

The Origins of Firearms Used in School Shootings in the United States

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This document lists the sources of the firearms used by school shooters for the twenty-five year period from 1991 through 2015. The perpetrators are divided into secondary school, college, and aberrant adult shooters. (For explanations of these terms please see “About the Site” at www.schoolshooters.info or my book *School Shooters: Understanding High School, College, and Adult Perpetrators*.) The shooters listed here include those who carried out either single-victim or multi-victim attacks. This is not a complete list; for some shooters I could not identify the source of their firearms.

The category of “Home” means that unless otherwise specified, the guns belonged to the shooter’s parents. Footnotes are used to provide more specific information where necessary. After the lists, there are quotes from three reports regarding the legal issues related to the guns used by the shooters whose names are marked by an asterisk (Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, Seung Hui Cho, and John Zawahri). These reports are available at www.schoolshooters.info.

The non-juvenile perpetrators fall into several categories. One consists of people such as Robert Flores and Duane Morrison who were long-term firearm owners. They were both middle-aged men who had served in the military when younger. Guns had been a part of their lives for a long time. They didn’t buy guns to kill people, but when their lives fell apart, they used the weapons at hand. Even though I can’t track down the sources of their guns, I included them in the list as examples of one type of firearm owner. Another category consists of people who deliberately obtained guns for the purpose of committing a school shooting. This includes Gang Lu, Wayne Lo, and Seung Hui Cho. Other shooters were adults who lived with a parent who was a gun owner. Examples of this category include Adam Lanza and Aaron Ybarra, who did not purchase guns of their own, but used firearms that their parents had bought.

Generally speaking, secondary school shooters were not old enough to legally purchase their own firearms. Exceptions include Eric Houston (age 20) and Karl Pierson (age 18). Also, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold bought some guns through a straw purchase that was legal under Colorado law at that time (see Appendix for explanation). It is noteworthy that the juvenile shooters almost never obtained their weapons “on the street.” In the vast majority of cases, young shooters took guns that belonged to their parents and other relatives. Out of all the cases in which the perpetrators took family members’ firearms, it appears that all of these guns were owned legally except those used by Evan Ramsey and Jaylen Fryberg (see notes for details). The guns owned by family members were not purchased with the intent of committing mass violence, but were accessible to adolescent (and even pre-adolescent) perpetrators. This highlights the importance of firearm security within the home.

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Name, Age	Home	Relative	Peer	Neighbor	Store	Mail/Web	Gun Show	Other
SECONDARY SCHOOL SHOOTERS								
Eric Houston, 20					X			
Scott Pennington, 17	X							
Toby Sincino, 16								X ¹
Jamie Rouse, 17	X ²							
Barry Loukaitis, 14	X							
Evan Ramsey, 16	X ³							
Luke Woodham, 16	X ⁴							
Michael Carneal, 14					X ⁵			
Drew Golden, 11 Mitchell Johnson, 13	X	X ⁶						
Andrew Wurst, 14	X							
Kip Kinkel, 15	X							
Eric Harris, 18 Dylan Klebold, 17*			X				X	
T.J. Solomon, 15	X							
Seth Trickey, 13	X							
Nathaniel Brazill, 13		X ⁷						
Andy Williams, 15	X							
Elizabeth Bush, 14	X							
Jason Hoffman, 18	X							
James Sheets, 14	X							
John McLaughlin, 15	X							
Jeffrey Weise, 16	X	X ⁸						
Kenneth Bartley, 14	X							
Alvaro Castillo, 18	X							
Eric Hainstock, 15	X							

1 Stolen during a car break-in.

2 Rouse received the gun as a birthday gift from his father; the gun was registered in his father's name.

3 Ramsey lived with the school superintendent as a foster child; the gun belonged to the superintendent's adopted son. The son was a sex offender who reportedly could not legally own a gun.

4 The gun belonged to his brother.

5 Carneal took guns from the garage of a neighbor; the guns belonged to the father of a friend.

6 Most of the guns came from Golden's grandfather's house.

7 Technically, the gun did not belong to a relative, but to the father of Brazill's godmother.

8 Weise used one gun from home to kill his grandfather, and then took his grandfather's guns.

Name, Age	Home	Relative	Peer	Neighbor	Store	Mail/Web	Gun Show	Other
Doug Chanthabouly, 18	X ⁹							
Robert Butler, Jr., 17	X							
T.J. Lane, 17		X ¹⁰						
Bryan Oliver, 16	X ¹¹							
Jose Reyes, 12	X							
Karl Pierson, 18					X			
Mason Campbell, 12	X							
Jared Padgett, 15	X ¹²							
Jaylen Fryberg, 15	X ¹³							

COLLEGE SHOOTERS

Gang Lu, 28					X			
Wayne Lo, 18					X	X ¹⁴		
Robert Flores, 41								X ¹⁵
Biswanath Halder, 62					X			
Seung Hui Cho, 23*					X	X		
Steven Kazmierczak, 27					X	X		
Amy Bishop, 44			X ¹⁶					
Chris Harper-Mercer, 26	X ¹⁷							

ABERRANT ADULT SHOOTERS

Jillian Robbins, 19	X ¹⁸							
Duane Morrison, 53								X ¹⁹
Charles Roberts IV, 32					X			
Jiverly Wong, 41					X			

9 The gun belonged to his brother.

10 The gun belonged to Lane's uncle.

11 The gun belonged to his brother.

12 The gun belonged to his brother.

13 The gun was stored in his father's truck. His father was not allowed to own guns due to a PFA from 2002.

14 Lo bought his gun at a store but obtained ammunition and other supplies by mail order.

15 Flores was a long-time gun owner. He reportedly had a concealed carry permit. I have not been able to track down the origins of his firearms.

