

LOCK IT UP

Grass Roots for Gun Safety



Louise Sagalyn

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“Have we been fighting the wrong wars to keep our children safe? Nearly five times more children and teens were killed by guns in 2010 than United States soldiers in action in Iraq and Afghanistan.”
~Marian Wright Edelman

Why Wait for Legislation?

Guns that are left unattended or unlocked are proven magnets for children and adolescents. Whatever your views on gun control, most Americans believe that young people should not have unsupervised access to weapons. Yet, more than a million and a half children under the age of 18 are living in households with loaded and unlocked firearms.

Citizens are not without power. A national grass roots advocacy campaign for firearm safety directed toward gun owning families could save the lives and injuries of thousands of children and teens each year.



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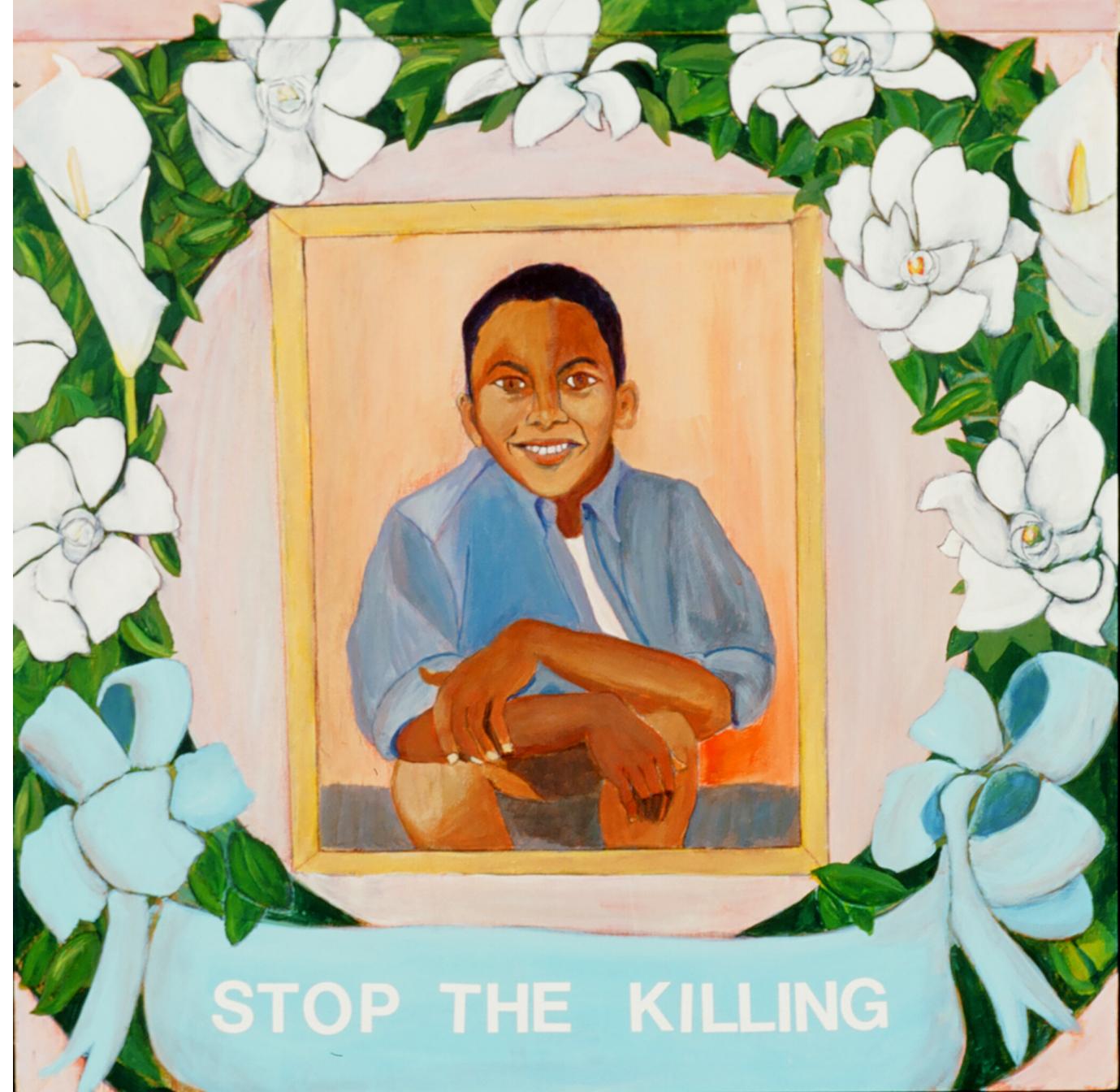
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The Carnage

In 2010, 2,694 children died from guns in the United States.

