

Angela Yoder

Folsom High School, Folsom

On December 14, 2012, two tragedies struck our world. In Newton, Connecticut, an armed gunman entered an elementary school and killed 20 children. On the same day in China, a man, unable to purchase any guns due to stringent restrictions, attacked a school with a knife. No one died (Lasseter).

This discrepancy shows clearly the problem with guns our country is facing. No less than 16 mass shootings occurred in 2012 alone, leaving 88 people, many of them children, dead (Zornick). This does not include those killed individually by guns which would be upwards of 30,000 (Connick). Clearly, it is time to consider gun control.

Many pro-gun advocates tout the motto “Guns don’t kill people; People kill people.” However, the statistics may disagree. As displayed earlier, guns increase the likelihood of death if used in place of another instrument. There are studies that showed “gun stored in the home is associated with a threefold increase in the risk of homicide and a fivefold increase in the risk of suicide” (Committee on Injury and Poison Prevention). These combined with the fact that America has very low gun restrictions point to a serious problem. In over 50% of our states there are no requirements for a license to carry a gun, limits on bulk purchases, requirements for gun shop record-keeping, background checks, laws concerning the gun show loophole, restrictions on large capacity magazines, nor controls on guns in public places (“Brady 2011”).

Many of these basic restrictions are implemented in many countries in Europe. For example, in Great Britain in 2010 a total of 155 people died of gun violence (“United Kingdom”). Taking into account population, they also have half as many guns (Lawrence). This translates into, on a per capita basis, 450% fewer people die from gun violence in Great Britain than here. This promotes the argument that fewer guns equal fewer deaths.

On the other hand, however, the gun culture is very prevalent in our society, making it difficult to pass or implement gun regulation. In some areas, it is believed that the second amendment bars restriction of firearms. The NRA encourages this because it helps their backers—the companies who manufacture guns. The Republican Party is also pro-gun, and even if they become to be a minority, they would still have power to hinder the gun debate from getting traction. As a result any radical change would be stopped in its tracks. There is no simple solution to this problem. We can’t ban all firearms; that is true. But that does not mean that there aren’t other effective solutions. We can support less invasive, gradual regulation, create more after-school programs that could keep kids out of gangs, incorporate a more comprehensive mental healthcare system, and restrict young children’s access to media that glorifies violence. With these solutions, we can achieve the short-term goal of fewer guns on the street and the long-term goal of changing opinions about the necessity of guns. Through education and regulation, we can save the children who could become the leaders, scientists, and adventurers of tomorrow.

Works Cited

Brady 2011 State Scorecards.” Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence. Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, n.d. Web. 10 March 2013.

Committee on Injury and Poison Prevention. “Firearm-Related Injuries Affecting the Pediatric Population.” *Pediatrics* 105.4 (2000): 888-895. Web.

Connick, Wendy. “Gun Violence in America.” *The Suit*. *The Suit Magazine*, 24 February 2011. Web. 10 March 2013.

Lasseter, Tom. “Watching Newtown from afar, China wrestles with its own tragedy.” *McClatchy*. n.p., 17 December 2012. Web. 10 March 2013.

Lawrence, John, and Frank Thomas. “A Cultural Comparison: Gun Violence in the US and Europe.” *San Diego Free Press*. sandiegofreepress.org, 8 January 2013. Web. 10 March 2013

“United Kingdom—Gun Facts, Figures and the Law.” *Gunpolicy.org*. Gunpolicy.org, 2012. Web. 10 March 2013.

Zornick, George. “Sixteen Mass Shootings Happened in 2012, Leaving at least 88 Dead.” *The Nation*. *The Nation*, n.d. Web. 10 March 2013.