

# IS NOW THE TIME FOR GUN CONTROL?

By Livvy Cohen

editor-in-chief

On Feb. 14, 17 students and faculty members at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida lost their lives too soon, all because of a man with a gun. A man with a weapon of war. A man who was also nowhere near mentally stable enough to be allowed to obtain that weapon.

And this shooter was not the first; following the Columbine school shooting in 1999, over 187,000 students in the United States have experienced the trauma and stress of a school shooting. As a nation, we have to admit that there is an undeniable epidemic of gun violence in this country. Now is the time to stand up against this. Sadly, students have had to be the face of this movement, rather than the adults in congress and in our communities.

In no way are those protesting demanding that guns be wiped completely off the face of the earth. They are, however, in demand of stricter gun legislation in order to protect the lives of millions of students. No student should have to worry about their "escape route" or whether it's their last day at school. Now, more than ever, it is time for change. Evidently, it is students who must lead this charge, and we will not back down until that change is made.

School is not the place for metal detectors or required clear backpacks; classrooms are intended to be a safe, comfortable environment where your main concern is receiving an education. Over the past few decades, however, our campuses have been transformed into battlefields. This is not okay.

This is not normal. We cannot become desensitized to mass shooting after mass shooting, losing thousands of lives and still making no change.

To say this is strictly a mental health issue is shameful and stubborn. The United States is not the only country suffering from mental illnesses, but we do seem to be the country suffering most

prominently from gun violence.

More extensive background and mental health checks are becoming more and more obviously necessary. We also need stricter laws regarding permits and open carry. In Mississippi, gun owners are able to carry firearms without any permit or license, and, according to the Giffords Law Center, there is no minimum age law when purchasing or possessing handguns and long guns.

It all begins on the local level, so Mississippi should consider being on the right side of history and making the necessary changes to help prevent an alarming amount of deaths by gun violence.

According to The Washington Post, Mississippi Senators Thad Cochran and Roger Wicker, who is running for re-election this year, have received \$18,900 and \$24,400 from the National Rifle Association since 1998, respectively. Instead of making decisions based upon the wishes of the highest bidder, our government should consider the children of this country and our right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. All of which is impossible without safety.

By Grant Daniels

sports editor

Across our country, school shootings are becoming what seems like a daily occurrence over the past month. When 17 innocent people were brutally murdered by a gunman at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, Americans started to realize that something must be done.

Abolishing our Second Amendment is not the answer.

Whether guns are legal or not, if a criminal or killer is motivated to get a gun, they are going to do anything and everything they can to find that gun. With the black market and other outlets to obtain illegal objects, guns would undoubtedly be another resource within the black market. Drugs are illegal, yet across the country drugs are still a problem. Guns would be the exact same way.

For starters, it can't be so easy to buy a gun. There needs to be an established series of tests that gun buyers go through that will reveal whether or not the buyer is mentally capable of having an armed weapon. It should also be necessary to

show no signs of post traumatic stress disorder if they have military or law enforcement background.

The gunman who killed those 17 people at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School accumulated a long list of disciplinary problems and mental health concerns. As sad as it is, by no means should a person with a mental illness ever be able to come within reach of a gun.

According to research done by the LA Times, at least 59 percent of the 185 public mass shootings that took place in the United States from 1900 through 2017 were carried out by individuals who had either been diagnosed with a mental disorder or demonstrated signs of serious mental illness prior to the attack.

In terms of how we can eliminate school shootings, we have to implement more armed weapons onto our school campuses and into our schools. Either schools could have more armed police officers or make it optional for teachers to carry weapons. According to armedcampuses.org, nine states—Idaho, Utah, Colorado, Oregon, Kansas, Arkansas, Wisconsin, Mississippi and Texas—allow for campus carry. These teachers could be those who have previous careers in law enforcement or military backgrounds or could be teachers with many years of experience with guns. The students wouldn't have to know who the teachers were.

Under no circumstances should a school ever publicize that they are a "gun free zone." According to the Crime Prevention Research Center, "gun free zones" have been the target of more than 98 percent of all mass shootings. In a world with criminals and killers, that is like asking them to come shoot because those killers know that they have no way to fight back.

While the events taken place in Parkland, Florida were unbelievably tragic, we cannot cut down on gun rights. We have to increase the amount of armed teachers on school campuses so there is a way to fight back against the killers of the world.

