

**Firearms,
for me, is
all about
freedom.**

*Rich Melton, 46, owner of Cover 6 Gear and
city councilman, Gardner, Kans.*

**The voice of the
middle has been
drowned out.**

*Joe Enderby, 36, owner of the Prairie's End
Hunt Club, Dallas*

**The gun
issue is the
single most
important
issue facing
America.**

*James Clark, 51, founder of
Better Family Life's St. Louis
Gun Violence De-escalation
Centers, St. Louis*

**I see gun
violence
every day.**

Dr. Laura Petrey, 50, trauma surgeon, Dallas

**I believe that without
the Second Amendment
we cannot have the
First Amendment.**

*Mauro Farinelli, clothing designer and amateur
competitive shooter, Alexandria, Va.*

he
en

**We just
need to
work
with each
other.**

*Jamison Sweet, 47, Marine Corps veteran
and sound mixer, St. Louis*

**Nothing says female
empowerment like
having total control
over your personal
safety.**

*Cassidy O'Neill, 20, graduate student at
University of North Texas, Denton, Texas*

**I see both
sides of why
guns are
important.**

*Charles Lowe, 42, sergeant, St. Louis
Metropolitan Police Department*

**I went
from being
anti-gun to
pro-gun in
seconds.**

*Megan Boland, 35, strategist and Second Amendment
advocate, Warrenton, Va.*

SPECIAL REPORT GUNS IN AMERICA

THE SEARCH FOR
COMMON GROUND
BEGINS WITH
LISTENING—TO
EVERYONE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JR

STORY BY ABIGAIL ABRAMS AND MELISSA CHAN

THE NUMBERS

The complexity of the gun issue means the evidence for the policies under debate isn't always clear-cut. Here's the data behind the arguments that support different views.

GOOD GUYS WITH GUNS...

rarely thwart active shooters

Of 200 shootings that killed or wounded 1,274 victims from 2000 to 2015, the majority were resolved when the shooter ceased fire, committed suicide or fled, according to U.S. government statistics. Here's a breakdown of interventions:

30%
Law-enforcement gunfire

13%
Unarmed citizens' actions

4%
Armed citizens' gunfire

SOURCE: FBI

stop bad guys with guns

Estimates on how often guns are used defensively range from fewer than 100,000 to more than a million times a year.

There were **235,700** violent crime incidents from 2007 to 2011 in which **victims used a firearm** to threaten or attack the offender.

In **32%** of those cases, the **offender was also armed**

SOURCE: DOJ, BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS

Deborah Wallace and Cindy Chester live about 30 miles from each other in Maryland. They ride the same freeways, read the same billboards, dress for the same weather. To some extent they have even encountered the same trauma. But for all that, it's not easy to locate their common ground.

Wallace teaches in a part of Baltimore where gun violence is so common that in the space of 15 months, seven of the students at her high school were shot dead. Atop a massage table during a sea cruise she had booked hoping to escape reality, "I just cried," Wallace says. "The masseuse thought she hurt me." The 63-year-old views guns as a plague that needs to be eradicated.

In suburban New Carrollton, Chester lives in regret that she did not have a gun at hand, and know how to use it, the day 10 years ago that her ex-boyfriend shot her. She lost her right leg and her unborn child. "It could have changed my whole story," says Chester, 31 and a "firm believer" in the Second Amendment. She wants other women to be empowered to take the action she could not.

Even though they may disagree on guns, their opinions are grounded in lived experience and expressed with a sincerity and respect often missing in the national debate. That was the most consistent takeaway from TIME's project on guns, an undertaking that involved three cities and 245 people over five months. The artist JR assembled the mural on this week's cover from separate photographs of every participant, each with a distinct view on firearms. They were situated in a tableau that evokes not only the spirit of debate associated with the Founding Fathers but something else as well—the unity that flows from a sense of shared enterprise. We saw the same thing in St. Louis; in Washington, D.C.; and in Dallas: We're all in this together.

Owning a gun remains one of the oldest and in many places most cherished traditions in America, but it's no longer as commonplace as it was 230 years ago. The right to "keep and bear arms" with a "well-regulated militia" was regarded as so central to the notion of liberty that it came second in the Bill of Rights only to the freedom to think and speak.

But when the topic is the Second Amendment, the exercise of the First Amendment lately amounts to talking past one another. The gun debate stands frozen in stalemate, advocates unable to agree even on the meaning of words. When one side appeals for "commonsense gun controls," the other hears only "control." When some say "law-abiding gun owners," others only hear "gun." How did we get here? Over time.

AMERICA WAS A RURAL NATION for most of its history. And in many places, firearms remain tools—for sport, for securing food, for a bond to connect generations. In Lewisville, Texas, 10-year-old Cooper Buck

spends many weekends hunting with her parents, something she has done since her grandfather gave her her first gun (it was pink) for Christmas when she was 5. "I really want to pass this down to my kids whenever I get older," she says after being photographed by JR while holding a gun in early September in Dallas. She hopes to show people across the country that her gun is not something to fear.

A firearm can be a beautiful thing, depending on the eye of the beholder. Wander the tables of a gun show and the combination of burnished walnut, tooled steel and exquisite balance might be fondly labeled *artisanal* by a city dweller. The craftsmanship displays tradition and care, including the solemn sort a parent brings to the instruction (often via an NRA safety course) of a youth in the responsible handling of a lethal weapon, a marker in the passage to adulthood.

