



Americans Against Gun Violence
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2025 Essay Contest

\$100 Scholarship Award Winner

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Rewrite the Narrative

In the powerful words of the late Justice William O. Douglas in the Supreme Court case of *Adams v. Williams*, the Second Amendment has been deliberately misrepresented by a powerful gun lobby. Gun control has been on the minds of Americans for decades now, with varying opinions on its concerns with the Constitution and the peace and safety of the community. Media has harmfully distorted our views of a “well-regulated militia.” At the core of this message stands the truth that safety and life should never be outweighed by the “right” to own deadly weapons.

The Second Amendment right that is used so often to protect these rights was made during the times of single shot muskets and pistols, not in our modern age when semi-automatic handguns and rifles that are widely available to civilians can fire more than 100 rounds per minute. This clear misinterpretation lacks any sort of common sense. Justice Douglas sees this misinterpretation. He understood that rights must be balanced against the need to protect society and that gun violence threatens the most basic right of all - the right to live.

Year after year, organizations like the NRA have pushed a narrative that the amendment guarantees an unrestricted individual right to own and carry any kind of weapon. With help from the media storm that has taken our generation, it is no surprise that firearms kill 40,000 people every year. Social Media, the Internet, and Toxic Masculinity have distorted our views on the gun crisis. The media and TV often reinforce the idea that “strong men” carry guns. Gun-toting characters are portrayed as tough, heroic, and powerful in movies, television, and advertisements. This image of the hyper-masculine, armed man doesn’t just glamorize violence - it equates strength with the ability to dominate or kill. To young and impressionable children that consume this media, the gun doesn’t just become a weapon; it can become a source of Identity.

Justice Douglas called for “stiff state laws” and even suggested banning all pistols except for police use. What he is asking isn't extreme; it is reasonable, and what is more extreme than a child dying in a school shooting? Is it more extreme than entire communities living in fear? Reasonable gun control, especially when paired with a cultural shift away from glorifying violence and hyper-masculinity, is not a threat to freedom - it is the only path to preserving it.

As a young person, I believe it's time to rewrite the narrative. Guns are not a symbol of strength. Real strength is protecting others, speaking up, and demanding change. Justice Douglas's words remind us that the Constitution is not a shield for lobbyists or toxic ideologies - it is a living document meant to serve the people. It's up to us to make sure it does.