



## The Gun Violence Crisis in the United States: Opinion

Lily Morgan, Junior Reporter

On October 27, 2018, anti-Semite Robert Bowers opened fire on worshippers at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. With an AR-15 and three handguns, Bowers murdered 11 people and injured six more as they began their morning Shabbat services. As the nation mourns the eleven Americans who lost their lives in this hate crime, we can't help but wonder why citizens are still allowed to purchase military grade weapons.

Robert Bowers holds a firearms license and has 21 guns registered to his name. Among these is the Colt AR-15 he used in his massacre at the Tree of Life synagogue. Bower's AR-15 was a semi-automatic rifle with a 32 round capacity. In nine states, there is a limit on the round capacity of guns available to the public. These states include California, Colorado, Connecticut, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, and Vermont, which all cap the number of rounds to between 10 and 20 rounds. Pennsylvania does not have a restriction on round capacity, so Bowers was able to legally purchase his AR-15 and rain terror on the lives of innocents.

We have seen on many occasions the devastation that stems from assault rifles in the hands of citizens. In the Sandy Hook shooting, Adam Lanza used three semi-automatic rifles to kill 28 people. At Stoneman Douglas High School, Nikolas Cruz gunned down 17 victims with his legally purchased AR-15. In Las Vegas, 59 innocent people were massacred by Stephen Paddock and his 23 firearms, a dozen of which were assault rifles. I could go on and on with examples of mass shootings that have occurred in the United States within my lifetime. But what do all four of the shootings I have mentioned have in common? The perpetrators had easy, legal access to semi-automatic rifles, and between just those four attacks, 115 lives were lost. American citizens should not be able to purchase semi-automatic assault rifles. Why would anybody need a gun that can fire 30 rounds in ten seconds if they are not in the military?

In 2017, in the United States, 15,643 people (excluding suicide victims) were killed by guns, according to the Gun Violence Archive. 732 children and 3,247 teenagers were killed by guns. There were 346 mass shootings, and a whopping 2,036 unintentional shootings just in the U.S. Those numbers are outrageously high. In comparison, in Australia, semi-automatic rifles were banned after a 1996 mass shooting. In 2016, according to [gunpolicy.org](http://gunpolicy.org), only 238 total Australians died from gun violence. That means that fewer total Australians died from gun violence in 2016 than there were mass shootings in the U.S. in 2017. Of course, Australia does have a significantly lower population than the United States, so it makes sense for their number of deaths from gun violence to be lower as well. However, the 15,643 gun deaths in the U.S. constitute 0.0048% of the country's current population, whereas 238 deaths in Australia makes up only 0.00097% of the population. The ratio of gun violence deaths to total population is five times greater in the United States than in Australia, all because Australia banned semi-automatic rifles after one mass shooting.

So what do I propose to end the United States gun violence crisis? First of all, the purchase of semi-automatic rifles and military grade weapons by American citizens must be banned. Secondly, there should be a limit on the number of guns one person is allowed to purchase. What would a single person do with 21 or 23 guns other than shoot up a synagogue or a music festival? I understand that people want guns for hunting and protection, and I am not proposing to take away all guns. I am saying that people do not need a gun that can fire three shots a second to kill a deer; guns with low round capacity will suffice. People will argue that owning whatever gun they want is their right, as spelled out in the Second Amendment. But the Second Amendment was written in 1791, a time when guns could not fire hundreds of shots in one minute. Also, laws can change; that's why we have the Amendments in the first place!

Just last week, there was a weapons threat at Marblehead High School. A student claimed online that he was going to bring a gun to school. The next day, we all laughed about how we knew the threat was a joke, and we joked about who we thought had made the threat. But it should not have been a laughing matter. Shootings occur so often in the United States that very few of us are shocked whenever a new incident surfaces. As long as semi-automatic rifles are easily accessible to Americans, nobody knows for sure that they are safe from a mass shooting.

## Literary Magazine Returns!

MHS is excited to welcome back the Literary Magazine to the high school! The Literary Magazine is a publication allowing students to express themselves creatively and spread their writing across the school.

Interested students can email the Literary Magazine at: [marbleheadliterarymag@gmail.com](mailto:marbleheadliterarymag@gmail.com)

## Quote of the Week

"The newspaper is a greater treasure to the people than uncounted millions of gold."

~Henry Ward Beecher

## "That's a Kind Shell that Won't Hurt You!"

Madison Morris, Junior Reporter

**This is MHS Headlight's first edition of our Best Student Essays written in school! You can find more student essays in our future issues!**

I head down the street to the New England Aquarium, where workers are already washing the pavement and preparing for the long day ahead. I walk into the building with excitement for the day. This is where I fit into the cityscape around me. When I step out the "staff only" labeled door, I become a fluent Aquarium English speaker.

