

# [The roots and motivations of violence in america in bowling for columbine](https://assignbuster.com/the-roots-and-motivations-of-violence-in-america-in-bowling-for-columbine-persuasive-essay-samples/)

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When Michael Moore’s BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE was initially released, many thought that the documentary was intended to present a traditional argument towardsgun control. This trite expectation was later proven to be inaccurate. Rather than dryly repeat old talking points, Moore devised a documentary that provided insight into the roots ofviolenceand, more specifically, the roots and motivations of violence in America in comparison to the rest of the world. One aspect that Moore points to is the fact the America has a unique gunculturethat derives from the frontier days when guns were absolutely vital for safety.

From this, a familiarity of guns was created that, for lack of a better word, made people feel “ comfortable” around guns. Later, this mythos of the frontier days would be transferred into popular culture in a variety of genres: the western, the gangster film, the police drama, etc. These films were melodramatically real and drew large audience. Later, the news media would attempt to replicate the success of the films by drawing audience attention to a broadcast by reporting on violence.

An ancillary effect of this, according to Moore, was that is had the psychological effect of instilling a foreboding atmosphere if fear in people’s subconscious. From this fear, there derives a paranoia that fuels both acts of violence and violent defensive measures. Moore also attempts to present an image that those suffering frompovertybecome victims of violence due to the susceptibility their plight leaves them. Moore underscores the need to realize the effect this violence is having on the community while seeking corrective social actions in poverty ridden areas in order to reduce instances of

violence. What makes this imagery effective is the fact that it involves the audience into the documentary by giving the audience the feeling that “ you” are the subject of the documentary. From this, the audience is to question its own individual role in contributing to violence in society. Concerning the individual’s role in society and the relationship to violence, there must be a clear understanding that the presentation of violence in the media is substantially more than the actual incidents of violence in society.

In a famous film review, Roger Ebert said of the film DEATH WISH (1974) something to the effect of ‘ yes, it is a very good film, but one needs to realize that if New York City was really as dangerous as portrayed in the film, it would have been placed undermartial lawa long time ago. ’ In other words, the representation of the crime in New York was overstated for dramatic purposes. The vast majority of Americans are not violent people. The number of aggravated felons in our prisons is minute when compared to the total population of the nation.

However, such representations of violence – particularly racial violence – start to become a perceived reality if such images are constantly repeated. When it comes to the subject of racial identity and the culture of violence, it has been said that when there are differences among people, it becomes easier to commit acts of violence. In the notorious “ Rape of Nan King” the Japanese army committed a series of unimaginable atrocities in their attempts to establish Japanese superiority over their conquered foes, the Chinese.

In a twisted way, people will dehumanize the enemy based upon racial identity as an excuse to attack with extreme malice. Even during the AmericanCivil War, rape was commonplace because as the war progressed, the enemy was no longer seen as ahuman being, but rather an object. While American society is not currently involved in a domestic civil war, it is a nation that has a long history of racial turmoil. Despite the incredible strides that have been made to make things right, there are still a number of negative feelings that exist among the races and ethnic groups.

As presented in BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE, it is clear that the media enjoys playing to these racial fears. In a world of multiple cable 24 hour cable news channels there is a great deal of competition for ratings. As a result, the news will often rely on salacious material in order to draw ratings. Since the facts surrounding a violent crime often draw curious onlookers, reports of crime will be over-reported. In realizing that there are underlying racial tensions in the nation, the media will play to the stereotype of (in Moore’s words) “ white America’s fear of the black man.

” While this fear mongering might draw ratings, it creates a damaging image of racial division and tension and such an atmosphere becomes a breeding ground for potential violence. Such a negativeenvironmentwill continue unless people take an active role in changing the environment. This is, of course, easier said than done. In the film, Moore makes a statement to the effect that the most patriotic thing an individual has the capability to perform is to attempt to make America a better place for all those who live in it.

This involves asking questions, and applying the freedom to think, and, if necessary, to dissent. That is the most American thing a person can do. On a baseline level, this is a very common sense statement. However, without action, it is also merely a statement. That is to say, if one makes a statement and does not follow up with any actual action, then it is worthless rhetoric. It is nice to listen to and it may make sense, but it becomes little more than empty words that sounds nice and makes the person saying it (or listening to it) feel good.

While it would seem common sense that merely making “ feel good” is without merit, far too many people will not take their notions of improvement beyond the mere statement level. If a person wants to improve the quality of life in the United States and feels that a particular issue can improve the collective good, then one must take deliberate action to make progress on the issue. Using Michael Moore as an example, he felt that there was a problem withgun violencein the United States and made a film on the subject so as to raise awareness on the issue.

Now, the average person on the street does not have the means to make a film, but there are a number of ‘ smaller’ activities that an individual could become active with so as to improve the collective good. This could be something as simple as writing a letter to an elected official or joining a civic organization or it could be something a little more elaborate such as maintaining a daily news blog informing the public of critical issues. There is one caveat, however, to this plan: the idea or notion that is conceived for the betterment of the American way of life must be based is reality has to have the potential to actually occur.

If one is pushing for stricter gun laws that is a possibility, albeit an uphill battle. If one feels that a radical overhaul of the American government or, more ridiculously, an over-throw of the American government is the goal sought, then one is taking part is a ridiculous waste of time. While the notion of overthrowing the government may seem absurd, it has been undertaken at various points in history by radical and reactionary groups on the extreme left and the extreme right.

If one decides to use the statement “ The most patriotic [action to take]…[create] a better place for everyone who lives in…America is [to ask questions and dissent when the need to question government arises]” as the basis for starting a nonsensical anarchist group or a group based on racial violence and separation, then one is merely using the rhetoric of the words as the basis of moralizing negative behavior. In other words, one is taking part in extremely destructive behavior on the basis of improving the collective good.

That is simply not the strategy for success nor will it improve anything. When the time needed for a positive pursuit is wasted on a futile effort or, worse, a dangerous venture, resources that could have been used for the good of society are channeled into avenues of no use. This does not benefit anyone involved and needs to be avoided. Instead, there needs to be a serious discussion and contemplation on where resources and energy should be channeled so as to actually achieve thegoalsone has set out to achieve.

Moore’s film BOWLING FOR COLUMBINE is far more than a documentary presenting a trite argument about the need for gun control. Instead, it is a unique and thought-provoking examination into violence and its societal causes and effects. As such, the film is a stirring documentary that remains a classic of its medium. As such, the film is destined to be one viewed many times over the next several decades. Perhaps it will play a role in the future of gun control as the westerns of old did in the part.