



Americans Against Gun Violence
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**2019 National High School Essay Contest
Third Place Winner (\$2,000 Award)**

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In the spring of my freshman year of high school, teachers and students alike complained over the hassle of the installation of new doors in every room of the building. These bulletproof doors were a great expense, but the school board thought it necessary to install them due to the recent increase of gun violence in America, with schools of all places becoming an increasing target. These doors could help protect the students, but there should never have been a need to install them in the first place. Only in the United States of America do students fear for their lives every day because of senseless, preventable gun violence.

I adamantly agree with Justice Blackmun's statement that firearms must have "some reasonable relationship to the preservation or efficiency of a well regulated militia" to be protected by the Second Amendment. This reasoning is exactly consistent with the wording of the Second Amendment itself. Blind advocates of fewer gun restrictions might prefer that Americans forget that the Second Amendment's gun protections explicitly apply to only "A well regulated militia."

But more and more Americans are fighting this revisionist history because they know how essential it is to enact more legislation to stop gun violence. On March 14, 2018, along with my fellow high school peers, I walked out of school to raise awareness of the danger of not having strong, common-sense gun restrictions. We stood with tens of thousands of other students across the country who also know that enough is enough (1).

We have seen the tragedies that ensue when everyday Americans have access to weapons of war. Twenty years ago from this April 20th, twelve students and one teacher were murdered at Columbine High School by two students who used guns they purchased themselves (2). Twenty years

later, 20 elementary school children and 6 teachers have been killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School (3), 58 people have been killed and just less than 500 have been injured in Las Vegas in the deadliest mass shooting to date in the United States (3), 13 students and 4 teachers have been killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas high school in Parkland, Florida (3), and significant improvements to federal gun laws have not been made. In fact, the narrowly approved 2008 *District of Columbia v. Heller* Supreme Court decision effectively negated the "militia" clause of the Second Amendment altogether (4), ignoring the Second Amendment's original goal in order to propagate the destructive practice of reducing firearm regulations.

Justice Blackmun's majority opinion in the 1980 case of *Lewis v. United States* is grounded not only in legal precedent and historical accuracy, but also in present day reality. The United States of America must not continue to look away from the truth: the truth that guns are killing innocent people, the truth that gun violence in the United States is much more common than in other developed countries (5), and the truth that the Second Amendment was never intended guarantee a right of everyday citizens to own murder machines.

References

- (1) https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/education/wp/2018/03/14/students-have-just-had-enough-walkouts-planned-across-the-nation-one-month-after-floridashooting/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.f9ecea88cbc
- (2) <https://www.cnn.com/2013/09/18/us/columbine-high-school-shootings-fast-facts/index.html>
- (3) <https://www.cnn.com/2013/09/16/us/20-deadliest-mass-shootings-in-u-s-history-fastfacts/index.html>
- (4) <https://www.oyez.org/cases/2007/07-290>
- (5) <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2017/11/06/562323131/gun-violence-comparingthe-u-s-with-other-countries>