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The Second Amendment: Twisted Into Terror

(Student's name and high school withheld at student's request)

In comments underneath online calls for gun control and bans on rifles, one can almost always find opposition that references the Second Amendment. This practice has become standard to an unbelievable degree--after any mass shooting, defense of the Second Amendment occurs like a reflex. While other countries like Great Britain, Australia, and Canada have successfully enacted stronger gun control laws in response to gun violence, the United States is held back from this progress because of the fraudulent misrepresentation of Second Amendment by the U.S. gun lobby. As a result, gun violence in America is no longer a horrific shock but instead a part of life, with one survivor of the Santa Fe High School shooting, Paige Curry, saying she was "not surprised", and actually "expected" the violence would happen eventually (1).

Yet, the reality is that the Second Amendment, touted so often by people opposed to gun control, never was meant to protect their viewpoints. While millions may claim the Founding Fathers wanted the American public's guns to be protected, this protection was never written into the Constitution, and instead was a result of what Chief Justice Warren Burger called "fraud on the American public", perpetuated by "special interest groups", perhaps none more so than the National Rifle Association.

The NRA focused on hunting and sportsmanship until 1977, when more right-wing groups swept the organization's leadership (2). Thus began the NRA's fierce lobbying of the GOP and the changing of the GOP's platform into one that endorsed the twisting of the Second Amendment's provisions. As time went on, more and more Americans had no idea that the Amendment was intended to prevent the need for a federal standing army. These events culminated in the landmark Heller case, in which a District of Columbia law that set requirements for safe storage of firearms and prohibited anyone who didn't already have a handgun from acquiring one was challenged by the gun lobby. In a 5-4 decision, the Supreme Court ruled that the D.C. partial handgun ban and safe storage laws were unconstitutional and that the Second Amendment conferred an individual

right to keep a gun in the home unrelated to service in a well regulated militia.(3). Unsurprisingly, all of the majority-voting justices were nominated by presidents with NRA membership (4). With that, D.C. v. Heller ushered in our current era in which the protection of human lives is not enough to have our government control guns.

If we want to remove the bloody thread of gun violence from the fabric of American life, we must realize the truth about the Second Amendment, and we must realize the actions necessary for change--the creation of strong gun control laws that deal with America's reality and reverse the harm the gun lobby's fraudulent misrepresentation of the Second Amendment has ultimately done.

I believe that my generation, the one that enters a classroom and immediately checks for exit points, will undertake these actions in honor of our peers who have fallen beside us and in pursuit of a world we are proud, not dismayed, to live in.

References

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2. Elving, Ron. "The NRA Wasn't Always against Gun Restrictions." NPR, NPR, 10 Oct. 2017, <https://www.npr.org/2017/10/10/556578593/the-nra-wasnt-always-against-gun-restrictions>.
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4. Waldman, Michael. "How the NRA Rewrote the Second Amendment." Brennan Center for Justice, 20 May 2014, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/how-nra-rewrote-secondamendment>.