

Gun Culture

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A good rule to live by is not to talk about politics or religion in polite company, and especially in a time when opinions about almost anything are so polarized you are best not talking about anything at all.

Canadians are usually less strident in their opinions compared to our neighbours to the south. Nevertheless, it helps to know your audience. You would think that when ridiculing Donald Trump has become a national pastime, you are on pretty safe ground, but I have come across people, I thought I knew, who are adamant he is the best thing that could have happened to America. Go figure!

When the topic of guns comes up, most of my hunting and sports shooting friends are patient with me when I explain my thoughts about the need for strict gun control in Canada.

If you are wise you wouldn't even think of venturing an opinion on any of this, where, just across the border, it is legal to carry a gun in the open. The law states:

In Michigan, it is legal for a person to carry a firearm in public as long as the person is carrying the firearm with lawful intent and the firearm is not concealed.

It is difficult to even wrap ones head around how this is even possible, but my hunch is that gun laws in the US have been so lax, for so long, that even debating whether a mentally ill person should be allowed the same privileges, or protesting after another mass shooting now just seems futile and silly.

I have taken some pains to try and understand gun culture. I have accompanied friends on hunts, and recently went to an outdoor gun range to try my hand at target shooting. It is easy enough to accept hunting regardless of how one feels about animals. Many of us still eat meat. Sometimes getting a bullet can seem more compassionate when one considers the dreadful conditions some animals endure on factory farms.

I can also appreciate the allure of firing a gun. The awesome power and the lethal capacity of a firearm can be an adrenaline rush. However, the thought of the harmful potential of firearms and what their very existence is meant for is sobering. As much as we pretend that target shooting is a fun, harmless activity one cannot deny it is being pursued using an instrument whose sole purpose for existence is to kill another sentient being.

I won't list the virtues of strict controls on guns because anyone on the other side could overwhelm me with statistics about how naive I am. But I'm sure there are no statistics that deny that living in a world where the only use of firearms, in a democratic society, would be by farmers, police, and the military would be a whole lot safer. Of course, there is an argument to counter that as well.