



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

(Name withheld at student's request)

"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

On March 24th, 2018, during *The March For Our Lives* protest, I was chosen to speak in front of an audience of 6,000 people on the steps of the State Capitol in Sacramento, and it changed the course of my life forever. My social activism has always been inside of me, quiet, but, fueled by the need for representation and what is right and what is wrong. However, something tapped deeper into the root of that activism and made me want to be a leader for change, the mass school shootings.

As I grew up, I always thought I would contribute to helping animals by becoming a wildlife veterinarian, a dream that I still hold to this day, but I have come to see that if we do not change society in one way there will be no one left to help. For this, I have completely changed my course of study. After organizing a group of 20 students to attend the march, I felt that fire of activism burst through....This is an era in which the United States is...a country so prosperous that it ignores the need to reduce the number of death by guns per year.

The late Senator Thomas Dodd of Connecticut stated the need for the United States to adopt stricter gun laws in 1968, but not just any laws - "legislation comparable to the legislation in force in virtually every civilized country in the world" – a statement that is still very relevant today. Since 1968, no formidable action has been taken by the U.S. Government to relieve the danger in everyday society. In fact, administrations have further contributed to the deaths of mass shootings by allowing the concealment of guns in certain states.

As a people, we must, for our sake, look deeper into Senator Dodd's words and see that the United States has done very little around this topic for 50

years....This quote remains an inspiration that the fight for stricter gun laws will not go out....I feel very strongly about this movement. This is why I organized my school's walkout on April 20th. Receiving a detention was a badge of honor for me for expressing my rights and beliefs about gun reform. This...is what we need. The youth will lead and push for stricter gun laws. We will sacrifice and bring about change...