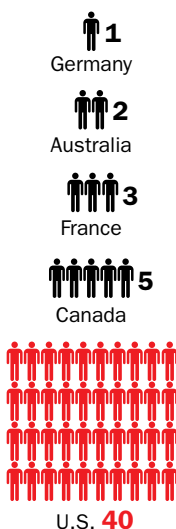
But fewer and fewer Americans learn about

MORE GUNS IN THE U.S....

contributes to more gun deaths

The firearm homicide rate is far higher in the U.S. than in other high-income countries. The firearm suicide rate is also higher.

Gun homicides PER 1 MILLION PEOPLE, 2016



SOURCE: IHME, UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

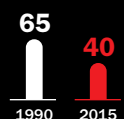
may deter criminal activity

The number of civilian firearms has grown.

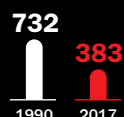


Yet both murder and violent crime rates have generally fallen.

Gun homicides PER 1 MILLION PEOPLE



Violent crime PER 100,000 PEOPLE



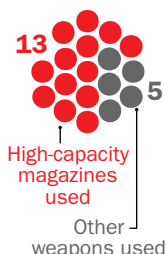
SOURCES: RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION; CDC; FBI

SOME WEAPONS AND ACCESSORIES...

don't belong in civilian hands

Weapons with high-capacity magazines were used in 15 of 133 shootings involving at least four victims from 2009 to 2015. These instances had more casualties.

Average number of victims shot



Average number of victims killed

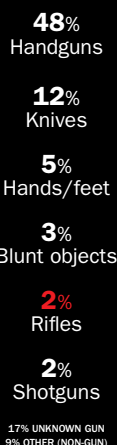


SOURCE: EVERYTOWN FOR GUN SAFETY

are wrongly vilified

Rifles—including the popular AR-15—are used in far fewer homicides than other weapons such as handguns and knives.

Weapons used IN 66,231 HOMICIDES, 2012-16



17% UNKNOWN GUN
9% OTHER (NON-GUN)

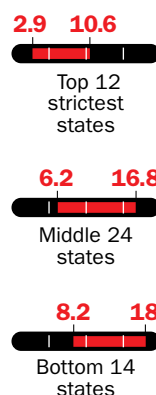
SOURCE: FBI

STRICTER GUN-CONTROL LAWS...

reduce gun deaths

Given all gun deaths—homicides, suicides and accidents—states with stronger gun laws have fewer gun fatalities.

Gun death rates PER 100,000 PEOPLE, 2007-10

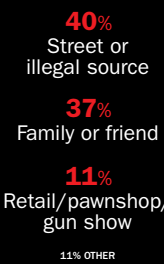


SOURCE: BOSTON CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

won't stop gangs and outlaws

Gangs are responsible for much of the country's violent crime. In general, criminals don't follow gun laws. Convicted prison inmates who had a gun at the time of their offense had acquired it through back channels.

Source of firearm 2004



SOURCES: FBI DOJ BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS

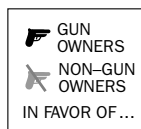
firearms tramping in the woods. Most today live in a suburb, neither city nor country, and in many ways the culture of gun ownership toggles between the two. Rural culture often evokes a defiant individualism that draws on the mythology of the American frontier, and a resistance to regulation as righteous and absolutist as anything free-speech advocates marshal in defense of their own favorite amendment. Gun owners are often gun enthusiasts, and a majority of owners have more than one gun. Research shows that while there are more guns in America than there were 20 years ago, they are owned by a smaller share of the population. Roughly 40% of Americans live in a gun-owning household, but just 30% own guns, according to recent Pew Research Center and Gallup surveys. Other studies have put the percentage of those who personally own guns even lower, at about 22%. And only 4.4 % of Americans over 16 actually hunt.

The view from urban America is markedly

different. In cities like St. Louis, which has lost a significant chunk of its population to the suburbs in recent decades and frequently has the highest murder rate in the country, not everyone experiences gun violence in equal measure. Black Americans are more likely to be shot than their white counterparts, and community leaders say much of the gun culture is tied to a lack of access to education, jobs and opportunity. "If we had better job opportunities, better mentors, better role models... then we wouldn't see this as much," says Emeara Burns, a 20-year-old college student and activist who grew up hearing gunshots in her St. Louis neighborhood.

Shootings are a common occurrence across the country. On an average day, six children are injured or killed in unintentional shootings, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). From 2012 to 2016, the last years for which data is available, an average of 35,000

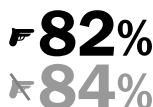
COMMON GROUND?



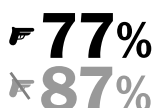
Preventing people with **mental illnesses** from purchasing guns



Barring **gun purchases** by people on no-fly or watch lists



Requiring **background checks** for private sales and at gun shows



Creating a **federal database** to track all gun sales



Banning **assault-style weapons**



SOURCE: PEW

Americans died from gun violence every year, according to the CDC. Nearly two-thirds are suicides. Homicides by gun, after declining from their peak in the 1990s, spiked 31% from 2014 to 2016, the CDC found. What more the CDC might have found we cannot say; Congress voted in 1996 to limit the scope of research into gun deaths and injuries by the country's premier health agency.

Similarly, there is wide disagreement over how to count mass shootings in America. The biggest point of contention is the minimum number of victims that qualifies as "mass." There is, however, no question that the maximum number keeps climbing. The record for deadliest shooting in U.S. history having been set at 49 at Orlando's Pulse nightclub on June 12, 2016, stood for just over a year. It was eclipsed by the slaughter of 58 people at a Las Vegas music festival on Oct. 1, 2017.

