

Winning Entries – 2017 Greenfield Peace Writing Scholarship
“How would you solve the public health crisis of gun violence?”

3rd Place – Kennah Watts, Oregon City High School

The Power of Availability

She dragged herself out of bed each morning to complete her routine. She stepped inside her cracking tub. As the scalding water touched her body, she sighed; what used to comfort her was now another burden. She dressed and left for school. Kayla shuffled through the hallways, hugging her body to keep from falling apart. She saw mouths speaking, yet didn't hear words. Once home, her hands spun the lock. 20-14-7. CLICK. She pried open her father's safe, revealing the solution to her despondent state. Pointed against her head, she knew her finger was pulling the trigger, but she couldn't feel it. She would never feel again.

“There are 20,000 gun suicides in the U.S. every year... That's more than half of all suicides and two-thirds of all gun deaths.”

WOOSH! A fighter jet zooms through the sky, hot on his enemy's trail, until finally in range. “PEW PEW PEW,” Edwin screamed as he ran giddily, thrusting his toy plane through the air. His excitement and speed grew; he could no longer control himself. With a boom, Edwin tumbled through the grass, smashing his favorite toy. Lost without his fighter jet, he began to wander in search of a new toy. Nothing seemed as thrilling, exhilarating, entertaining. His home seemed to have a toy deficit, until he peeked in his parents' room. It was slick and made his eyes sparkle. How could he resist? Picking it up, he began to examine the new toy. This was incredible compared to his water pistols. Edwin readjusted his hands for a better view of the barrel then his body dropped, motionless. No plane would fly in Edwin's hand again.

“Nearly 1.7 million children live in households where guns are stored...This makes American children 16 times more likely to be unintentionally killed by a gun.”

Shane felt his blood begin to boil. “How many times do I need to tell her to clean the house? I work all day. All she has to do is clean the house!” He remembered the previous times Carla had neglected to clean their home. “She can't get it through her tiny brain. I've yelled, I've screamed. She even made me hit her last week.” Shane was fuming now. “I know what I have to do,” he thought and stomped into their room.

“Hello, sweetie,” Carla said gingerly. She could sense the anger, which had become quite familiar. He dismissed her; Shane's mind was set. He ripped open his sock drawer. He pulled out the solution, pointing it at Carla. “Now will you learn how to clean?” Shane bellowed at her. Stunned with fear, Carla could not respond. This wasn't enough for Shane – he quickly pulled the trigger. As her body slouched against the bed frame, he realized his mistake. What Shane believed was his solution became his demise. He too slouched.

“Abused women are five times more likely to be killed by their abuser if the abuser owns a firearm.”

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It was an early morning in 1997 when the Australian sun glistened on the morning paper. Walter retrieved it from his porch. “MASSIVE BUYBACK, 650,000 LEGALLY OWNED GUNS PEACEFULLY SEIZED AND DESTROYED” the headline filled him with hope. As he continued through the article, he was astounded. “The average firearm suicide rate has declined 57%,” and “the average firearm homicide rate has dropped near 42%.” He thought about the lives saved, the lives which can now be created, the lives with endless opportunities. “What a ridiculously simple fix,” he thought. “With fewer guns, there’s less violence.”

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