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2018 National High School Essay Contest \$1,000 Winner

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Fifty Years

After 50 years, his words still echo.

On June 11th, 1968, Senator Thomas Dodd proclaimed, "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." Fifty years later, the same words are declared but by a different generation. His voice echoes in our hearts and minds as Americans continue to look towards our government and towards each other for the same essential protection that Senator Dodd asserted the urgency of 50 years ago.

In 50 years, too many have fallen.

Since 1999, more than 187,000 students -a number 187,000 students too large- have experienced a school shooting(1). The number of students who have gone to their school, expecting a safe, average day of education, but instead have their lives endangered by a machine that gives mankind the power to end another's life, is more than the entire population of Fort Lauderdale, Florida(2).

Why is it that when I check Twitter, expecting to see prom pictures of my friends laughing, I instead see news of my best friend's high school being closed due to a shooting threat? Why is it that on the very same day students plan to protest, I hear news of another high school shooting, one less than 50 miles away? Why is it that again and again our people are being killed, their blood on the hands of insufficient laws and backhanded sponsorships, as we continue to declare, "How many of us will it take for the men in suits in DC to listen?" Because when 50 more years have passed, and I have voted and begged these men to save my friends, my family, and fellow Americans, I refuse to worry whether my daughter's shoes squeaking across her classroom determine whether or not she lives.

In 50 years, their justifications are no longer justified.

I hear the same monotonous arguments by proponents of gun rights. "We need it for protection." How am I, a sixteen year old who has trouble opening pickle jars, supposed to use a gun against a planned attack, unless of course I am pre-trained, and in that case perhaps we ought to militarize the entire American population. "It's in our rights." it was also illegal to sell alcohol, and it was legal to own slaves. America has always been known for progress. "A knife or lamp can kill people, don't blame guns." A knife helps with cooking, a lamp provides light, but a gun has no other purpose but to kill. As Americans, we need not look any further than neighboring countries to see the potential success of what our legislation could become.

In the past 50 years, Americans have waited for change, but in the next 50 years, we will fight relentlessly, because 50 years ago in 1968, today in 2018, and in 50 years, 2068, it was, is, and always will be, the time for change.

References

(1)Rich, Steven, and John Woodrow Cox. "Scarred by School Shootings." The Washington Post, WP Company, 25 Mar. 2018, www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/local/us-school-shootings-history/?utm_term=.10969204670d.

(2)Rich, Steven, and John Woodrow Cox. "Scarred by School Shootings." The Washington Post, WP Company, 25 Mar. 2018, www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2018/local/us-school-shootings-history/?utm_term=.10969204670d.