School shootings, astonishing a generation ago, have taken on the element of routine—both in the frequency with which they happen and in the public mind. "Active shooter" drills are now familiar to many kindergartners. And parents in suburbs see their children off in the morning with the pit in their stomach parents in inner cities have felt for decades.

At the start of the school year, Beth Poquette Drews asked her music class at a Dallas middle school to create a "respect agreement" outlining how they would treat one another for the rest of the school year. "Usually the answers we receive are things like 'Don't interrupt,' 'Keep your hands to yourself,' 'Listen to each other'—the typical things you would expect a child to say," she says. "But this year the first one that came up on the list was 'Don't shoot each other.'"

The school shootings also underscore the utter paralysis in our politics. In a Gallup poll taken in March, 67% of Americans said they wanted stricter laws on firearms sales, the highest percentage for any Gallup poll since 1993. A Quinnipiac survey found almost every American, 97%, in support of universal background checks. Yet Congress hasn't passed the Manchin-Toomey measure to expand background checks, first introduced after 20 first-graders were killed at Sandy Hook Elementary School in 2012.

"It's hard for people to settle for the modest progress or the modest change," says Senator Pat Toomey, a Pennsylvania Republican. Attention tends to gather instead at one extreme or the other, where maximalist positions generate enthusiasm among the confidently certain. In Texas, state representative Jonathan Stickland, a Republican, wants to remove permit requirements on gun owners in an approach known as "constitutional carry." And in Northern California, Representative Eric Swalwell, a Democrat, stokes gun owners' worst fears by proposing that they be required to sell their military-style semiautomatic assault rifles to the government, in a "mandatory buyback."

As Colin Goddard, 33, a survivor of the 2007

Virginia Tech shooting, puts it, "Guns are a symbol for a lot of people, and they mean different things. I think the symbol to some Americans is of tradition, of family, of history. And others I think view it as a symbol of death, fear, destruction. And when you have such different values and feelings associated with one symbol like that, I think it helps explain why this issue and guns is so difficult to talk about."

WE DIVIDE OURSELVES. We cluster around the warmth of shared opinions, separate ourselves by disposition, neighborhood or, especially, news feed. Joe Enderby, a 36-year-old who owns a bird-hunting club in the Dallas area, calls himself a strong supporter of the Second Amendment. But he keeps mostly to himself his parallel thought, "There is nothing to fear in gun regulation," because he knows what the reaction will be. "In 2018, the middle is a very difficult place to be," he says. "You have to be on polar-opposite sides, and I think the polarities are the loudest."

Money also matters, and not just in rewarding or punishing candidates. Firearms are a \$17 billion industry, and paranoia can juice demand. Gun and ammo sales soared when Barack Obama was President, as gun owners stockpiled whatever rumor said was about to be outlawed by the feds. (Nothing was.) After Trump was elected, helped along by \$30 million from the NRA, sales slowed and have not fully recovered. In March, Remington filed for bankruptcy. TIME repeatedly invited the NRA to participate in this project, but ultimately the organization declined.

The same polarizing political system shapes the side advocating for limits on guns. In addition to their own stereotypes and intolerances, they must lug into the public arena the burden of justifying regulation. In other words, differentiating between the impulse to do *something* vs. doing something likely to achieve the desired results—a challenge that remains when the welling emotions summoned by a grieving parent have ebbed. There are reasons the status quo is a standoff.

Yet as we learned from listening to many of the voices in our project, two clear themes—responsibility and the need for extraordinary care around lethal force—are common to both the ethos of gun ownership and the stated goals of those who seek controls. Which commends them as logical starting points for a conversation that takes place not through elected surrogates, and not online, but face to face, where Americans still tend to get along pretty well.

"Guns aren't going anywhere," says Jamison Sweet, 47, a gun owner in St. Louis who served in the Marine Corps for 15 years. "We need to come together to just listen." That's the first step in bridging the divide, says Holly Sullivan, a 36-year-old single mother and firearms instructor who lives in Connecticut, about seven miles from Sandy Hook Elementary School. "If we could educate on who we are and what we believe," she says, "I think we could find common ground." □



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

25 PEOPLE SHARE THEIR VIEWS—AND THE EXPERIENCES THAT SHAPED THEM

THE WRONGLY ACCUSED

With an AR-15 slung across his shoulder, **Mark Hughes**, an activist and tax preparer, joined hundreds of protesters at a Black Lives Matter rally in downtown Dallas on July 7, 2016. Hughes openly carried his rifle—a legal act under Texas law—for the first time. It was a symbolic response, he says, to fatal police shootings of black men including Philando Castile, who was killed during a traffic stop in Minnesota after disclosing to an officer that he was armed but licensed. The rally turned into tragedy when a sniper killed five police officers in what is considered the worst attack on U.S. law enforcement since Sept. 11. Before the real gunman was identified, the Dallas police department wrongly labeled Hughes a suspect, tweeting out his photo in a plea to the public to “please help us find him.” He was questioned for hours before being released. Now Hughes, 36, is suing the city and the department for what he says were civil rights violations. (The city and police department declined to comment.) Hughes is still a proud gun owner but says he thinks twice about exercising his legal right to carry in public.

‘It’s dangerous being a black man in America with a gun.’

