

Our family came to this country in 1972 as immigrants wanting to live the American Dream. My parents found jobs, worked hard, learned the language, taught their kids right from wrong and made sure we were educated to have a better life than the ones they had growing up in Korea.

In 1975 they saved enough money to purchase a 7-11 Store franchise and moved the whole family from Maryland to Springfield Mass. They worked hard becoming one of the highest grossing franchise in the first year and were loved by all of their customers.

We were a very close family. Giving both my parents hugs & kisses before they went to work was an everyday routine for me, until one morning in 1978 waking up and getting ready for school when a couple of my parents friends showed up at the house and informed me that I wasn't going to school that day, but they were taking me somewhere else. I ended up at a hospital, then to a room where I saw my father laying in bed with his arm in a sling, my brothers standing by his bedside and the awful smell of his blood permeating the room. A gunshot from an illegal gun had permanently disfigured his arm. As a result, he never regained 100% use of his arm again.

I was only 11 yrs old and I immediately knew what had happened, but what I didn't know til later that afternoon was that my mother had been shot in the head at close range and was dead at the hands of two young men using these illegally obtained guns. My father, seeing my deceased mother on the floor, literally begged for his life explaining that his children would be orphans. The gunmen, for reasons unknown fled without killing my father. My whole life was shattered in that moment from that day forward. Never having her here with me to see me go to high school, prom, graduate, get my drivers license, get married, see the birth of her 2 beautiful grandchildren and then see them do the same.

I am not here to have anyone feel sorry for me, but want to share the tragic event that happened to our family involving gun violence. We didn't see this tragedy as a way for stronger gun control, but the opposite, we became law-abiding gun owners to be able to protect our families from this sort of tragedy from happening to us again. Those of us determined to protect ourselves as each surviving member of my family has done, will be made vulnerable by proposed gun control laws that will do little in protecting the public but will serve to limit law abiding citizens. A legal gun in the hand of my mother or father, with a magazine large enough to stop two armed murders, may have led to a different outcome.

The 2nd Amendment gives the people the right to keep and bear arms. Stronger gun control will not stop the gun violence nor will it stop the criminals or mentally ill people from getting hold of these guns illegally and killing innocent people. My opinion is supported by fact, not by conjecture as we saw the result of the last assault guns ban. This law that the government is proposing will only make things harder for law-abiding citizens like myself from being able to protect ourselves and our families. Guns just don't shoot themselves, they are not to blame for what happened to our family, the blame lies solely on the person pulling the trigger.

We are realistic. We understand that criminals that wish to use guns will find them regardless of the law.

Just with the so called "war on drugs," as long as there is a demand, the government will not now or anytime soon have the resources to protect my family from these crimes. Just as with the so called war on drugs, criminal's will have little problem obtaining items like large magazines that are nothing more than a metal box with a spring on the black market.

As a survivor of a family changed forever by murder, I urge you not to use this horrible tragedy, one that is so close to my own heart, as an excuse to push forward a personal agenda.

I wish to leave you with this final thought; If we are to learn anything from this tragedy in Newtown and others like it, most have occurred at places where guns were not permitted. Mentally ill cowards have shown a pattern for preying on those that cannot defend themselves. Think about it.

Thank you for your valuable time.

Sora Garlasco