At the Edge of the Sea touch tank, I stand before 50 people as I carefully explain how to handle the animals. I go over to a young boy looking at the animals in awe.

"Have you seen the flounder yet?"  
"A FLOUNDER?! Like in Nemo?"

"This is a flounder, but not the same one as Nemo. Look, there's one right over there too! Aren't they cool?" The boy nods excitedly.

"You can touch him if you want to," said the little boy, nodding and roughly touching the fish.

"Let's pat him together. Now, we need to pat slowly, okay?" He pets slowly and gently.

"Mom, I touched FLOUNDER!"

I tell the boy he did great and turn away from him and his mother. The use of words such as "slowly" help children to touch gently without knowing that is what they are doing. It is easier for them to understand slow versus fast, as opposed to gentle versus rough. A little girl with two scrunchie-wrapped pigtails and a little boy with a Transformers t-shirt approach me hesitantly. They are keeping their hands out of the touch tank unlike all the other children.

"Would you like to touch the sea star?" The girl shakes her head nervously.

"How about you just feel the water. Do you want to feel the water?" The boy lights up as he and his sister lower their hands down just enough to feel the icy cold New England water. They smile and laugh, becoming more comfortable.

"Would you like to feel this empty shell?"

"Will he hurt me?" the boy asks, a worried look on his face.

"No. He is a nice shell." The girl smiles, reaching two fingers over to lightly pat the shell before moving on to the sea star. The shell is not alive and therefore cannot be "nice," but the children better understand the word "nice" as not being harmful, instead of explaining how the shell is not a living organism. I hear a large group of about ten adults approach the exhibit. They are speaking animatedly with one another.

"Wǒ xiǎng chù mō dòng wù," a teenage girl from the group says while reaching into the tank. I walk over and place my hands into the tank right in front of her. I touch the sea anemone as I look up at her, wordlessly demonstrating the proper touch. She smiles gratefully back at me and begins touching the animals like I demonstrated. Aquarium English can often be understood best without words.

Soon enough, my shift is over. As I push my way out of the heavy, clear glass doors, I join the crowd of visitors. This English requires specific words that children know that will make them feel comfortable, or no words at all for non-English speakers. Without my Aquarium English, I would not be as successful as a volunteer, and my life at the Aquarium would be much more difficult. Aquarium English is unique to those around me, and I have picked up this English from many hours of watching others use it. I can now happily say that I am a pretty fluent Aquarium English speaker.

## The Baggage of Technology

Eva Nickolas, Freshman Reporter

Technology has become increasingly popular over the past few years. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter are so engraved in people's lives that we feel anxiety simply by going a day without our phones attached to our hands. Just recently, I overheard two girls talking about their Snapchat streaks. One girl was worried, telling the other, "I haven't done my streaks yet and it's almost midnight." It seemed as though it was more important for her to send a picture to someone she barely knew than to have an intellectual conversation with the person sitting right next to her.

I am not foolish enough to assume that girl I overheard is the only person who has had anxiety over social media, for technology poses many problems. Apps such as Instagram and Snapchat are known to cause a "fear of missing out," more commonly known as "FOMO," as well as anxiety and depression. Instagram is a place where people are free to post nearly anything. However, the vast majority of people only post the positive aspects of their day. Even then, photos are often cropped and edited before they are uploaded to one's account. This is something that many individuals have a hard time understanding. When scrolling through Instagram, one sees the so-called perfect lives that others are enjoying. This leads them to question their own lives. Teenagers do not see the filters and work that is put into a photo; they merely see the picture and think, "I wish I could be like that."

It is common for one to stumble upon a picture of a group of friends laughing together, or people on a nice vacation with their families, or someone's mirror-selfie, while meanwhile he or she is sitting on the bed alone, wishing to be with friends, on a luxurious trip, or looking like all the perfect people on Instagram. The fights with friends, the quarrels with family, and the make-up put on remains unnoticed. Thoughts of self-hate and devaluation only grow stronger. This spiral of self-demoting thoughts is what turns a happy person into an unhappy person, and an already fragile individual into a depressed teenager.

Simply put, social media is not worth your time, energy, or thoughts. Experience life without the pressures of Instagram and be free from the unnecessary anxiety that comes with all social media. Teens are already stressed out individuals, why stress yourself out more by looking at an unrealistic picture of someone else's life and comparing it to your own? I promise you, a life without social media is a life worth living.

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