



Americans Against Gun Violence
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2018 National High School Essay Contest \$1,000 Winner

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12 years old. I was only 12 as I sat in Math class on October 8, 2012. It was only about 9 am, my teacher was teaching.. but then we hear a gun go off. I remember that day clearly, I remember the sounds, the screams, my teacher screaming and calling someone on the intercom. However, then I look down, I look down to my feet and I see a bullet next to my pink vans. I don't recall much of what happened after that; however I do remember that officers came and took us out of our classroom one by one and sent us for questioning and into another classroom; I remember crying in my friend's arms, telling her how much I loved her and how I was glad we weren't hurt. After that day, I struggled with PTSD. I struggle with being afraid and triggered of certain sounds.

I tried to erase what happened to me, but then Sandy Hook occurred 27 CHILDREN- dead. Pulse, a gay nightclub- 49 dead. Sutherland Springs, Texas- 25 and an unborn child- dead. A concert in Las Vegas- 58 dead. And many more. The list goes on and on; however, I only remember so many. But what I can tell you is that, since Sandy Hook, there have been at least 1,607 mass shootings, with at least 1,846 people killed and 6,459 wounded. When will it stop?

At age 17, I have lived through 188 SCHOOL SHOOTINGS; this isn't even mentioning mass shootings- just school shootings. We need to end this, break the constant cycle of mass shootings leading to thoughts and prayers, to Facebook and Twitter debates, then to everyone forgetting and Congress doing nothing, leading to crickets chirping and back to another mass shooting.

If the GOP, NRA and everyone else who doesn't want to do anything anytime soon because it's too early to talk about guns and gun violence- who thinks that we'll let this cycle continue... they are **WRONG**. Midterm elections are coming up, and we are going to grab them by the midterms.

Logging onto Twitter on February 14, 2018 and seeing STUDENTS, students my age saying their goodbyes, saying that the gunshots wouldn't stop because Nikolas Cruz was in their building murdering their own teachers and classmates was the most heartbreaking thing I've ever had to witness. From that day, I began to brainstorm and think: how can I change this? So I met up with my friends at school after the walkout and we brainstormed ideas. In a span of a week, we created posters, flyers, met with survivors from the first mass shooting, planned so much because we are sick and tired of this. It can't continue to happen and there will be change because change starts with us.