THE MAYOR

When she was elected in 2017, **Lyda Krewson** became the first woman mayor in St. Louis history. Over two decades ago, her husband was killed during an attempted carjacking. As mayor, the 65-year-old Democrat has appointed a new police chief with a mandate to rebuild trust amid community calls for reform. Krewson says she has been frustrated with the Missouri legislature, particularly after the state passed a permitless carry law letting virtually any adult who is not a convicted felon carry a gun without a permit or training. "Mayors of urban areas ought to be able to have some say over what sort of guns can be carried," she says.

My husband was murdered on March 23, 1995, in front of our house. My daughter was 5, my son was 2. We had eaten dinner, we were headed to Target to get river shoes—you know, the shoes that you put on your kids so they can walk in the river on the rocks. So we were at Target, we got the river shoes. My son who's 2 starts having a fit. So we're like, O.K., it's time to go. We get in the car, I get him in the back seat in a car seat. My daughter's in the back seat and I slide in with them. My husband's driving the car.

We pull up in front of our house. Out of the corner of my eye, I see a guy standing on the corner, and I see a guy at the driver's-side window of our car and he has a big gun, a long gun. I saw him for an instant. I imagine my husband saw him for an instant. My husband put the car in reverse. And as he put the car in reverse, the guy standing at his window shot my husband in the neck through the window. It went across the car, went into the passenger-side door on the inside and went out that door. So had I been sitting in the passenger seat, I probably would have been shot too. And so that changes your life forever. It changes your kids' lives forever.





THE PROTECTOR

*Frustrated by police killings of black men, **Shetamia Taylor** took her four young sons to the 2016 Dallas protest. When gunfire erupted, the retail worker threw her body over one of her sons while the others fled. One of the sniper's bullets struck her in the calf. Now Taylor, 40, has a metal plate and a dozen screws in her leg. She continues to struggle with the shooting's aftermath and has become more politically active: she found a new job as a campaign canvass manager and is planning a run for city council in her hometown of Mesquite, Texas, next year.*

I was nervous everywhere I went. I felt like something at any time could happen. I'm sitting in my home, and people are still setting fireworks around my house, and I'm freaking out. I'm sitting on my couch because I can't move. I'm paralyzed in fear some nights. I'm crying. I'm thinking, What can I do in this situation that I'm in right now to protect my family? It felt like breakdown after breakdown. And it was like, How much more weak can I be? How much more crumpled up can I become?

I changed my mind-set and became a gun owner. Because I did feel helpless and because I felt weak and because I felt like I was not protecting my children, I decided to become a gun owner. It was just something that I knew I had to do for me. It kind of helped me feel as though I would be able to protect myself and my children if need be.

And I know that sounds strange, but unless you went through or been through what I have, you wouldn't understand.

