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## Behind the Bullet

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## Behind the Bullet

### **Abstract**

This is a film review of *Behind the Bullet* (2019), directed by Heidi Yewman.

### **Author Notes**

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**Behind the Bullet (2019), dir. Heidi Yewman**

Behind the Bullet is a documentary feature film that is a collection of four stories about people who have pulled the trigger and the aftermath of that action. Christen is a young woman who pulls the trigger in an attempt to complete suicide. Will is from the streets. He shoots at three young men from the neighborhood, killing one of them. Kevin shoots an intruder and spends 40 minutes watching him die. Taylor was 8 years old when he pulled the trigger that killed his brother.

At the end of the film there are some statistics about gun violence, so the message of the film is clear: “be careful with guns.” But this is a mild message. There is no call for gun control, nor any talk of background checks on gun owners. There is no condemnation of our “gun culture,” nor an analysis of the second amendment. It may be that the message of the film is that we should “be careful with guns,” but we cannot do anything about the situation beyond that.

Religion, however, does seem to play a role in how we understand the people behind the bullet. In the case of Will, turning to God and God's work offers him an opportunity for redemption. Will can forgive himself if he does God's work. Taylor's family turns to God to make everything okay. God will heal this wound. At the end of the film, however, the wound seems to still be open. And, one of Taylor's friends actually claims that Taylor's shooting of his brother was God's will, part of God's plan. There is no explanation, of course, of why God might want Taylor to shoot his brother, nor any explanation of God's plan.

In Kevin's case, there are no references to God, but it is clear that Kevin continues to experience serious guilt. For Kevin, the guilt seems less about shooting the intruder than it does about not doing something to save the intruder out of fear. Finally, God is a part of Christen's shooting, but only because she asks God to forgive her for shooting herself. Since God's role in each of the shootings is different, it is hard to see a religious theme in the film.

It would have been interesting is to know what God would say about a culture of guns, the machismo and ego and bravado that make gun ownership so illogically important. All of us can own guns, but should we? What kinds of guns, legal guns, would God encourage us to own or forgo? In a Judeo-Christian culture, is the right to own guns more important than the safety of others? Indeed, whatever one's religion, is gun ownership more important than the safety of others?