

Shoaib Laghari
Academic Product/Essay
Option A - Existing Essay or Story (Written on 2/25/18)

To Megan Barry:

Nashville today is not the same as it was before, as I remember it when I was much more young and careless. Maybe this is due to the fact that I had never noticed what was really occurring beyond my tunnel vision. But I will stand in oblivion no longer, as there are too many issues in reality for which our city needs voice for reform. In Nashville, and in any other city in America, there are major problems in local situations, as well as country-wide conflicts. Some that I wish to bring attention to, that I can no longer accept as part of my society, are issues regarding school, police, and safety, which all trace back to Nashville's government. We must take initiative and bring upon Nashville change, change for a better life, and change for a safer society. Megan Barry, in times when no one else dares to take risks, we, as citizens, depend on you to take the first step in resolving these public matters, that affect every single life in America.

While it may be a smaller issue, school lunch should not be overlooked and ignored. It is the responsibility of the local government to ensure all students health, if not satisfaction. However, Nashville has failed to do both. At my high school, I have asked every day for the past months, for one favor. "Is there any peanut butter and jelly today?" I ask the lunch lady. I get the same, disappointing reply... No. I am told that they are waiting for the government to distribute their meals, and without the government doing their job, as far as I know, I have been restrained (because of religious purposes) to only a single apple for lunch every day for the last month. How much effort does it take for the government to fulfill their duty and supply schools with the lawful meals they are sworn to provide? All big changes start out small, and to get the stone rolling, one thing we must take action in are the miniscule everyday issues in life, like making sure kids in our city are fed and not left with a hungry stomach and a frowning face.

Next, a more important and larger-impacting issue today is the unethical and unlawful behavior of police. Like before, this was also an issue I encountered by personal experience. Approximately a month ago, on the way back from school, as I was driving home, my family got pulled over at the turn right before my apartment's entrance. We were unsure and slightly upset about the ticket because we were all seemingly certain that what we had been charged for, not coming to a complete stop at the stop sign, was false. The next day, we come to the same stop sign. Acting with extra precaution, we make certain to come to a complete stop and pause for multiple seconds before taking that turn. Not surprisingly, we were soon to hear sirens. Two days, back to back, the same cop, at the same turn, had ticketed us for the same reason. The officer claims that he does not watch the car, but keeps his eyes on the tires to see if they come to a complete stop. Not only is this inadequate training for police to determine real road safety, but it is altogether senseless. Additionally, it was not just a

coincidence that we were pulled over with such rare frequency. I had seen police pulling over civilians daily, sometimes multiple cars pulled to the side of the road on one day. One thought which passed my head was police exploitation of the area. Taking advantage of a higher income area to go around and ticket who they want, when they want, and how they want, figuring that whoever they pull over will just put up with their action. This sort of corruptness makes me sick. My own sister (who also goes to high school), had never been pulled over and greatly feared the thought of it, and when it happened, the officer put her into uncontrollable tears. The job of a police officer is very important, and one of the most crucial things to bring a safe place for people in our city. But what we are currently witnessing is not acceptable. Governments need to abide their law officers to ethical integrity and enforce proper etiquette. Police should not be going around pulling people over for no reason, that is not keeping our people safe. If they really want to do their job, they should be utilized to keeping schools safe, robberies (which have been occurring at an oddly frequent rate in Green Hills) at a minimum, and other situations which might be of actual harm to the people of Nashville under control.

But if these issues must be temporarily set aside to focus on the safety of people regarding guns, then it is essential we do so. Guns, in my opinion, should be the number one priority in America as of right now. They must be dealt with immediately, because more and more lives are being lost as time unhesitatingly passes.

Regardless, there are still some people who sit on the other side of the fence. President Donald Trump believes that the resolution to shootings is by including more guns in the process, training teachers and such to be weapon trained on the job. However, if we want to stop guns altogether, additional guns is most certainly not the answer. This idea accounts for a great number of risks. Teachers are not meant to be trained with these deadly weapons. The possibility always exists that a misfire risks the life of a student, or a student finds and steals one of these government-distributed weapons, and does things unimaginable to our minds. Others believe that we need guns for "self defense." But consider the fact that if we take action on the prohibition of all rifles, that one would not ever encounter the situation to defend their lives so. Less guns would mean less overall danger throughout the community. If it is harder for these criminals and psychotics to get easy access to weaponry, then it is better for the lives of everyone directly and indirectly involved. Another argument states that we should not ban these "assault rifles", since they are similar to hunting rifles in many aspects. Realistically, this is not the case. Assault rifles, like M16s and AR-15s, are not meant to be in the hands of everyday people. They are no longer rifles, they are weapons of mass destruction and evidently deadly. I am not anti-Second Amendment, but I strongly believe that due to recent tragedies in America, what is necessary is at least total restriction of all non-hunting weapons, if not the complete ban of guns altogether.

How many lives must be lost for America to realize that what hurts us most is by all means ourselves?
December 14, 2012... October 1, 2017... February 14, 2018: 27 lives, 59 lives, and 17 lives, respectively. The Sandy Hook shooting was one that could have been avoided. It did not take an intensive amount of effort for an ordinary adult to isolate himself from his family, steal a weapon, and be on his way to take the lives of 20

helpless six-to-seven year olds. In the tragic Las Vegas shooting, all it took was a seemingly-innocent 64 year old to get his hands on a weapon of mass destruction, and set up a murder machine on the 32nd floor of a hotel adjacent to a large crowd. The recent Florida shooting, angering me especially, was one which I remain clueless on how the government did not catch and stop, with all the social media and pre-tragedy evidence. All three shooters were proven mentally unstable, but that does not make it anywhere near okay for these events to take place. Availability to destructive weapons is far too accessible in current times, and if we don't do something about it, things like this will continue to happen. The Florida shooting could have been avoided if we had realized that a schizophrenic student had been expelled from his high school and seemed to be suspicious when it came to youtube comments and social media. If we had implemented and enforced sufficient gun laws, Adam Lanza would not have been able to go to his "gun enthusiast" mother, steal one of her rifles, shoot her, and continue to take an additional 26 more lives. Even the unstable 64 year old, whose motives for the shooting remain uncertain, could have been avoided if mental health care was easier to access than an assault rifle, along with death-causing attachments, at a local gun store. I cannot put up with this anymore. We must do something about this, if we continue to sit and watch in silence, no progress will be made. Prayers and condolences are appreciated, but we need reform Megan Barry.

We are capable of taking the first step. It has been done before. In 1934, the Thompson (commonly referred to as the Tommy Gun) was outlawed as it was decided that it was a military grade weapon. The assault rifles sold in gun stores today are no different. It is not safe, no matter how much we focus on selling it to innocent and sane purchasers, to keep these guns in the market for anyone to attempt to get a hold of. More recently, Trump has taken a tiny step to help towards these shootings: the prohibition of gun stocks (which I do not see why they are legal in the first place). This isn't the exact ban I hoped for in the total degree of it, but it is progress. And in situations like these, the most important thing is that we are making progress, and not frozen solid as acts like these continue to occur.

The idea of a total ban of weapons may seem unrealistic and infeasible, but at minimum we must begin to restrict who can have access to these guns. Megan Barry, I am reaching out to you in hope that you will act upon the issues we confront today. Nashville must take the first step for the country as a whole, because if we don't, no one else will. With the amount of threats visible everywhere in society and horrific events arising more often in our country, it is time for action. It is time for reform. It is time to bring meaningful change to the lives of those in Nashville, Parkland, or anywhere else in America.

Thank you,
Shoaib.