The death rate from guns of US children under 15 years old was nearly 12 times higher than those in 25 other industrialized countries combined.

1,213 children committed suicide with a gun each year on average between 1993-2002—and an average of 135 each year were under 15 years of age.



Guns Breed Curiosity

Despite strong parental warnings of the deadly nature of firearms, guns continue to be a strong magnet for curious children, particularly boys.

The vast majority of accidental deaths revolve around children's **access** to firearms and the shootings are either self-inflicted or done by another child.



Guns DO Kill

"Guns don't kill people, people kill people." ~ NRA

Despite the most famous quote from the NRA, access to guns does kill people.

Just before the Newtown Massacre that took the lives of 26 people, there was a similar school rampage in central China. There, 22 children were injured. There were no deaths.

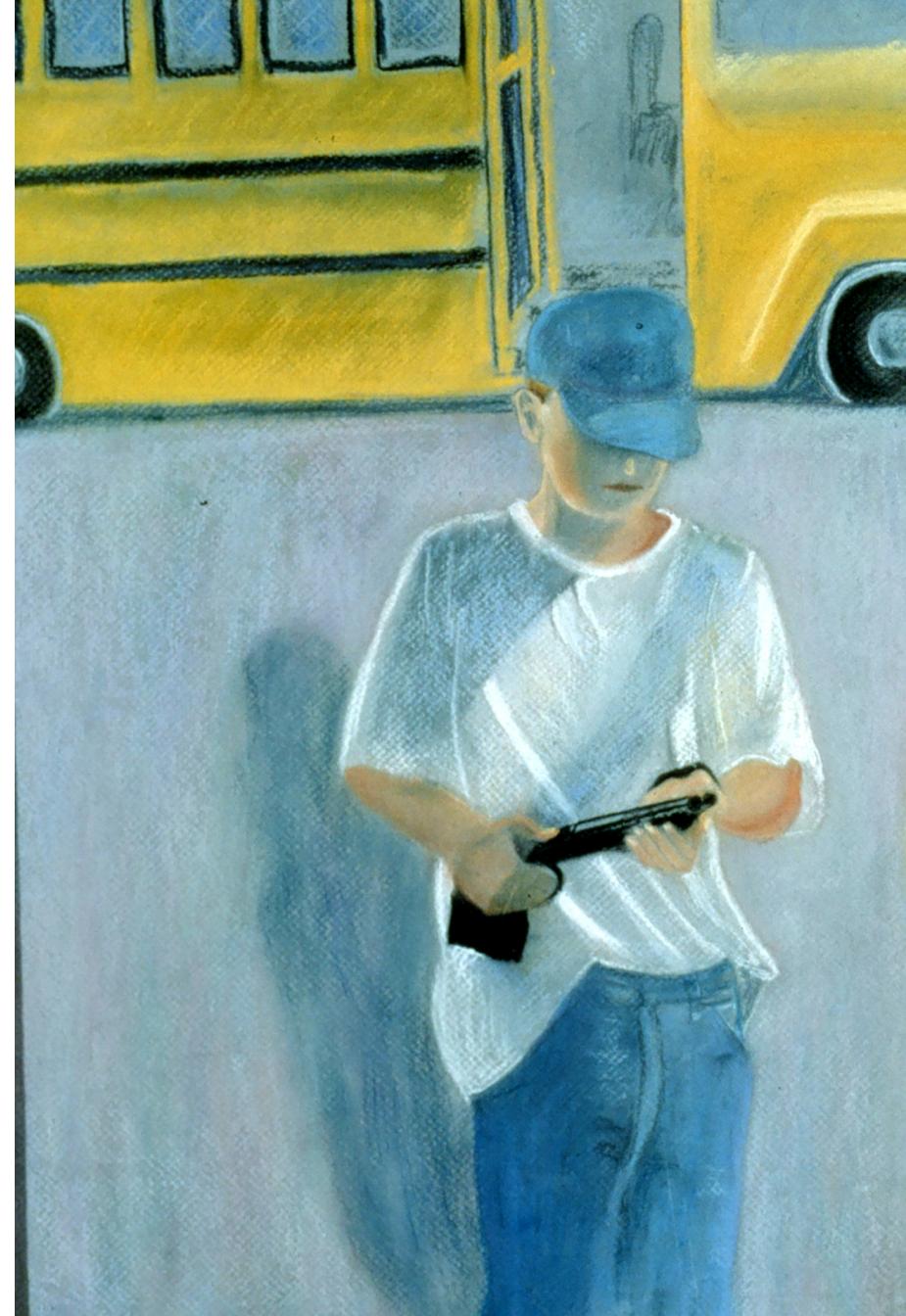
The difference? The Connecticut attacker had a gun. The Chinese attacker had a knife.



