

To whom it may concern:

Since the shooting at Columbine High School I've been concerned. Since the shooting in Arizona I've been alarmed. Since the shooting in Aurora I've been afraid and since the shooting in Newtown I've been horrified.

I am 36. I am a mother of two girls, 8 & 5, who attend elementary school in Stamford, CT.

I am a social studies teacher in a public high school in CT and as soon as I was able to pull myself together and had discussed the shooting with 4 of my 5 classes (3 U.S. history, 1 Mideast), I set up a midterm in which the students would be preparing for CAPT and responding to a prompt, with articles on both sides, about whether or not teachers should be armed. I believe the public should be educated about this issue.

Prior to Dec 14, I'd spent a great deal of time considering whether the wealth gap or the environment was going to be the biggest issue of our time. Then came the shooting in Newtown. My life has changed since then. It will never be the same, and I didn't even lose a coworker, friend or loved one.

But, I am tired of having my life dictated by an empowered minority with a lot of power and money. Lobbyists are the least democratic thing in our society and I firmly believe that there is a silent majority that believes in common sense gun laws.

I support Colin Powell's assertion that you can own weapons, legally, but that there should be universal background checks. I know that the second amendment doesn't offer free reign to have the most powerful assault weapons out there, and as many as you like.

I believe that common sense gun laws are patriotic. I believe in the Constitution. I support the Preamble and know that to "form and more perfect union" and "ensure domestic tranquility" we MUST act NOW.

The issue of gun violence is a public health issue that the CDC should've been tracking and researching for as long as its been a problem. We shouldn't need a thaw on the freeze that was surreptitiously put in place by a small interest group.

I have been haunted since Newtown. Having experienced the personal tragedy of having to identify my own brother's body and having small children of my own, I can only imagine the situation of those families and the first responders.

No one needs access to the guns that were available to Adam Lanza.

Also, having been a teacher in NYC and suburban CT, I have been afraid that a student might harm me. But none of those students had diagnosed mental illness. Yet, they all were white males (fewer than 5 and all in suburban CT, never in NYC).

There are MANY roots to this issue. I am a staunch feminist who believes that our society has castrated males. I don't blame Hollywood or video games. I do blame over-vigilant parenting, fear of children experiencing the realities of life (including frustration, anger, hurt and consequences), the fragmentation of communities, and more, complicated causes.

I also believe that guns kill people. I fully support extremely restrictive legislation: thorough background checks, waiting periods, banning many kinds of guns, limiting suppliers and ensuring that legislation is obeyed, locking up weapons in homes, and doing anything and everything possible to debilitate the black market. For starters.

I am also a teacher who regularly provides her students with evidence of the inequities in this country and I believe that there is no accident that both our Gini-coefficient and our rates of gun violence resemble those of Swaziland and the Cote d'Ivoire. Economic inequity IS pandemic. Gun violence has been epidemic in our inner cities but it takes a tragedy in a white suburb to get the nation's attention. Racism remains a horrific reality in this nation.

I ache for the families and victims of Newtown. I will not stand by and watch it happen again without making my voice heard. I will attend rallies and meetings and protests and teach-ins to try and make this country a better place for my kids. I spent so much time worried about them growing up female - concerned with the predictable drop in self-esteem that they may very well experience with puberty - and then a far more pressing crisis pulled the rug out from under me.

I am an active citizen and I want legislators who will support me and the many other mothers, parents, grandparents, teachers, doctors, police and first responders who know we can do better.

Please, I urge you, pass and enforce common sense gun laws. Protecting our kids is patriotic and Constitutional.

Thank you for your kind attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Cathy S.
Stamford, CT
Mother of 2 and teacher