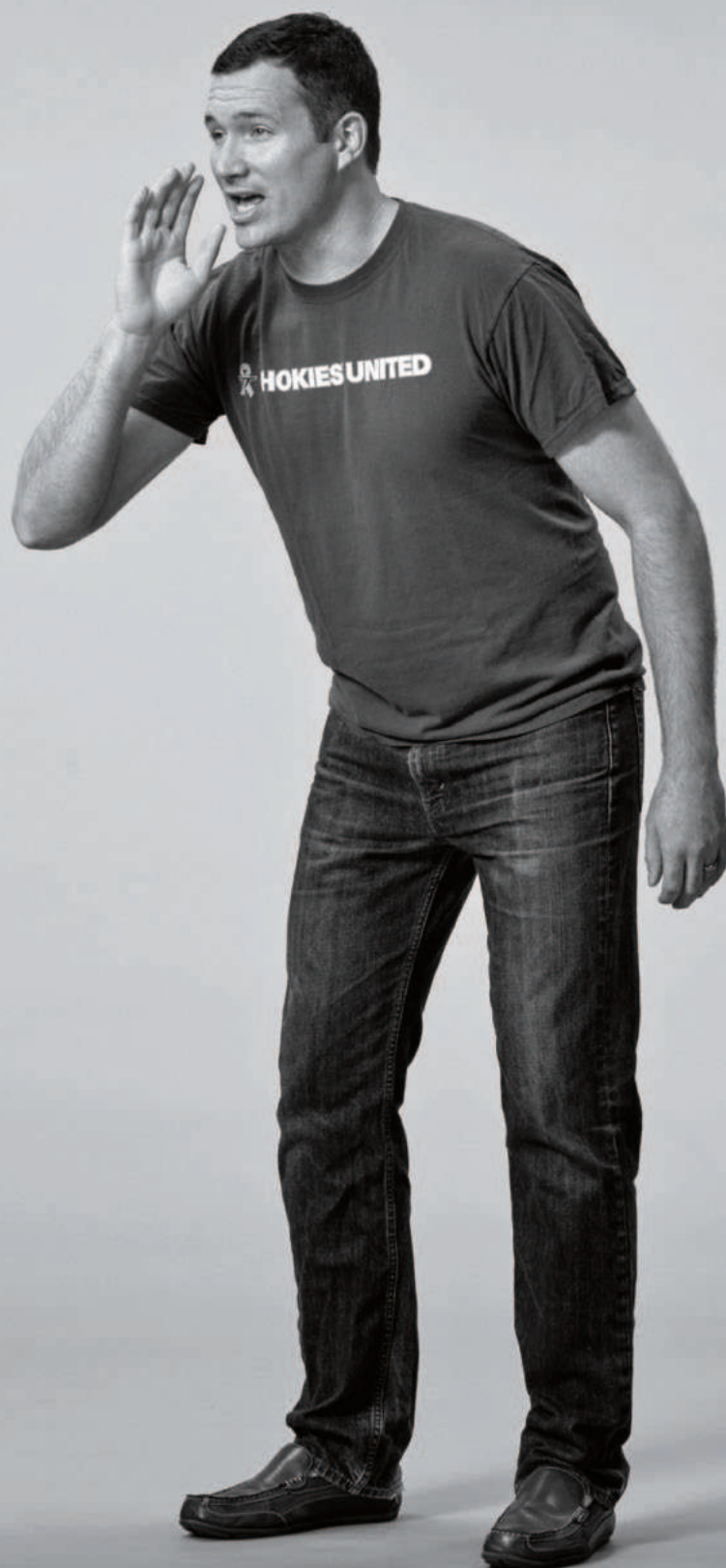
THE SCHOOL-SHOOTING SURVIVOR

On April 16, 2007, **Colin Goddard** was sitting in an intermediate French class at Virginia Tech when another student attacked the campus. Goddard was shot four times in the hips, knee and shoulder. In all, 32 victims were killed. Goddard, now a 33-year-old business-development director living in Bethesda, Md., advocates for a number of stricter gun regulations, including comprehensive background checks.

I still have three of the four bullets inside my body today that broke up into small pieces. Back in 2007, doctors took the stuff out that was in a major joint or organ, but they said it wouldn't be a problem for the rest of your life. And over 10 years later, I found out that I had the beginnings of lead poisoning because of the fragments that remained inside my body in different places. I'm still trying to figure out what to do about the lead poisoning that's happening—the lead inside my body that toxicologists say has to come out, and trauma surgeons say we can't take out.

It just blows me away that in 2018, with the hundreds of thousands of Americans who get shot with guns and bullets every year, we don't have a good understanding medically about how to treat people with retained bullet fragments for lead exposure. And I have to navigate this field by myself, in the dark. I've got to think that we have to do better as a country to treat this problem that's only affecting more and more people.

I survived the shooting. I dealt with the physical trauma. Ten years later, it's not over. This is a whole new chapter. It's hard. It takes you back.





THE LAWMAKER

*Republican legislators were practicing for a bipartisan charity baseball game on June 14, 2017, when a gunman opened fire. Representative **Steve Scalise**, the House majority whip from Louisiana, was critically injured by a bullet in the hip. He survived after multiple surgeries. Three others were wounded before police—including officers from Scalise's security detail—shot and killed the assailant.*

A strong Second Amendment is critical to keeping our communities safe. I experienced firsthand just how important it is that there are people with guns that can counter bad people that are out there.

Right after the shooting, there were people that just expected that somehow my views on guns would change. It's easy for people to get reactionary. I think we all know the honest answer to that is there's no single magic solution to this. That horrible incident only solidified my strong beliefs that you want law-abiding citizens to be able to defend themselves and others, because there are bad guys out there. And if only the bad guys have weapons, then that means everybody else is vulnerable.

I've experienced both sides of this debate. But ultimately it was people with guns that were able to counter the shooter and save the rest of us.



THE ADVOCATES

Former U.S. Representative **Gabrielle Giffords**, a Democrat, was meeting with constituents in front of a Tucson, Ariz., grocery store in 2011 when a gunman opened fire. She was gravely wounded; six others were killed. The next year, 20 children and six adults were murdered in the Sandy Hook school shooting. That incident prompted Giffords, now 48, and her husband **Mark Kelly**, a 54-year-old Navy veteran and former NASA astronaut, to seek solutions to gun violence. They founded an organization called Giffords and now work with politicians in both parties to advocate for stricter gun laws, including background checks, across the country.

‘I’m a gun owner, I’m a supporter of the Second Amendment. But we must do better than this,’ says Kelly. ‘We’re like no other country in the world on this.’



THE YOUNG ACTIVIST

When thousands of students marched out of classrooms for the National School Walkout demonstrations in April, **Havana Chapman-Edwards** stood alone outside her Virginia elementary school. Chapman-Edwards, 7, says she was “really sad” when she realized she was the only student in her school to participate in the massive protest against gun violence. The second-grader says she wanted to honor children killed in school shootings.

‘Kids getting shot—it’s just heartbreaking to me because kids should just be kids.’

THE VETERAN

As a teenager in Texas, **Sung Song** hated guns so much he once delivered an impassioned speech opposing the Second Amendment for a high school competition. Then he joined the U.S. Army. Song, 42, is now a respiratory therapist and remains an avid marksman.

Back in high school, I was vehemently against guns. I was in this thing called Academic Decathlon, and we had to do a five-minute speech in front of judges. That was my topic: gun control. It was about how the Second Amendment was outdated. I thought it didn't apply since the environment had changed. I believed it 100%. I didn't have an understanding of guns back then. I never used them. My parents never owned guns. I never really got exposed to guns growing up. Guns were scary because we didn't know anything about them.

But as I started to learn more and get trained in its usage and its safety, I saw the benefits of gun ownership. In the military, you take an oath to the Constitution. You are automatically supposed to support everything in there and defend everything in there, including the Second Amendment. I feel like I learned more about the world, about guns, about gun safety and gun violence. I became comfortable with it.

It is a dangerous weapon, but it can be very safe when you know how to use it and take the proper precautions. It's like a car. If you're a kid, you're scared of a car when you don't know how to drive. But once you get familiar with it and you know how to use it responsibly, it shouldn't be a problem. There are irresponsible people, but it doesn't change the fact that the car itself is within the responsibility of the person.

I would tell my younger self that you don't actually know that much. You'll keep on learning. Try to explore all sides before you make a decision.