Guns at Home

In the United States, 22 million children live in a home with at least one firearm.

And 1.69 million children 18 and under live with loaded and unlocked household firearms.



Home Protection?

*“The only thing that stops a bad guy with a gun,
Is a good guy with a gun.”* ~NRA

Contrary to common thinking, a gun in a houseful of ‘good guys’ increases the risks of accidental deaths, homicides and suicide. For every time a gun kills in self defense, there are:

11 attempted or completed suicides

7 criminal assaults/homicides with a gun

4 unintentional shooting deaths or injuries



It Keeps Happening

Newtown is only the worst.

There have been 44 school shootings in 24 states in the 14 months since the Newtown Massacre. 65 were killed or injured.

Minors who obtained their firearms from home carried out 70% of the school shootings.

We need new strategies.



Accidental Gun Deaths Undercounted

Guns are the second highest cause of death among children after car accidents.

Statistics regarding accidental deaths of children are faulty. The states, responsible for counting these deaths, have different definitions and standards for counting accidental death—many are counted as homicides, some are uncounted.

Because of this, accidental deaths are estimated to be at least twice as prevalent as counted by the National Health Center for Health Statistics, a division of the CDC.



Gun Myths

Most parents with guns think their children do not know where they hide them. However, 8 in 10 first graders know where their parents' guns are hidden.

Many parents think their child is not capable of firing a gun. However, children as young as three can pull the trigger of most American guns.

Parents believe their children know the difference between real guns and toy guns, but few children under the age of 8 years do.

Parents often believe their child would not touch a gun because they "know better." Studies reveal that to be false, their curiosity overpowers parental admonitions.



Why Not Guns?

In a North Carolina study: 99% of parents had at least one smoke detector—only 57% locked away their guns.

In another North Carolina study: 72% of parents cover unused electrical outlets and poisonous household substances—36% store guns loaded and 45% store them unlocked.



Shameful Access

American military and law enforcement officers have 4 million guns. American citizens have 310 million guns.

Only 39% of homes with children and firearms keep their firearms locked, unloaded and separate from ammunition.

School shooters found their guns at home or at a relative's home.

47% of high school students and 22% of middle school students claimed they could obtain a gun if they wanted to.

Legislation would be helpful, but a national grass roots campaign, similar to the Mothers Against Drunk Drivers or the anti-smoking campaign, could persuade the 310 million gun owners to lock, remove ammunition and keep their guns out of the hands of children, particularly their own.



Injuries Abound

15,576 children and teens were injured by firearms in 2010.

1 every 34 minutes

43 every day

300 every week



Grass Roots Campaign

Although the NRA opposes so-called “safe storage laws,” 70 percent of NRA members are in favor of common sense legislation. When studies reveal that even the most extensive parental warnings fail to protect children from the magnetic lure of playing with firearms, shouldn't we muster the forces for a more extensive campaign of persuasion?

Mothers Against Drunk Driving became a strong moral force against drinking and driving. Local efforts offer free rides on holidays when drinking is prevalent. The national campaign against smoking has cut in half the number of smokers during the last 30 years. Legislation was not involved when these two successful campaigns began. The owners of the 310 million guns need to be shamed into protecting their children from firearm deaths.

The American Academy of Pediatrics believes the best way to prevent gun-related injuries to children is to remove guns from the home. However, if the choice is to keep a household gun, it is important that it be unloaded and locked, and the ammunition stored and locked in a separate location.

Establishing gun safety rules may not replace necessary gun legislation, but it could go a long way toward preventing the life long trauma a child suffers when responsible for an accident occurring while playing with accessible guns.

Above all, gun safety rules should include safe storage:

Guns should be unloaded and locked away and ammunition stored separately.

Safety devices such as gun locks, lock boxes and gun safes should be considered.

Possible new technology might be investigated, including the personal gun and guns with grip recognition.

Organizations With Sensible Gun Solutions

Brady Campaign

[ASK: Asking Saves Kids, Speak Up!, Suicide Proof Your Home](#)

Everytown for Gun Safety

Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America

Newtown Action Alliance

Sandy Hook Promise

The National PTA

Sources

Children's Defense Fund

Center for Disease Control and Prevention

New York Times



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