



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

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Everyday Fear in Schools

The bell over our school's intercom system rings. I hear my principal's voice through the speakers.

"This is a lockdown drill. I repeat, this is a lockdown drill. You are in no immediate danger. This is a lockdown drill."

I wish that I could recall a time in which my fellow classmates and I did not have to practice these procedures. Truthfully, lockdown drills fill me with emotion, not to the extent that I have had a panic attack during one - though I have heard stories of this happening to individuals. Rather, I am filled with fear, with sadness, and with anger.

Fear is likely the most common response to lockdown drills. "We are practicing this out of an abundance of caution," teachers say. I, and many others, are afraid of when this preparation will need to be applied. No one ever thinks that it will really happen to them. Simultaneously, I am afraid that the preparation is not enough. As students, we are told to hide in a room where no one can see us. Lock and barricade the doors. Be as silent as we can. Shut our phones off (which, devastatingly, prevents us from contacting our loved ones). The possibility of something slipping through the cracks still feels so likely. A student could forget to shut down their phone. Someone could sneeze. The barricade could be broken. While I understand the importance, these drills feel like a paradox. They make students feel a bit safer, while also reminding them of the looming possibilities.

Lockdown drills bring me sadness. Every drill serves as a reminder that I live in a world where people are cruel enough to bring weapons into schools. Why would someone want to kill students? I am left wondering, because I truly do not understand. The number of articles that I have read about school shootings in my life thus far is devastating. A school is a place of education, a place that should be safe. A life should not be the price to pay for this.

Something Is Wrong Here

I am angered by lockdown drills. I am angry that I live in a world where these drills are still important, because school shootings still happen. Students and teachers alike are left wondering if their lives will be the next ones lost. I have come to realize that there is a cycle every time a shooting occurs. People talk about it. Posts circulate the media saying "never again." The recent event is spoken about for approximately a week, give or take a few days. People stop talking about it. Later on, another shooting happens, and the cycle begins again. When will these words, "never again," become a reality?

When will the cycle end and when will change begin? When will students have the privilege of going to school without fear? When will there be a year in which students do not need to practice lockdown drills?