

I am a mother to four kids, living nineteen miles from Sandy Hook Elementary. I grew up in Montana and Wyoming, on a ranch, and my parents used guns to protect our sheep from coyotes. I fired my first adult gun at eight, and spent a happy childhood loving archery and my brother's BB gun. My brother was an armorer in the US Army, before he was killed overseas in 1995. My father still hunts when he can get an elk license, and I am happy to feed that to my kids instead of factory-farmed meat. So you see that I am not a knee-jerk liberal who has never been near a gun and knows nothing of their uses. But I am also a parent who refuses to have them in her home with small children, because of the evidence that that increases the risk of fatal accidents.

And now I am a parent reeling with horror over the attacks on tiny babies so near me. And with guilt, for I have watched every one of these massacres in our country and been appalled and horrified, especially over the children, and I have never written anyone about it nor done one thing to change our culture or laws. These gun massacres must stop. If a mentally ill man attacked my child, I'd choose the knife attack my child and his class survived over a gun attack they could not.

I ask you to look at the example of Australia, where a conservative prime minister signed a law banning assault weapons, buying back 650,000 of them and regulating the use of the 80% of guns that remained in private hands. They haven't had a massacre since, and their gun homicide rate has dropped, I read, by 40%. I want a civilian ban on assault weapons, high-capacity magazines, and hollow-point bullets; a buy-back of the ones that are out there; regulation and high taxes on ammo, perhaps with the exception of ammo purchased and used at a firing range; all the background check loopholes closed; insurance and gun safes required along with life-of-the-gun liability; and no license without character references from enough people that it's not just someone's partners in crime vouching for them. Then when we've scraped some of these rampage weapons off the fabric of our society, I want serious attention to the resources we give families living with mental illness.

You want to know why I want this, if the stories and images from Sandy Hook aren't enough to move you to action? Our Advent activity that weekend was Christmas bubble baths - food dye and bubbles. I intended Christmas colors, but my eleven-year-old chose blue, and my four-year-old yellow. My seven-year-old chose red, and as he lay back in the water, I commented, pleased, that it looked so pretty, with the white bubbles and red water, just like Christmas. And my son? My sensitive, artistic, fierce son, who has seen no tv, heard no radio, been told an absolute minimum about what happened, looked back at me and said, "No, Mom. It's blood. I'm lying in a bloodbath."

Please, finally, act to save us all any further moments where one seven-year-old has to imagine lying in a bloodbath, because other seven-year-olds near him died in one.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Turner