

## Students for Not Getting Murdered in School

In 2032, a group of 10 normal kids who shared an 8<sup>th</sup> grade homeroom in Gilded, Colorado had enough. An entire generation of children in the U.S. had now experienced growing up in a society that killed kids. For more than 20 years, we'd averaged one mass shooting per day in the country, killing 4 or more, and we'd averaged 3 mass shooting per week in which a murderer showed up at a school and shot kids.

This group had started off in kindergarten together, all scared, confused and excited. Within a month, they were practicing "active shooter drills" in which they were taught how to run and hide under desks, in closets and behind toilets, in the event some "bad person" came to the school to try to murder them. Drills had continued in every grade. They had pamphlets: "Hiding from Mass Murderers in School."

Outside schools, people were getting shot at the rate of 10,000 per month in the U.S. 1,500 were kids. The epidemic of U.S. gun violence, on average, was leaving about one child bleeding or dead every hour. Death by gun had for two decades been the 3<sup>rd</sup>-leading cause of children's deaths in the country. Teachers were forced to wear handguns in schools in Colorado Springs, even if they didn't want to. Women were being fatally shot by current or former romantic partners at a rate of one every 10 hours.

"I'm sick of it", said Reggie, a tomboyish Latina 13-year-old girl. "I'm tired of hiding from guns."

"You said it", replied Dannie, a black boy whose voice broke periodically, with the changes of his age.

"It's like we're a herd of antelope surrounded by wolves", said Shane, "and the wolves have guns."

They'd just had an unannounced active shooter drill, in which school alarms had sounded, loudly and suddenly, like submarine dive klaxons, during an important math test. They didn't know it was a drill. Last week, a 20-year-old white male with assault rifles and handguns had shot 37 students and teachers at a middle school in Temple, Florida, killing 19. Police had shot him without asking why he did it. Students were taught to never assume it was a drill. It was always a matter of life or death, to survive. These messages were constantly drilled into them by what sounded like drill sergeants or coaches yelling "Drop and give me 50, maggots!" "You do, or you die. You don't expect mercy from a killer."

In this drill, the students had gone from puzzling over algebra questions to full adrenaline in 2 bells. Reggie had laid her desk down facing the door and laid behind it. (Most but not all of their school desks now had "bullet-resistant" bottoms, thanks to a multi-million-dollar purchase from a military contractor. Schools had been made to give up athletics, science and music to pay for them, but "safety first", right?)

Dannie and Sam had run to the side of the doorway, thinking they could either attack or escape behind the shooter as he entered. (It's always a white he, you know.) Carolyn and Shaggy had stood flat against the wall behind the bullet-shadow of the steel "shooter closet" installed for student protection, because it was almost full by the time they got there from across the room. Shane lifted his legs up in a stall in the bathroom, where he'd been dealing with "an emergency" when the alarm sounded.

This had not been a normal drill. Just when they'd started thinking it was a drill and begun to relax, Rocky Smith had lit off about a hundred firecrackers in the hallway. He thought it would be funny, but most of the students were really freaked out. We heard gunshots, and lots of them. It was pure terror. Shane shat himself, but fortunately he was optimally positioned for that. It did not feel good.

“This is bullshit”, said Dannie. “I’m sick of the fear and running and hiding. Why is anybody shooting kids in schools? Half the time, it’s one of us, a student with guns. Rocky’s an ass. He could shoot us.”

Sam said, “Well, I say we’re done with it. Let’s just stop coming to school until they stop shooting us.”

They were still shaking a little bit, even after school, huddled behind the gym. They talked about it. They agreed to quit school until the shooting stopped. They’d had enough. They were done with it.

That night, they met in Reggie’s garage and wrote up and posted their declaration on the Internet: “We’re sick of being scared and terrorized by people shooting up students and teachers in schools. We’re tired of hiding behind desks and doorways and in closets. Until this stupid gun violence stops, we’re not going to school. The U.S. is the only country in the world that murders its kids in schools. We’re done. We will not return to school until somebody does something to stop school gun violence.”

The next morning, they didn’t go to school. They went to a public library instead, and started sharing. They sent messages to their friends. They posted messages on online forums and message boards. They sent letters to newspapers. They shared what they were doing on social media, in various ways.

The school day wasn’t even over before the whole thing started blowing up. Kids carried cellphones. Parents insisted on it, so they can connect with kids and say goodbye to them if they’re getting shot. Kids in schools started getting and sharing the messages, which resonated hard with them, in classes. Everybody was sick of it. Nobody wanted to put up with it anymore. By midnight, these and other messages had been shared over 10 million times. The next day, a million kids skipped school.

By the end of the week, fewer than a third of U.S. children and youth were inside, attending schools, while the rest were outside of schools, making lots of noise, holding signs, acting up and acting out. “Stop Shooting Us!”, was a common sign, and “No More Murder in School!” and “School Is Killing Us!” read others. Adorable but riled up elementary and middle schoolers were pacing in front of schools, chanting: “Hell no, we won’t go. Hell no, we won’t go. To School. Until you stop shooting us.”

The news stations were all over it. This kind of thing sells stories, gets eyeballs, and makes money. Photo opps were brilliant. Cute kids taking a stand. Angry kids telling adults off. Scared kids reacting. The protest blew up in news and media channels all over the country.

Millions of kids across the country lined up to participate in this protest. They were simple-minded. They were uninterested in adults blathering on about the gun violence problem while doing nothing. They didn’t care about any 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment, or gun and bullet sale profits, or thoughts and prayers. They wanted this bullshit to stop. They were sick of being terrorized in school, and at home or play.

They stuck to their guns, so to speak. They refused to go to school unless the gun violence stopped. Many were thrown into detention centers. Police, school officials and other adults tried to bully them. They were having none of it. Kids can be really stubborn if they choose to be. Millions chose that. Three months long, from March and into June, they struck, ruining the school year, missing graduations. They cost schools millions, because schools receive money based on how many students attend.

They kicked off national debates, dominated news and talk shows, and got in adult faces and hearts. More importantly, they moved President Sioux, who went to war for them. She got riled up, and President Sioux riled up was like a fiery force of nature. She fought for her people, without fear. Government Takeback Amendment efforts were underway, and this issue got folded into all of that.

When the Constitution was rewritten, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment was eliminated, assault weapons were banned by U.S. government, and gun control power was given to the states, *Students for Not Getting Murdered in School* was credited with much of it. A group of kids had changed their worlds.