



Americans Against Gun Violence
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**2020 National High School Essay Contest
\$250 Winner**

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Changing the Narrative: Creating a New Normal Without Gun Violence

I was 7 years old when I learned about school shootings and ironically I was sitting in school when I did. I remember the look of anguish on my 2nd-grade teacher's face as she explained to her class of seven-year-olds about the Sandy Hook shooting merely 30 min from our school. Back then I didn't understand the concept of using a gun to hurt others, but now I do.

Since then I have learned to accept a new normal as I'm sure millions of students across America have as well. Schools have lockdowns once a month and students sit in fear wondering, is this a drill? The reality of shootings, injuries, and death are so prevalent that lockdowns and procedures for mass shootings are embedded in American society.

We need strict gun laws in the United States of America similar to the laws in other first-world countries. In Australia, after a deadly mass shooting in 1996, it took the Australian government just 12 days to agree to ban civilian ownership of all automatic and semi-automatic firearms.(1) The Australian government bought back and destroyed approximately one million guns, and there were no further mass shootings for the next 22 years.(2) Adopting strict firearm regulations similar to Australia would help reduce the number of gun-related deaths and injuries, including mass shootings, in the United States.

The United States experienced 229 mass shootings from the years 2009-2019 and we have had no new federal gun law initiative (3). It is enraging how politicians refuse to enact necessary gun laws. But that stops now. The youth of my generation are voicing their opinions, and the movement for gun control is growing. We will fight to change the norm and shape our futures in a world without gun violence. We will work for the adoption of stringent gun control laws in the United States comparable to laws in other advanced nations, including complete bans on handguns and assault weapons, which, as the American Academy of Pediatrics explained in its thoroughly researched position statement two decades ago, are the most effective way to reduce firearm-related injuries.

Firearm regulations aren't a political charade. They will make a change in saving lives and reducing gun injuries along with gun deaths and mass shootings. Some people think safety pamphlets and courses on safe gun storage can stop the gun violence epidemic in

the United States. However, the problem has always been the firearm. Furthermore, we will continue to see history repeat itself, we will see more school shootings and gun injuries if we proceed with bandaid solutions. We need concrete federal laws including assault weapons and handgun bans as the American Academy of Pediatrics suggests. These firearm regulations will help bring our country into the 21st century and change the narrative. The question is, will politicians stand with the people and fight for firearm restrictions, or will my life be the next at risk?

References

1. Rebecca Peters, "Rational Firearm Regulation: Evidence-Based Gun Laws in Australia," in *Reducing Gun Violence in America: Informing Policy with Evidence and Analysis* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 195–204.
2. Simon Chapman, Philip Alpers, and Michael Jones, "Association between Gun Law Reforms and Intentional Firearm Deaths in Australia, 1979-2013," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 316, no. 3 (July 19, 2016): 291–99.
3. <https://everytownresearch.org/massshootingsreports/mass-shootings-in-america-2009-2019/>
4. <https://everytownresearch.org/a-more-complete-picture-the-contours-of-gun-injury-in-the-united-states/>