



Taking aim: NRA protesters are targeting reckless legislation, not gun owners

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In Atlanta last weekend at the Georgia World Congress Center, people were pointing assault rifles directly at you everywhere you looked.

Posters of National Rifle Association CEO Wayne LaPierre declared this to be “Freedom’s safest place.” Actor Tom Selleck touted guns rather than the reverse mortgages he normally plugs. The 17th annual convention of the National Rifle Association was living up to its promise of “15 Acres of Guns and Gear,” and the approximately 80,000 attendees were happily surrounded by firearms and their accouterments.



Activists from Moms Demand Action, an organization that pushes for tougher gun laws.

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There was a room set up for target practice and a man passing out safety glasses. There were display cases filled with trauma kits and entry/exit wound packs. A mannequin sported a bra holster. The convention center

was packed with young and old, men and women, mothers and daughters, fathers and sons and people of every race, creed and color. They wore T-shirts shouting “Ban Idiots,” “Terrorists Suck,” “Trump-Pence.” One man in a wolfskin, complete with tail, bit into a huge turkey drumstick with sharp feral teeth.

Outside, the message was different. A truck idling at the curb displayed a mobile billboard, sponsored by resistance group Betsy Riot, with this message:

“You’re not a good guy with a gun. You’re a frightened boy with a gun fetish.”



HEY, BIG GUY: A mobile billboard aimed to taunt convention-goers.
BOB RANDALL

East of the convention, 400 people gathered on Saturday at Woodruff Park, a green oasis donated by a former Coca-Cola executive. The day before, several hundred people from the Georgia Alliance for Social Justice had

staged a die-in in the springy grass for a “die-in” to call attention to gun violence.

The messages on Saturday were similar, mostly sent via handmade signs: “Guns make killing easy.” “Make America Think Again.” “No Campus Carry.” Protesters wore red t-shirts bearing the name of one of the largest organizations fighting gun violence in America — EVERYTOWN FOR GUN SAFETY, founded by former New York mayor Michael Bloomberg — and the name of the grassroots organization founded by Shannon Watts after the shooting deaths of 20 children and 12 adults in Newtown, Connecticut: MOMS DEMAND ACTION FOR GUN SENSE IN AMERICA.



SIMPLE TRUTHS: Handmade signs sent blunt messages.

“We’re seeing more coalitions for reducing gun violence pop up,” she said. “There have always been gun violence prevention agents within smaller regions in the urban communities. And they are definitely understaffed and underfunded. But now we’re starting to tie in the larger national organizations to the smaller ones. We’re building coalitions, we’re building momentum. And that’s where it starts. We’re the Davids, they’re [the NRA] the Goliaths. We’re just systematically chopping down all the bills, all the legislation.”

The aim, McBath continued, is to help the general public have a clear understanding that these “Davids” aren’t going after gun owners who adhere to gun laws. Their target is reckless legislation at the state level.

“There’s a lot of fear-mongering, a lot of untruths in the gun lobbying,” she said. “What we’re doing is spending as much time as possible letting people know what our policies really are. Specifically within their own states. Gun lobbyists go to the state legislators and say, ‘We’re going to

keep you in your seats, but you have to fund this legislation.’ So then the state legislators are beholden to the gun lobby. We’re bringing this truth to the light. We’re exposing the NRA leadership. Not the law-abiding gun owners. Because they agree with us about this dangerous extremist gun culture.”

It isn’t the first time advocates for gun control have tried to make their voices heard at such an event, and it won’t be the last.

“Every year, we go to the city where the convention is,” McBath said. “We don’t picket, but we hold rallies. We build, we organize, we bring people together like we did today. We educate them, we empower them to stand up, and that’s how the change happens.”

A lot of change is happening all right. Climate change, health care change, immigration policy change. Yet, as the NRA protest rally proves, none of it will go unchallenged.

Jeanna Trugman, a Moms Demand Action organizer, said the fight against a powerful industry that values its profits over safety is part of a greater struggle.

“We have to do better as people.”