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The So-Called, “School Shooting Generation”

Jacqueline Maciel, Copy Chief

There is a numbness that has waded over my generation for a period of time, although too many of us were unaware of it until things started to hit a little too close to home. People have traded our ‘Gen Z’ name to one that embodies the incident that crosses our mind every now and then when we are sitting in our classrooms. “The School Shooting Generation,” a fitting name for a group of students who have had to listen to or read stories about the 300 plus school shootings that have occurred since 1997.

Two years of peace were given to the older age group of Gen Z, all up until the massacre at Columbine High School that took 15 lives, including the perpetrators, and left 24 injured. The mass shooting of 1999 shifted a tone within students, who now experience an underlying fear of attending school, and set protocols in classrooms throughout the nation.

I was never alive to see a time before active shooter drills were set in place. We were trained to hide from a gun before we even knew what the object was. My generation was exposed to the idea of death so early on because we needed to understand the true harm of a gun for our own safety. We had to learn quickly that at any moment someone could walk into our school, a place we were told was our “safe space” from home, and hurt any one of us because it was that easy for someone to get a gun.

You would think that after several traumatic shootings and thousands of lives lost each year, the U.S. government would make assault weapons less accessible, but of course that would be too logical. Instead, it took a whole global pandemic which forced students out of schools to online learning that obviously allowed for a decrease in school shootings across the nation.

In one aspect, someone may see the COVID-19 pandemic as a positive because it gives students a “break” from the worry of gun violence at school. In some ways, yes this is correct; however gun violence does not just stop at schools. Shootings go beyond the front steps of a school, for some students, gun violence can be closer to home instead. For these students, they did not get some “time off” to stop worrying about gun violence.

In an op-ed for Teen Vogue, March For Our Lives: Arizona organizer Induja Kumar spoke more of this issue.

“While the same students (including myself) who protested gun violence in the context of school shootings have the ability to quarantine and maintain social distancing, incidents of gun violence have increased in cities like Dallas, Nashville and Tucson, according to analysis from The Trace of Gun Violence Archive data. People can’t just maintain social distance from gun violence when it’s so close to home,” Kumar said.



Within the midst of the pandemic, the U.S. has seen an increase in gun and ammunition sales and noted that there are more first-time buyers. Concerns of at home gun violence have raised due to this statistic.

The topic of gun violence is not new in American history, however as time has progressed, there are new questions and concerns that have risen.

As schools and universities plan on having students return to campus again, will we see another spike in the amount of school shootings? The most blunt answer I can give to this question, yes.

We have already seen the rise of gun violence within the U.S. as several states have furthered along in their reopening plans due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On April 12, in Knoxville, Tenn., police responded to reports of a student with a gun at Austin-East Magnet High School. In result, an unidentified student was shot and pronounced dead at the scene, and an officer was injured.

Maybe it's the numbness or the pessimism that has been created over the years of thinking that each lockdown, no matter the severity, would lead to seeing one of my peers take their last breath or even taking my own. It's a hard thing to say. Yes, I think there are going to be many more young, bright souls that will have their life taken away from them while they're at school because there are not enough measures to prevent this.

All of my hope has not completely gone to the wind, although past government officials have continuously let me down, in more ways than just this one. My generation, who have all collectively suffered the same pain, keep me optimistic. There is a unity amongst most of us "school shooting generation" kids in holding officials and the public accountable for allowing more violence to occur after giving us the false hope that "that one would be the last."

Organizations created by school shooting survivors, such as March For Our Lives, are what motivate me to use my voice and speak up about gun violence and its horrific effects it has had within the past and present history of the U.S. I don't know if this fight will ever truly end and I can only sadly imagine how many more schools and names we will know of because of this, yet I keep hold of the slight chance that this generation will make a change and hope future generations will continue on the work.