



Americans Against Gun Violence
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2026 National High School Essay Contest \$100 Winner

(Student's name withheld at Student's Request)

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The Lockdown in the Land of the Free

"The thought of having armed guards and 'lockdown drills' never crossed our minds," is a critique by Dr. Michael North on America's so-called "brilliant idea" in preventing gun violence in schools. Our panacea solution of armed guards and lockdown drills claims to comfort the ill at ease minds of parents and students alike, but ultimately overlooks the heart of the issue: guns.

[The 1996 Dunblane Primary School mass shooting] in Great Britain incited the rage of its citizens and put an end to its crisis on school shootings through the prohibition of civilian handgun ownership. Great Britain has accomplished with 1 major school shooting what Americans have failed to accomplish, even with continuous headlines featuring a fresh batch of school shootings. Within 3 months, thousands of weapons were surrendered, and within 2 years, legislation was passed to outlaw all private handguns in Great Britain. Meanwhile, 3 decades later, the US still outwardly refuses to place the ban, reflecting the broadcasts of the screams of children and wails of their families being voiced onto deaf ears.

Whether it's attributed to the US government's inefficiency or ignorance, having armed guards and lockdown drills in itself sounds post-apocalyptic to me. We dare to advertise this country's land as "the land of the free" while we cover up the thousands of children chained within its soil. I never saw the "freedom" in "lockdown" drills. All I saw were the children cowering in fear from the very freedom of which we sing our "freedom" in the 2nd Amendment. There's nothing free about a drill that imprisons broken people in society and locks innocent children into small, cramped corners of classrooms.

The Lockdown in the Land of the Free

The US must strive to adopt gun control laws comparable to those of Great Britain, as its future generations depend on it. Though controversy arises with the mention of the 2nd Amendment protecting the right to bear arms, it was originally never made for privately owned guns, nor was it made to excuse the lives of children lost and families torn apart. Rather, it was linked to the concept of a civic duty to serve in militias, with historical roots in English common law that allowed for arms "suitable to their condition" and "allowed by law."

In other words, the founding fathers envisioned valiant soldiers, armed to fight for the red, white, and blue stripes of our flag on battlefields, not our toddlers staining their white shirts with red blood as their lips turn blue. If our flag represents the slaughter of our future, then we have failed as a nation. To overcome this national challenge, light must be shed during this era of darkness, and citizens must be educated on the true nature of the 2nd Amendment. Then and only then, may we finally begin to bring comfort to the generations of grieving families and amend our future as the land of the free and home of the brave.