THE PRINCIPAL

*In one 15-month stretch, **Tammatha Woodhouse** lost seven of her students at Baltimore's Excel Academy high school to gun violence. Woodhouse, 49, moved this summer to run Renaissance Academy, another Baltimore high school. She'll never forget her first hospital visit to see a student who had been shot. He had a bullet wound in the middle of his head. This was Woodhouse's first exposure to gun violence, which she now describes as an epidemic.*

'When I became a principal, I didn't think I would be going to funerals. I didn't think that I would be going to wakes and I would be telling parents I'm sorry.'



THE POLICE OFFICER

*For 19 years, St. Louis police sergeant **Thomas Lake** served as an officer in his hometown. Then, in November 2016, he was shot twice in the face while on patrol. After recovering in the hospital, Lake was left with shrapnel in his face and PTSD that prevented him from returning to active duty. The shooting “took my life from me,” says Lake, 48. Now he is learning to code and hopes to retire from the police department soon so he can find another way to serve people—through computer programming.*

So I was on patrol in my neighborhood where I live and grew up. There was a violent guy that was going around hurting people, and we were looking for him. And it was a Sunday night, it was cold, it was Nov. 20, 2016, 7:30 p.m. I was kind of uneasy about what was going on. So I was on the phone with my father, and I was stopped at a stoplight, and I had let my guard down a little bit, which is something I usually didn't do. And I saw the guy coming up on my left side, and there was cars all around me. I couldn't really go anywhere. I knew the minute I saw him that it was going to be bad. I was convincing myself it wasn't going to happen, but my gut was screaming at me to get out of there. He pulled up, and I took my eyes off him for a minute and I looked down to roll the window down. When I looked back up, I saw the 9-mm with the extended magazine come over the top of the backseat, and he fired the gun and all I saw was a muzzle flash. I didn't realize I was shot.

I'm in a marked police car, in my uniform, and the light turns green and all these cars just drive away. Like they either didn't know or they didn't care what happened. For me, that has probably been the most alone I've ever felt in my life. A guy came up from behind me and he goes: “Officer, are you O.K.?” I said, “No sir, I'm not O.K. I've been shot, I need some help.”

My police brain kicked back in. So I got on the radio and I gave the dispatcher a description of the car and where the car went to, that I had been shot and that I needed help. One of my best friends heard the call. He's the first guy on the scene. They walk up to the car, my dad is still on the phone. And Kevin said, “Oh sh-t, he's dead.” And my father heard that. When your dad's your hero, you don't ever want that to happen.

That changed my life. But as a person I'm still the same guy. I still want to serve and I want to help people, and I have to find a new way to do that now.

‘I believe that we have the right in order to protect the ones that we love and ourselves,’ she says. ‘There’s a reason why guns were made.’



THE SELF-DEFENSE ADVOCATE

*Growing up in a military family, **Cindy Chester** had guns in her childhood home and learned from an early age that firearms needed to be handled safely. But she says she wasn't prepared for the moment 10 years ago when her then boyfriend pointed a gun at her right leg and fired. Her wounds ended her 4½-month pregnancy and required amputation. At the time, her brother **Sean Chester** was serving in the Marine Corps in Iraq. The traumatic incident brought the siblings closer together, and years later they still share a faith in the protection provided by firearms. Now Cindy, 31, is a new mother who advocates for amputees and more broadly for women to be prepared to defend themselves. If she had owned a gun when she was attacked, she says, "maybe my story would have changed."*



THE SIBLING

*After her brother was shot and killed by an assailant during a domestic-violence incident, **Cheeraz Gormon** founded the Sibling Support Network. This summer, Gormon, a 40-year-old activist in St. Louis, launched a nationwide survey seeking to understand the emotional and psychological effects of losing a sibling to violence.*

My youngest brother, John, was murdered Aug. 14, 2013. I flew home the next morning. I remember being upstairs in my mother's bedroom, and I went downstairs and I got one of her really good knives. And I was looking for a place to cut myself. I've never been a person who self-mutilates at all.

I put the knife down, and I went downstairs and I told my mom. I just went to my mom. I was like, "Can I call some of my friends who were like mental-health professionals to give people help?" Because far too often, we don't get those services at all in our community when somebody is murdered. So, we turned my brother's repast into a community mental-health space. So that's when I really started laying the groundwork for Sibling Support Network.

So following my brother's trial, I'm looking for resources for myself and couldn't find anything to what I felt like were my unique needs. Because you know, losing a sibling is like you got to care for your parents and you got to care for the other siblings and everybody else around you. And it's all this assumption that somehow you're O.K.

