



Americans Against Gun Violence  
7862 Winding Way #151  
Fair Oaks, CA 95628  
(916) 668-4160  
aagunv.org / info@aagunv.org

## **2026 National High School Essay Contest \$100 Winner**

Louis Serrano

Jordan High School, Long Beach, California

### *The Price of Preparation Being A Choice Between Two Worlds*

Every morning at 7:00 AM, my father, who immigrated to this country to escape violence, tells me “Tu educación es tu futuro.” But in America, that education comes with a grim prerequisite of the lockdown drill. As a student in North Long Beach, I have grown up in a community where the sounds of the world, sirens, news reports of local crime, the hushed tones of worried parents remind us that safety is a fragile luxury. And for that I saw the grim reality in 5th grade at my local elementary school Starr King.

Dr. Michael North, who lost his daughter Sophie in the 1996 Dunblane massacre, noted that in Scotland, the thought of armed guards or lockdown drills “never crossed our minds.” To a U.S. high schooler, that statement feels like science fiction. In the United States, we don’t just learn biology and history we learn which corner of the classroom is the “blind spot” for a shooter and how to remain silent while a teacher locks the door which I learned early on in 1st grade.

The contrast between the British and American responses to school shootings is a study in political courage versus systemic complacency. Following Dunblane, Great Britain didn't just offer “thoughts and prayers.” They also chose the lives of children over the right to own handguns. They enacted a total ban on civilian handgun ownership.

One regular evening after recess time I sat in class learning basic division with friends enjoying the sun outside. When 10 gunshot pops near my classroom rang across the street at the gas station. A man lost his life that day and my elementary school lost their sense of safety and youth. That feeling of being scared, nervous, thinking of my

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twin sister across the school, last moments thinking you will be killed, is nothing little old me or my peers should be worrying about.

As a student leader and a future physician, I see gun violence as a public health crisis that cannot be cured by adding more guns to campuses. The primary obstacle to adopting British-style laws in the U.S. is the misinterpretation of the Second Amendment, specifically the *Heller* decision, which prioritized individual gun ownership over collective safety. To overcome this, my generation must lead. As President of my HOSA chapter and a City Commissioner, I have seen that leadership means adapting when a system is failing. We must advocate for a legislative framework that mirrors the United Kingdom, recognizing that a "well-regulated militia" was never intended to be a death sentence for children in classrooms.

We are told that the American Dream is built on opportunity, but that dream cannot flourish in a country that asks its students to prepare for war before they have even learned to drive. By following the British example and prioritizing the complete regulation of handguns, we can finally ensure that the only thing crossing a student's mind is their future and not their survival.