



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

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### *America's Non-existent Dilemma*

Gun lobbyists and 2nd Amendment fanatics have always been quick to defend their guns. They say things like people kill people, not guns. That banning guns would penalize law-abiding citizens. And worse, that mass shootings have nothing to do with guns. Quite the opposite is true: mass shootings have everything to do with guns. In fact, in Dr. Michael North's address at the Americans Against Gun Violence Annual Dinner in 2023, he stated, "The one factor common to all shootings is that the perpetrator has been able to arm themselves with a gun."<sup>1</sup> Dr. North lost his daughter, Sophie, in the 1996 Dunblane Primary School mass shooting. A gunman armed with four handguns, which he acquired legally, killed 16 children and a teacher, and severely injured many others. "The idea of having armed guards and 'lockdown drills' never crossed our minds,"<sup>2</sup> Dr. North said in his address. It didn't cross their minds because those are not the solutions to gun violence: doing something about guns is the solution.

Dr. North and other families of the victims fought hard for a ban on civilian ownership of handguns in Great Britain. After that ban, he explained, levels of gun violence fell significantly. Dr. North also stated and reiterated that there hasn't been another school shooting since Dunblane.<sup>3</sup> And it hasn't been just Great Britain. Australia banned semi-automatic rifles and pump-action firearms after the shooting in Port Arthur, Tasmania. Because of this, "The homicide-by-firearm rates dropped dramatically."<sup>4</sup> New Zealand severely tightened gun laws after the shootings at two mosques in Christchurch, which led to over 60,000 firearms and more than triple the number of components, including high capacity magazines" being taken out of circulation due to a nationwide buy back. Norway's ban on semi-automatic rifles

## America's Non-Existent Dilemma

came after a two-stage terrorist attack. Now the homicide-by-firearm rate is 12 times higher in the U.S. than in Norway. Despite the nonsense gun lobbyists repeatedly spout, the statistics are irrefutable: getting rid of guns lowers gun violence. So why haven't we taken the tried-and-true path and put people over guns?

It's been observed that the U.S. is the recalcitrant, obstinate middle child of the world's countries, sitting idly by, refusing to learn from others, and instead pointing fingers and never taking blame. I'm a student. My sister is a student. My parents are both teachers. I don't want armed guards at my school. I don't want my parents to have to pick up a gun, or worse, put themselves in front of one. I don't want to sit through another lockdown drill and wonder what it would be like if it wasn't just a drill. I think it's time America grows up and takes some advice from other countries, because no student should have to wonder if they've said goodbye to their family for the last time.

### References

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<sup>1</sup> Michael North, "Gun Control in Great Britain After the 1996 Dunblane Primary School Mass Shooting: A Model for the United States," Americans Against Gun Violence Annual Meeting, Sacramento, California, October 21, 2023, 10, <https://aagunv.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Dr.-Norths-Keynote-Address-w-Bills-intro.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> North, "Gun Control in Great Britain After the 1996 Dunblane Primary School Mass Shooting: A Model for the United States," 9.

<sup>3</sup> North, "Gun Control in Great Britain After the 1996 Dunblane Primary School Mass Shooting: A Model for the United States," 9.

<sup>4</sup> Eloise Barry, "These Countries Restricted Assault Weapons After Just One Mass Shooting," TIME, May 27, 2022, <https://time.com/6182186/countries-banned-guns-mass-shooting/>.