic tenor of the gun debate is the

(sad) new normal.

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