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Opinion | OP-ED COLUMNIST

# Our Blind Spot About Guns

Nicholas Kristof JULY 30, 2014

Handwritten: cited: Kristof, By Nicholas

This is really sad to read but a true statement.

If we had the same auto fatality rate today that we had in 1921, by my calculations we would have 715,000 Americans dying annually in vehicle accidents.

Instead, we've reduced the fatality rate by more than 95 percent — not by confiscating cars, but by regulating them and their drivers sensibly.

Handwritten: (how) they should be more strict on the CWBs because people drink a lot.

We could have said, "Cars don't kill people. People kill people," and there would have been an element of truth to that. Many accidents are a result of alcohol consumption, speeding, road rage or driver distraction. Or we could have said, "It's pointless because even if you regulate cars, then people will just run each other down with bicycles," and that, too, would have been partly true.

Yet, instead, we built a system that protects us from ourselves. This saves hundreds of thousands of lives a year and is a model of what we should do with guns in America.

Handwritten: What guns? I'm confused, because I don't know a lot about cars. Do you buy this comparison?

Whenever I write about the need for sensible regulation of guns, some readers jeer: Cars kill people, too, so why not ban cars? Why are you so hypocritical as to try to take away guns from law-abiding people when you don't seize cars?

Handwritten: We can't ban cars because it is a necessity for people to go to job, school, event and much more.

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Our Blind Spot About Guns - The New York Times

In today's <sup>ten.</sup> cars drive by themselves and I don't think it is safe.

That question is a reflection of our national blind spot about guns. The truth is that we regulate cars quite intelligently, instituting evidence-based measures to reduce fatalities. Yet the gun lobby is too strong, or our politicians too craven, to do the same for guns. So guns and cars now each kill more than 30,000 in America every year.

People have the right to bear arms, but some people take advantage of this right.

One constraint, the argument goes, is the Second Amendment. Yet the paradox is that a bit more than a century ago, there was no universally recognized individual right to bear arms in the United States, but there was widely believed to be a "right to travel" that allowed people to drive cars without regulation.

A court struck down an early attempt to require driver's licenses, and initial attempts to set speed limits or register vehicles were met with resistance and ridicule. When authorities in New York City sought in 1899 to ban horseless carriages in the parks, the idea was lambasted in The New York Times as "devoid of merit" and "impossible to maintain."

Yet, over time, it became increasingly obvious that cars were killing and maiming people, as well as scaring horses and causing accidents. As a distinguished former congressman, Robert Cousins, put it in 1910: "Pedestrians are menaced every minute of the days and nights by a wanton recklessness of speed, crippling and killing people at a rate that is appalling."

Courts and editorial writers alike saw the carnage and agreed that something must be done. By the 1920s, courts routinely accepted driver's license requirements, car registration and other safety measures.

There are some people that don't have a license and still drive. <sup>yes</sup>

That continued in recent decades with requirements of seatbelts and air bags, padded dashboards and better bumpers. We cracked down on drunken drivers and instituted graduated licensing for young people, while also improving road engineering to reduce accidents. The upshot is that there is now just over 1 car fatality per 100 million miles driven.

This reduces people's death average in car accident.

Yet as we've learned to treat cars intelligently, we've gone in the opposite direction with guns. In his terrific new book, "The Second Amendment: A Biography," Michael Waldman, the president of the Brennan Center for Justice at

the New York University School of Law, notes that "gun control laws were ubiquitous" in the 19th century. Visitors to Wichita, Kan., for example, were required to check their revolvers at police headquarters.

And Dodge City, symbol of the Wild West? A photo shows a sign on the main street in 1879 warning: "The Carrying of Fire Arms Strictly Prohibited."

The National Rifle Association supported reasonable gun control for most of its history and didn't even oppose the landmark Gun Control Act of 1968. But, since then, most attempts at safety regulation have stalled or gone backward, and that makes the example of cars instructive.

*Wines?*

"We didn't ban cars, or send black helicopters to confiscate them," notes Waldman. "We made cars safer: air bags, seatbelts, increasing the drinking age, lowering the speed limit. There are similar technological and behavioral fixes that can ease the toll of gun violence, from expanded background checks to trigger locks to smart guns that recognize a thumbprint, just like my iPhone does."

*Young people still drinky and I don't think this is the main cause of car accidents*

Some of these should be doable. A Quinnipiac poll this month found 92 percent support for background checks for all gun buyers.

*have 2 mental health test, just to make sure a criminal is buying.*

These steps won't eliminate gun deaths any more than seatbelts eliminate auto deaths. But if a combination of measures could reduce the toll by one-third, that would be 10,000 lives saved every year.

*Every person that uses this for bad should have a major consequences so crime rate can reduce.*

A century ago, we reacted to deaths and injuries from unregulated vehicles by imposing sensible safety measures that have saved hundreds of thousands of lives a year. Why can't we ask politicians to be just as rational about guns?

I invite you to join me on Facebook and Google+, watch my YouTube videos and follow me on Twitter.

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A version of this op-ed appears in print on July 31, 2014, on Page A23 of the New York edition with the headline: Our Blind Spot About Guns.

*Good*

*Summary: This passage showed me how car and guns have change to be more safety, but some of there requirement are useless, because most people still kill and don't follow the rules.*