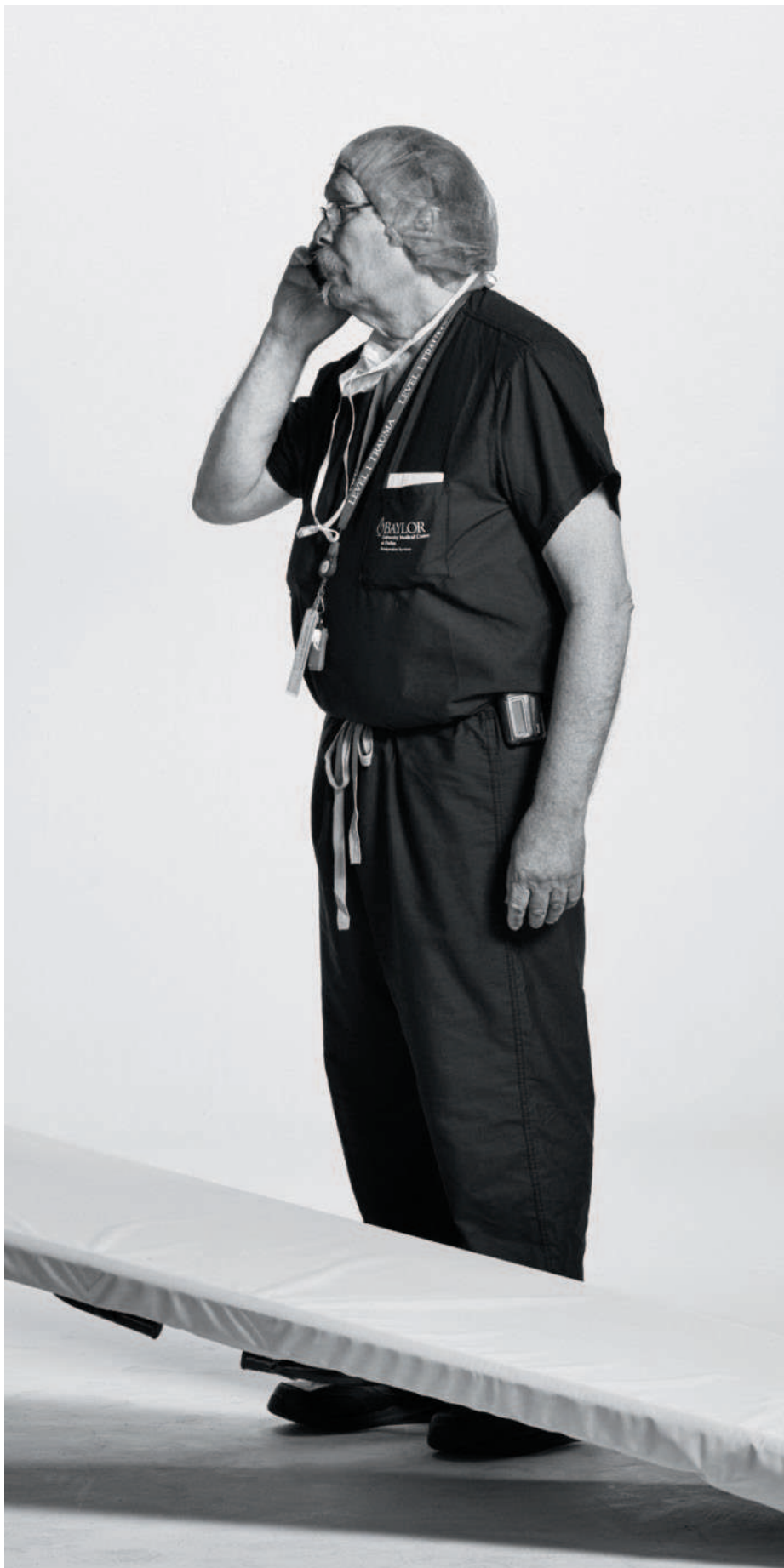
And when I found out that there was nothing out there, I took it upon myself to say people have to know that we exist. And it's time for a policy change. When we look at some of our most pressing public-health issues—everything from death from completed suicides to our incarceration rate, the recidivism rate, poverty, underemployment, unemployment—I'm pretty sure that a lot of people who have lost their siblings to violent crime are people that fall into those categories. I want to say: What does that person need, and how can we help them heal and be whole so they can integrate back into life?

‘It’s disheartening as a gun owner and as an NRA member to continually get beat down and continually to get bullied.’



THE CHAMPION

*In the world of competitive shooting, **Dianna Muller** is a celebrity. A former Tulsa, Okla., police officer and rodeo horse racer, Muller says she got serious about shooting sports in the mid-2000s and quickly “fell in love with the people.” She sold her horses and her farm to focus on guns and went on to win the women’s title at the 2015 NRA World Shooting Championship. Now she’s using her fame to advocate for the rights of gun owners around the country. “People who don’t understand, who don’t have the education, are making the decisions,” she says. “That’s the scary part.” So Muller, 48, founded the D.C. Project, a nonpartisan group of women from all 50 states who travel to the capital each year to talk with their elected representatives about the Second Amendment. She says she carries this goal of understanding into all her interactions. “If we don’t communicate with the other side, then we’re definitely on the losing platform,” Muller says.*



THE TRAUMA SURGEON

*As director of trauma at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas, Dr. **Michael Foreman**, 65, sees a steady flow of shooting victims in his emergency room. On the night of July 7, 2016, police cars arrived carrying wounded from the mass shooting at the Black Lives Matter rally.*

I'm probably the controversy in many ways. I take care of people with gunshot wounds. I've also been a lifetime shooter. I'm what most people would refer to as a gun nut. I grew up with guns. I've shot guns all of my life. I enjoy them very much. What I don't enjoy is what they do to people. I love guns, and I hate gunshot wounds.

When I go shooting, I tell people it's really no different than golf. A lot of people go out and they cause an object to go from one place to another place in an accurate fashion, and that's what I do when I go shooting. It gives me great enjoyment, and I don't want to give up what is rightfully mine.

My biggest concern is that we're focusing on the wrong thing. What we need to be focusing on is violence. I can tell you as a trauma surgeon, I have seen people killed with any variety of objects. Guns make it a little easier perhaps. But I will tell you that a brick or a bat or a fist or a knife makes you just as dead as the bullet does. Everyone talks about commonsense gun control. I'm all in favor of that. I just don't have any idea what it is.



