



Americans Against Gun Violence
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2023 National High School Essay Contest \$250 Award Winner

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"It's just a drill," my gym teacher says as he checks his phone for the third time. The boy's locker room is sticky, the air is thick, and my hair sticks to my face.

This was normal, we have drills all the time. What makes this one any different? The boys in my class sit back and whisper jokes to each other as we sit in silence. I count – 6, 7, 8 – eight times our principal's voice repeats on the overhead speakers to remain in lockdown position and follow lockdown procedure.

Seems a bit long. I look at the numb expressions of the students huddled next to me. Nothing? Why does no one seem nervous? My legs bounce as I turn my head trying to get a glance at my teacher's watch on his wrist. My eyes are locked on my teacher and his every anxious move. He checks his phone for a fifth time.

Strange. His eyes widen and his hands shake uncontrollably as he slowly places his keys into his pockets with a tight grasp. He turns his head and silently mouths to the class, "This is not a drill."

My face gets feels hot I as I look around the room. My teacher gets up to double-check that the door is locked and we all flinch as the doorknob screeches. I look over at the boys in my class. No more whispers, no more jokes, just silence. I get angry at the fact I left my phone in my gym locker thinking this was just another day. Where's my sister? Are my friends okay? Is there an active shooter? I don't want to be another story on the news.

I watch as a boy gets on his knees and starts to pray. Bang! A loud creak by the shower jolts everyone upright and my heart drops. We sit there in silence giving each other glances that speak for us. We wait for what feels like months. I sit and stare at the locker room wall with so much I wanna say and do, but I am trapped. I am trapped feeling like my life is on the line and the only thing I can do is wait for someone to take it.

Something Is Wrong Here

Three pounds at the door tells us the police have finally come to save us. I made it. I survived. We put our hands up as we are humiliated by photographers taking pictures of us while the police escort us to the football field. Rumors flying left and right, 10 people shot, 3 dead, active shooter. False alarm? I don't know what to believe.

An email is finally sent by the school telling us this was a hoax. A fake 911 call caused hysteria and disaster. Tears uncontrollably stream down my face as I see my sister and friends. Hundreds of parents swarm the building like flies. All this fear and all these emotions for nothing. I am left traumatized and angry.