



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

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(Name of High School Withheld at Student's Request)

### *The Flyer*

I moved from Italy six years ago, in June 2019, when I was only ten years old. Only a few weeks after my family's arrival, we found a promotional brochure in our mailbox.

It was a flyer no one could pick out from a pile. Nothing was special about it: it was covered in eye-catching images and large-print figures announcing supposed discounts. However, as I looked closer, I was shocked. Upon closer inspection, I was shocked to realize that the products being advertised were pistols, rifles, and ammunition.

I was taken aback as I understood that the nation I was preparing to call my new home was delivering seemingly innocent advertisements for tools of death right into the mailboxes of ordinary families - families just like ours, with children.

At first, I was simply struck by the sight of these weapons, which were items I had, until then, seen only on television: during crime scenes in movies, or worse, on the evening news during war coverage. The worst thing, I thought, was that these flyers were part of daily life in a country full of goodness and opportunity.

I cannot reconcile the concepts of a peaceful society with the idea that guns should be advertised to families, or arguably, even children, as it was I who found the flyer.

Furthermore, school shootings seem to be unpreventable. These acts, perpetrated by killers who are, at times, the most unlikely of suspects, capture our attention for a single day, only to be swallowed up by the urge to move on and erase those "disturbing" images. For only a week, politicians follow up with the useless "thoughts and prayers," which are oftentimes, just performative.

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

The very next day, we know more: we know...how the killer managed to acquire the weapon, or for what absurd reason innocent lives were cut short. The question remains: do these lives count for less than a single individual's desire to assert their "legal right" freedom to purchase and use a firearm? My answer is a resounding no!

I was deeply moved by the actions of Dr. Michael North, a man who rose from the death of his own daughter - a five-year-old child - and who, alongside others, succeeded in changing the laws of his country. He stands as an illuminating example of how dedication to a just cause, pursued peacefully yet steadfastly, and bolstered by strong, rational argumentation, can transform the legislation of an entire nation, and indeed, the very face of that country.

I am only seventeen years old, but I know enough to understand that true freedom is only respected when others are free to live their lives without risk.