16 The gun was reportedly bought in 1989 in New Hampshire by a friend of her husband.

17 Legal purchases by his mother and/or himself.

18 The gun was a gift from her father.

19 Morrison was a long-time gun owner. I have not been able to track down the origins of his firearms.

Name, Age	Home	Relative	Peer	Neighbor	Store	Mail/Web	Gun Show	Other
Bruco Eastwood, 32	X ²⁰							
Brendan O'Rourke, 41					X			
One Goh, 43					X ²¹			
Adam Lanza, 20	X ²²							
John Zawahri, 23*						X ²³		
Elliot Rodger, 22					X			
Aaron Ybarra, 26	X ²⁴							

APPENDIX: LEGAL ISSUES INVOLVED IN SPECIFIC CASES

► Eric Harris / Dylan Klebold

“Robyn Anderson, who attended the school prom with Klebold days before the massacre, bought two shotguns and the carbine at a Denver gun show in November 1998, using funds supplied by the two [Harris and Klebold]. Colorado law allows adults to transfer long guns to juveniles. Investigators concluded that there was no evidence that Anderson knew of the killers’ plans for using the weapons, so that she was not charged with any crimes related to the gun purchases. Anderson told investigators that she went with Klebold and Harris to the gun show and bought the firearms from three private sellers who were not licensed federal firearms dealers. Federal law prohibits a person from buying firearms for someone who is otherwise ineligible, but applies only to licensed gun dealers. Anderson said one of the sellers asked Klebold and Harris ‘if they brought someone 18 years old this time’ when they approached his table.”

“Klebold and Harris enlisted a co-worker, Philip Duran, to acquire the 9 mm handgun for them. Duran introduced them to a friend of his, Mark Manes, who sold the pair a TEC DC-9 assault pistol for \$500. The TEC-9, manufactured by IntraTec Firearms of Miami, was made illegal by the Brady Act, a 1994 federal gun control law . . . Although Manes and Duran cooperated with authorities, both were charged with illegally providing a handgun to a minor and possessing an illegal or dangerous weapon, related to the firing of the illegal weapons. Both pleaded guilty to the charges; Manes was sentenced to six years in prison, and Duran received a four-and-a-half year term. They are the only two people charged with any crimes related to the Columbine High School massacre.”

*from “The Report of Governor Bill Owens’ Columbine Review Commission,”
p. 23, footnotes 58 and 59*

20 The gun belonged to his father.

21 Reportedly bought legally; I have not seen if he did this at a store or online.

22 Guns were owned by his mother.

23 Zawahri reportedly had applied for a firearm permit in 2011 and been denied. He purchased various parts from around the country and assembled a gun that was illegal in California. See Appendix for explanation.

24 Though Ybarra and his brother were competitive shooters, the guns reportedly were bought by his mother.

► Seung Hui Cho

The official report on the shooting at Virginia Tech examines the issue of Cho's firearms and ammunition purchases in detail (see pages 71–75). Here are few brief excerpts:

“Cho was not legally authorized to purchase his firearms, but was easily able to do so. Gun purchasers in Virginia must qualify to buy a firearm under both federal and state law. Federal law disqualified Cho from purchasing or possessing a firearm . . . The legal status of Cho's gun purchase under Virginia law is less clear . . . On February 9 and March 13, 2007, Cho, a person disqualified under federal law from purchasing a firearm, walked into two licensed firearms dealers. He filled out the required forms. The dealers entered his information into the background check system. Both checks told the dealers to proceed with the transaction. Minutes after both checks, Cho left the stores in possession of semi-automatic pistols . . . It is not clear whether Cho knew that he was prohibited from purchasing firearms . . . In any event, the fact remains that Cho, a person disqualified from purchasing firearms, was readily able to obtain them.”

from “Mass Shootings at Virginia Tech: Report of the Review Panel,” pp. 71–73

► John Zawahri

“The lower receiver [part of a gun] was manufactured from what is commonly called an ‘80% lower’ – a partially machined AR lower receiver casting or forging that requires additional machining before meeting the definition of a ‘firearm.’ Because it is not a ‘firearm’, the sale of an 80% lower is not subject to the same controls as that of a firearm, such as background checks and record keeping by the Federal Firearms Licensees. The lower receiver of Zawahri's firearm could have been finished using a manually operated milling machine but was probably finished using a simple drill press. All of the parts used to assemble the rifle can be purchased over the internet. The ease in which 80% lower can be acquired and manufactured into a complete firearm, as well as the anonymity in manufacturing and possessing such a weapon, makes it an option for people prohibited from purchasing a firearm through legal channels.”

from “John Zawahri: District Attorney's Narrative,” p. 8, footnote 14