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The YouTube shooter fits the most important narrative of all

By Molly Roberts April 5

Few would have guessed the next shooting to make national news would be carried out by a female animal-rights activist [enraged](#) at YouTube for demonetizing her fitness videos. And because YouTube shooter Nasim Najafi Aghdam doesn't fit into the familiar narratives of the gun epidemic, those on the right have taken to Twitter to create [narratives](#) of their own.

This was another instance of Islamist terrorism, some announced, and Aghdam was [Muslim](#). (She was [not](#).) Or she was an ["illegal immigrant"](#). (That's also wrong.) Or, better yet, an artificially intelligent [robot](#). (Wait, what?) One contingent even [postulated](#) that the name "Nasim" is traditionally male, so Aghdam must have been a transgender woman — after all, another [added](#), cis "women would never do such a thing."

And for pro-gun commentators less prone to conspiracy theorizing, Aghdam was the exception that disproves the rule. No longer, conservatives crowed, could liberals argue that angry white males armed with semiautomatic rifles were the greatest threat to American civilians.

There's a problem with this argument, apart from the vulgarity of [smirking](#) when a shooting proves agenda-convenient. The fact that Aghdam doesn't match the common profile of a shooter who captures this much media attention underscores the one thing that does unite every instance of gun violence: guns.

One reason Aghdam doesn't match the common profile of a mass shooter may be that she's not one. Instead, she's part of a side story to the saga of large-scale [slaughters](#) like the Parkland, Fla., massacre: "active shooter" incidents, as law enforcement [labels](#) them, that don't necessarily end in a slew of deaths. Aghdam injured three; no one except Aghdam has died. Apart from her gender, it turns out, the circumstances of her assault don't diverge much from the [norm](#).

Aghdam stirred such a frenzy in part because she chose to attack one of the highest-profile workplaces in the country. But the FBI [counts](#) 220 "active shooter" events between 2000 and 2016; stories similar to this one simply don't often inspire such feverish coverage or conspiracizing. And even those less-noticed tales garner more attention than the firearm homicides that have [soared](#) in recent years, as firearms in circulation have [soared](#), too.

So, no, Aghdam doesn't fit the narrative of the white male gun nut simmering with repressed rage who lets it all out with an AR-15 (though perhaps she would have killed more people had California's stringent gun laws not made it so difficult to

