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English 11 Ms. Jason

*How to Keep Our Children Safe from Violence: What Have We Done?*

Jacksonville, Florida. Oakland, California. Aurora, Colorado. Portland, Oregon. Newton, Connecticut. Do you know what all these places have in common? Is it the weather? The friendly staff and students? The education quality? Maybe so, but since March 2012 all these schools have a new, horrifying connection; all of them have been victims to violent school shootings. Violent shootings have shaken schools worldwide but the most recent school shooting in Newtown, Connecticut was the straw to break the camel's back and politicians all over are scrambling to put together a new reformed plan to reduce the numbers. However, there are so many differences in opinion that absolutely nothing is getting done. I have a plan of my own—a simple 3 point plan that includes refining procedures used in schools in the event of an emergency, reducing the amount of violence found in various forms of media, and providing armed guards for schools all over America.

First of all, it is important that lawmakers enforce a regulation in current safety procedures. Bottom line is what schools are doing now in the event of an emergency is just not enough, as if they don't believe that the kinds of things that have been happening in Tucson and Aurora and Newtown could ever reach them. According to the CARE International Safety & Security Handbook, in the event of an armed intruder within the building, the current procedures are to instruct students to stay away from windows and

doors and move to the interior of the building, take shelter in the best protected areas, such as a bathroom, the basement, under a stairwell, or behind a solid wall, and, if possible, contact the appropriate authorities for assistance (CARE International Safety & Security Handbook). In other words, all the administrators are required to do was lock students in the classrooms in the dark and wait, hoping that help arrives before the enemy. Hope tends to sooth the mind, however when there is such chance that lives could be lost sitting and hoping just isn't enough to provide the safety needed in the gravity of that situation, for if there were some issue, there would be countless casualties. This is why I believe that new points should be added to the CARE International Safety & Security Handbook, simply requiring that schools should be able to intercept the intruder at the door, armed or not. Before Taft students can even enter, who are no strangers to the building, we must walk through a metal detector and be patted down and thoroughly searched for weapons. I saw a student who couldn't even sneak a lighter in the building, so there is absolutely no way an unfamiliar face could sneak an assault rifle and two pistols into the building after adding this simple and microscopic point.

In addition to enhancing the effectiveness and reliability of school safety precautions, I believe that armed guards are also necessary. I understand completely why some would disagree with providing armed guards in elementary schools—we don't want to turn an elementary school into the pentagon—however, I would ask them to consider this: December 14, 2012, a troubled man heavily armed with a Bushmaster assault rifle and two pistols waltzed right into Sandy Hook Elementary to rip apart 6 staffers and no less than 20 first grade students. Twenty families torn apart at the loss of their sons and daughters; their little brothers and sisters, their babies who were just sent out the door to

experience school for the first time. You could imagine the tears pouring from the eyes of their loved ones wondering how could this have happened. If there had in fact been armed guards they would have been able to intercept this assault, and therefore limit or even neutralize the number of casualties. However since there was no one there to counter his attack, he was permitted to take 26 innocent lives, 20 of those lives being six year olds, who were never even given a chance to become the engineers and the chefs and the scientists who could have made our parents proud of this generation. Having armed guards in an elementary school sounds terrible to parents now because they don't think about the what-if's and the possibilities of their children's lives being in danger. Eyes need to be popped wide open, and parents, school administrators, and our country's legislatures need to help prepare for these what-if's, because they do happen, have happened, and could happen again if nothing is being done because legislatures can't compromise on what is best for the safety of our country.

Finally, it is MANDATORY that we eliminate exposure to violence to children for long periods. In today's economic conditions, parents are stolen from their children's lives by work they are left to entertain themselves, and nowadays the only thing they scream their heads off for is blood, gore, and violence, violence, violence. Now you can find anything in a movie or games, a "drug" that satisfies this newfound addiction. A survey conducted by PEW Research Center in 2008 state that "97% of teens in America play video games, 66% of those containing violence" (Violent Video Games and Young People). The most popular games are violent role-playing games, better known as RPGs, which gives teens the ability to play the role of a violent character, and these games such as Grand Theft Auto, Call of Duty, and other game series practically show our children

step-by-step how to hold, handle, and obtain a gun. Kids are even becoming “desensitized” to violence, says Dr. L. Rowell Huesmann, director of the Research Center for Group Dynamics at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research in Ann Arbor (Violent video games linked to child aggression). "Once you're emotionally numb to violence, it's much easier to engage in violence," He goes on to say; in other words, by continuing to expose teens to violent media, we are raising and training mass murderers like those Portland, Tucson, and Newtown have witnessed.

In conclusion, refining procedures used in schools in the event of an emergency, reducing the amount of violence found in various forms of media, and providing armed guards for schools all over America are just three simple and very obvious steps that can be taken toward a safer America. However there are still countless things that can be done. I know we Americans just love our freedom to own a gun, but we need to realize that this freedom also gives criminals the opportunity to “suddenly” become mentally ill and forget that owning a gun doesn’t grant them the privilege to point it at anyone they damn well please and squeeze the trigger. Also, is there really a need for every man, woman, and child to own a high power assault rifle with a 100-round drum? We are so afraid of violence that our homes are flooded with shotgun slugs and .50 caliber rounds to protect ourselves. Most people don’t realize how popular it has become, making the biggest danger to Americans nowadays Americans themselves. I just wish America could conjure up the courage and common sense to put aside their own wants for the greater good, because it seems to me that legislatures and diehard gun owners won’t even open their eyes to the issue until one of their own wives or children are taken down by a bullet from a gun.

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