



Americans Against Gun Violence
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2023 National High School Essay Contest \$1,000 Award Winner

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Untitled

Earlier this week, I found myself scrolling on TikTok when I came across a video that did not surprise me, but also made me feel ill. It was a video of a woman describing how to use a fire extinguisher in case of an active shooter in the classroom. The video was directed toward teachers, but as a student, I found myself watching the entire video, "just in case". I finished the video and was almost enraged. Teachers should not be forced to learn how to use fire extinguishers (that they likely had to buy themselves, mind you) in order to defend their students from a potential threat.

Lockdown drills are security theatre. Lacking any proved effectiveness, these drills are merely there for the illusion of safety. Shooters are well aware of these procedures, and it is highly unlikely that in the event of a real shooting it would do anything more than ensure that students can watch the execution of their own classmates in the class they shared with them. And while the drills are supposed to make students and faculty feel better, most of them know what a charade these drills are anyways. So are they really doing any good to anyone? And while the best thing you can do is attempt to be prepared for an event, is this really the best way to do it?

In my opinion it can't be. But it's also the only option schools have right now. In fact, where I work, Starbucks, we are trained that in the event of an active shooter we should do something very similar to what we are taught in school. We never practice this, but there is at least a "plan in place," "just in case". So the fear and the security theater are not limited merely to schools, although this is where they are most prevalent and affect the most people.

The best way to protect innocent children from being shot in their schools? Do what every other wealthy country has done in response to this issue; enforce better gun control. There should be zero tolerance by a government "of, by, and for the people" for a total of 648 mass shootings last year alone, including the

shooting at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde Texas in which 19 students and two teachers were killed and 17 others were wounded. The fact that these shootings have happened and gun control is no stricter represents both gross misconduct on behalf of the government and a failure of the people to hold their elected officials accountable. It should not be the role of our country's students and teachers to worry about whether or not they will get shot in their classrooms, nor should it be their responsibility to participate in drills of no proven value in anticipation of a shooter coming into their schools. Older generations should be ashamed of their failure to take definitive steps long ago to protect our country's children and youth from being massacred in their classrooms.

As the late Senator Thomas Dodd stated more than half a century ago, in June of 1968:

“Pious condolences will no longer suffice....Quarter measures and half measures will no longer suffice....The time has now come that we must adopt stringent gun control legislation comparable to the legislation in force in virtually every civilized country.”

It's long past time to heed Senator Dodd's advice, if for no other reason than to protect our country's children and youth from the threat of being gunned down every time they go to school.