Not a Million Moms, Just Multi-Million Dollar Media

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The Million Mom March was not a grassroots uprising of mothers but a slick media event orchestrated by Bill Clinton's public relations experts and led by a sister-in-law of a close friend of Hillary Clinton. That the campaign was contrived was evident in the cozy meeting with the President, the extravagant television coverage and multi-page color "ads" disguised as "news" in national magazines, and the distribution of color brochures in airports.

The march was advertised as growing out of mothers' outrage at the large number of children who are killed by guns. But Professor John Lott Jr., senior research scholar at the Yale University Law School and author of "More Guns, Less Crime," has exposed the blatant lies in the statistics bandied about by the President and the press, such as the lie that 12 children a day die from guns.

Most of the "children" in the statistics on kids killed by gunfire are 17-, 18- and 19-year-olds killed in gang or drug wars in high-crime urban areas. It is unrealistic to think that trigger locks or waiting periods would have any effect in stopping those homicides.

The Centers for Disease Control could identify only 21 children under age 15 dying from accidental handgun deaths in 1996. But 40 children under the age of five drown in water buckets every year and another 80 drown in bathtubs.

Are we going to demand that water buckets and bathtubs be locked up and fitted with safety catches? The risk of a child drowning in a swimming pool is 100 times greater than the risk of dying from a firearm-related accident.

The Columbine killers violated at least 17 state and federal gun- control laws among the 20,000 gun-control laws on the books today. Does anyone think that Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold would not have known how to unlock their guns, or that a waiting period would have made a difference in the murders

they planned months in advance?

Another Clinton argument for more gun control is the alleged increase in what are called "rampage killings." But Professor Lott, who did a couple of thousand hours of research on this issue, found that there has been no upward national trend in such killings since the mid-1970s.

The only policy that effectively reduces public shootings is right-to-carry laws. In the 31 states that passed right-to-carry laws, the number of multiple-victim public shootings has dropped dramatically.

Those who are looking for the cause of murders committed by very young boys should listen to Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, author of "Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill," who believes that some children are taught the desire and the skill to kill by violent video games. The killers at Columbine High School reenacted the methods of killing they had learned from the video game called "Doom."

How did 14-year-old Michael Carneal of Paducah, Kentucky, who had never before shot a real gun, have the skill to walk into a school in December 1997, fire eight shots and hit eight kids, all in the head or upper torso? Colonel Grossman says the answer is in the violent video games kids play.

The sheer number of guns and gun owners in America makes gun control far more unrealistic than Prohibition. At least 80 million Americans own 250 million guns, and most of them obviously handle their guns responsibly or we would have lots more accidents.

The marching moms say they want handguns registered and handgun owners licensed similarly to what is required for automobiles. But registering cars doesn't make kids any safer, and many other methods are obviously better at improving safety, such as safety instruction itself.

Using automobiles as an analogy boxes the marching moms into a corner, anyway, because it invites us to demand gun safety courses in schools like drivers ed. Schools were a lot safer prior to the 1970s, when many public schools had shooting clubs and high school students carried their unloaded guns to school and competed in shooting contests.

It's time for Americans to separate truth from propaganda in news coverage about guns. Under the principle that "if it bleeds it leads," television redundantly reports on guns used to kill, but censors out the

four times as many incidents of successful defensive use of guns to disarm criminals and protect law-abiding citizens from becoming victims.

Research shows that crime is reduced by putting guns in the hands of law-abiding citizens. Even those who do not own a gun are safer because the criminal fears that his next victim might have the power to defend himself.