

# March for Eight Billion Lives. “US Wars and Domestic Gun Violence are Intertwined.” Interview with Riva Enteen

By [Ann Garrison](#)

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*Organizers of the upcoming Women’s March on the Pentagon are calling on the Democratic Party-sponsored Women’s March and March for Our Lives to expand their message to include the eight billion lives on the planet, all of which are imperiled by US weapons and wars. I spoke to Riva Enteen, a former National Lawyers Guild Program Director and a member of the steering committee for the October Women’s March on the Pentagon.*

**Ann Garrison:** Riva, how would you like to see the March for Our Lives message expanded?

**Riva Enteen:** We must expand the message in two ways. First, we must acknowledge that US wars and domestic gun violence are intertwined. Our military budget is obscene, and the majority of Democrats voted with Republicans to give both Trump and the Pentagon more money than they asked for this year. Three Republican Senators joined the five Democratic Senators who voted against the \$700 billion 2018 military budget. This has normalized carrying and using guns, which now include military-grade weapons on our streets.

Secondly, we have to be concerned with all lives, from Florida’s Stoneman Douglas High School to Yemen. The US military is by far the largest arms dealer in the world, and it’s common knowledge that much of its weaponry ends up with those that our government calls “terrorists” and claims to be fighting. The US calls the terrorists it arms “rebels,” as in Syria, or “friends and allies,” as in Israel and Saudi Arabia. Gun control should begin at the Pentagon.

The endless “War on Terror” emerged after 9-11, which became the excuse for war as a constant, not an aberration. Until we rein in the US’s determination to exert hegemony over the whole world, we will continue to see blood spilled here while, at the same time, our missiles rain down on innocents in the name of specious “humanitarian intervention” and stopping terrorism. There is an irony to the US invoking the term “humanitarian intervention,” as it publicly abandons and scorns international law, bombing civilians and even hospitals.

**AG:** I counted ninety geographically distinct manifestations of the Democratic Party promoting their participation in the March for Our Lives, and all the march and voter registration logos and banners were blue. Your thoughts on that?

**RE:** The Democratic Party contained the message and excluded the call for peace, just as they did with the two Women’s Marches. It is counter-intuitive that a women’s march and a students’ march wouldn’t talk about peace, with the US at war in at least seven countries

and no end in sight. But the Democrats, who promoted the Women's Marches and the March for Our Lives, are a pro-war party. Peace is not on their agenda. War is a bi-partisan policy because, according to Wall Street, war is good for business, and that's who controls our government.

At the beginning of his second term, after the December 14, 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, Obama said that he would address gun control and sounded convincing. A year earlier, in 2011 he had bragged, "In fact, my administration has not curtailed the rights of gun owners—it has expanded them, including allowing people to carry their guns in national parks and wildlife refuges."

Attempts to limit the size of gun magazines, expand background checks of gun buyers, and ban gun sales to buyers on terrorism watch lists all failed to pass under Obama, when he had a Democratic House and Senate, from January 2009 to January 2013, and when he had a Democratic Senate, from January 2013 to January 2017.

Stand-your-ground laws, which George Zimmerman successfully used in his defense for killing unarmed Trayvon Martin, have expanded to more states, even though Obama lamented that if he had a son, he'd look like Trayvon.

**AG:** The March for Our Lives and the Women's Marches have enormous corporate and celebrity support as well as the Democratic Party's. They're able to hire all kinds of staff to work full time on networking and turning out their huge crowds. Can you imagine getting any of that kind of support for the October Women's March on the Pentagon?

**RE:** Of course we imagine getting support from all peace-loving people. Unfortunately, most corporations benefit from war so they would not support the cause of peace. We do believe there are celebrities who will step up to the plate and do the right thing, because the stakes are so high. This march commemorates the 1967 March on the Pentagon, which included celebrities such as Norman Mailer getting arrested.

**AG:** The Pentagon now admittedly has more money than it can figure out how to spend, so its surplus weapons go to militarize the police who are most aggressive in Black and Brown neighborhoods. Anything you'd like to say about that?

**RE:** Military grade weapons have no place in domestic neighborhoods, not in the hands of police officers, veterans with PTSD, or civilians. People from other countries are shocked at what we allow on our streets. The normalization of killing includes domestic massacres perpetrated with these military-grade weapons.

As to police killings in Black and Brown neighborhoods, it remains open season, just as it did under Obama, even when Black Lives Matter was at its strongest. I guess we can hope a precedent was set by [South Carolina cop Michael Slager's second degree murder conviction](#) for shooting Walter Scott— an unarmed Black man—in the back.

**AG:** Some March for Our Lives supporters are likely to get defensive and ask whether you're refusing to support their cause. What would you say to them?

**RE:** Of course we support the cause of protecting lives, but there is an exceptionalism to believing it only applies to American lives and especially white lives. In a promotional video that Democracy Now played repeatedly during their broadcast of the Washington, DC March

for Our Lives, former US soldiers said that they'd learned how to put assault rifles to good purpose in US wars, but didn't want them aimed at US citizens.

Isn't it time to stop aiming those guns—and our missiles, fighter jets, and drones—at the rest of the world? My mother was a member of Women Strike for Peace, founded in 1961 with the slogan "Stop the Arms Race, Not the Human Race," and that has never been more true.

Women, the givers of life, are confronting the Pentagon in Washington, DC, October 20-21. We hope that all peace-loving people will consider this a chance to make a stand for peace. There will be local antiwar actions springing up, as they did during Occupy, so keep your ear to the ground, and watch for updates on [our website](#) and our [Facebook page](#).

**Riva Enteen** is a former Program Director of the [US] National Lawyer's Guild, and a current member of the steering committee for the Women's March on the Pentagon, who lives in South Lake Tahoe. She was also chair of the first KPFA Local Station Board. She can be reached at [rivaenteen@gmail.com](mailto:rivaenteen@gmail.com).

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