THE PASTOR

*As pastor of New Exodus church in Cahokia, Ill., just across the Mississippi River from St. Louis, **Bryan Moore** always considered the Bible to be his protection. But when one of his congregants became the victim of a brutal attack, Moore says, he had an epiphany: he decided he needed another way to defend his flock. So he headed to a shooting range and spent the next two years training to become a certified firearms instructor. Now Moore, 38, teaches regular concealed-carry classes in addition to giving sermons.*

‘I was raised that God was a magician, he was a protector. In the black community there was a time where we needed to hope and pray that way ... Well, that was me before this experience, and now this is me.’

THE COMPETITOR

Mia Farinelli, 14, travels many weekends during the school year to compete in shooting matches. The ninth-grader from Alexandria, Va., participates in a variety of events, but her main focus is 3-Gun, which involves shooting a pistol, a rifle and a shotgun while navigating an obstacle course.

I started shooting with my dad when I was around 7, and I started shooting a lot of bull's-eyes. And so a few years later, I went shooting and once again, I did really good. This was when my dad was getting into competitive shooting, and he was receiving a jersey from this range. He got this box which had his jersey in it, and he opened it up, and underneath his was one labeled MIA FARINELLI.

So I went into the range the next day and they said, "Well, now that you have a jersey, you have to shoot a match." So I kept shooting these local matches near us. And then I shot the state match and I did very, very well, and so I started shooting these state matches and now I'm the champion of my divisions in multiple states. I travel pretty much all over the United States to do my competitive shooting.

I want people to know that I'm doing this because it's my passion. I'm doing it because this is a sport. The community is so nice. Not like it's portrayed to be in movies. Safety is the priority when you're shooting. When I would tell some kids about it at school, they'd come up to me in the hallway and be like, "Oh, you're going to be the next school shooter?" It makes me feel really bad because it's something I put a lot of passion into, and I put a lot of effort into. I try to work on teaching everybody about how safe it is. It's just like they're not really listening to me. They're not really hearing what I have to say. They're kind of just painting an image in their mind about what they want me to be, or what they think I am.





**‘We don’t need
more teachers
with guns in
the classroom. I
believe what we
need is more
resources, more
counselors to
support our
kids.’**

THE TEACHER

An eight-year teaching veteran, **Josue Tamarez Torres** was named one of three Dallas public schools’ Teachers of the Year last school year. He says the reason he wanted to be a teacher in the first place—“changing students’ lives”—still resonates. But as he prepared math lessons for his fourth-graders this fall, he found it hard to dismiss the specter of school shootings. “I am constantly thinking ... ‘Is my school going to be the next school where a shooter comes in?’” Tamarez Torres is a gun owner himself and says he doesn’t want to infringe on anyone’s Second Amendment rights. But he doesn’t believe arming teachers will help. Instead, Tamarez Torres wants lawmakers to find common ground around issues like background checks aimed at keeping guns out of the hands of dangerous people. “I’m just making sure that our kids are protected,” he says.



THE HUNTERS

Like many families in Texas, the Bucks have hunted for generations.

Michelle Buck, above with husband **Austin Buck**, says her father taught her to hunt when she was a young girl, and now her 10-year-old daughter **Cooper Buck**, right, enjoys the family tradition. The Bucks take their two children on frequent hunting trips, which offer an escape from the hectic pace of work and school—and a chance to bring back meat for homemade quail and pheasant dumplings.

‘[Hunting] has made all the difference in the very strong woman that I am today,’ Michelle Buck says. ‘Here I am with a degree and a good job and a great family and husband who shares the same values and morals and ethics and ... we deposit those things into our kids.’



THE LEADER

At 13, **Antong Lucky** became a top member of a Dallas gang. After serving nearly four years in prison for drug- and gang-related charges, he decided to forge a different path. Now Lucky, 42, mentors young people as national director for Urban Specialists, a nonprofit that works to end gun violence.

I come from a family born in poverty in the projects. The name of the game was survival. Guns, drugs, it was just so pervasive. One day, I went to school. About 40 to 50 gang members waited. I just heard somebody say, "Shoot him, shoot him!" This guy steps out, lifts his pistol, and this girl jumped in front of me. He ended up shooting the girl.

I think that was the single incident that made me say, I had enough. A cousin and a couple of friends of mine started the first Bloods gang in Dallas. We vowed to become the most deadly, vicious gang in the city, and we did.

Over the next couple of years, my neighborhood did some of the most heinous and horrendous acts against other gangs ... drive-bys on school buses and stuff like that. We used everything—automatic weapons, the whole nine yards. I lost a lot of close friends, family members. Eventually, I ended up in prison.

It was in prison that I realized some important things that changed the course and trajectory of my life. My heart had changed in prison. Once I got out, I began to work to end the cycle of gangs and guns in our communities. I wanted people to understand that we got a lot of stuff in common and that we needed to work together. I want people to know that redemption, transformation, is real. There's hope. We can make using guns and being violent nonexistent in the mind, if we keep working on it.



‘People can debate that any way they want to,’ he says, ‘but the guns don’t kill people, the people kill people.’



THE PARENTS

As **Sam and Paulette Thompson** were watching coverage of the July 7, 2016, Black Lives Matter protest in Dallas, their son Brent was shot and killed. The Dallas Area Rapid Transit officer was among the five police officers gunned down that day. The family's tragedy was compounded more than a year later: William Thompson, Brent Thompson's 19-year-old son, took his own life with a gun. Despite their losses, the Thompsons say they support the Second Amendment, though Paulette adds, "There should be stricter controls over who can buy guns."

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