



Americans Against Gun Violence  
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**2020 National High School Essay Contest  
\$1,000 Winner**

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*The Last Thing Our Family Needs Is A Gun*

The familiar sound of snack bags and other plastic packaging colliding with each other alerted me that my mom and sister just got home from Grocery Outlet. "There's so many people," my mom said. She said the store was packed. The lines were exceptionally long. But in this time of crisis, it was to no surprise. It was kind of worrying, but one thing troubles me more and equally puzzles me - the spike in gun sales.

Watching the news, I saw gun stores with lines stretching around the block. Buyers justified their purchases with fears of looting, with some dismissing criticisms with a wordy reference to the Second Amendment or prideful remarks that flaunt ownership of semiautomatic rifles like, "Say that to my AR-15." I was confused. With quarantine orders in place, I would feel less safe with a gun at home. Things seem to be more volatile with firearms around, escalating petty altercations to homicide attempts. This is even more concerning given the fact that the US has about six times the gun homicide rate of Canada and 16 times that of Germany, according to a 2012 United Nations data published by The Guardian (Chalabi, 2012).

Besides homicide, suicide risks are also linked to firearms. A study published in Epidemiologic Reviews pointed out the positive correlation between gun ownership and suicide risks at the household level and the state level, attributing it to the lethality of the method of intentional self-harm (Webster et al., 2016). With the COVID-19 pandemic drastically changing everyday life and putting pressure on people, access to guns will most likely exacerbate suicide and homicide risks as well as firearm-related injuries.

However, the aforementioned problems can be addressed with firearm regulations. A study also published in Epidemiologic Reviews cited the success of firearm legislations in other developed nations such as Australia in reducing homicides or suicide rates. Meanwhile in Colombia, laws in two cities banning firearms in specific occasions showed a reduction in homicide rates: 14% in Cali overall and 13% in Bogota in firearm-related homicides. (Santaella Tenorio et al., 2016)

Growing up in a culture that is a foil to American individualism, I've always been

fascinated by the zeal in people's excuses for gun ownership, especially of assault weapons. I see the defense of gun ownership as a product of machismo and an irrational cling to a sense of power. Gun enthusiasts would often blame everything else except guns and propose solutions that fail to directly address the problem. Firearm regulations, through the ban of firearms such as handguns and assault weapons, would clearly be the most effective solution.

A few days ago, my mom's shrill cackle informed me that she finally got her stimulus check. "Two months of rent!" she exclaimed. In this time of crisis, I am proud of my mom for deciding to spend it on things our family needs, which do not include guns because the last thing our family needs is a gun.

#### Works Cited:

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\*Daniel W. Webster, Magdalena Cerda, Garen J. Wintemute, Philip J. Cook, Epidemiologic Evidence to Guide the Understanding and Prevention of Gun Violence, *Epidemiologic Reviews*, Volume 38, Issue 1, 1 January 2016, Pages 1-4, <https://doi.org/10.1093/epirev/mxv018>

\*Santaella-Tenorio, J., Cerda, M., Villaveces, A., & Galea, S. (2016). What Do We Know About the Association Between Firearm Legislation and Firearm-Related Injuries? *Epidemiologic Reviews*, 38(1), 140-157. doi: 10.1093/epirev/mxv012