2018 National High School Essay Contest $250 Winner

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Why Do I Have to March for My Life?

"The time has now come that we must adopt stringent gun control legislation comparable to the legislation in force in virtually every civilized country in the world." *The Late Senator Thomas Dodd, June 11, 1968*

Senator Thomas Dodd's comment weighs heavily on the minds of many in this country as it pushes for common sense gun reform now in 2018. Fifty years later and this quote is still painstakingly relevant - especially to the new wave of student activists that were put into motion after the Parkland, Florida shooting on February 14, 2018.

Since that day, I have been part of the *Never Again* movement, joining up with other teen organizers in mid-March to help them organize the Phoenix *March for Our Lives*, which saw 25,000+ people marching alongside one another. This isn't an unpopular idea. Many in America want common sense reform, and many would love to implement solutions that other countries have adopted, such as safe storage of guns, and extensive training of those who wish to own a firearm.

Now, after our march, we are continuing to push for legislation to protect us at school and in public spaces. We have spent hundreds and hundreds of hours planning, organizing, phone-banking, emailing, *etcetra* to mobilize action to keep our voices heard.

It is sad that a bunch of high schoolers have to do this - having to demand to feel safe in our own communities. We shouldn't have to be up all night stressing out about our events - getting hate mail and having to tell the other organizers about it while hoping they never get the same treatment. Our legislators should have protected us long ago with actual gun control measures - protected us before we had to learn how to act dead so we aren't the next victim in a mass shooting.