Campuses and Guns
A Multilateral Approach to Gun Violence Prevention

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INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

Each year, about 33,000 Americans are killed with guns. In 2010, 54 percent of those murdered were under the age of 30.¹ Gun-related deaths are rapidly rising and if this alarming trend continues, by the end of 2015, the number of gun deaths by a firearm of Americans under the age of 26 will surpass the number of deaths of young people caused by car accidents.² There is a national gun violence crisis that is affecting our youth, and young people on college campuses around the country are no exception to this epidemic.

Amidst the national gun violence prevention debate is an ongoing discussion about the protection of America’s youth and the roles that college campuses and universities play in protecting their students. The widely televised campus shootings that have occurred over the last decade are usually what come to mind when individuals think about college campuses and guns. One of the deadliest college shootings to date occurred on April 16, 2007 at Virginia Tech, when a gunman shot and killed 32 students and faculty members and wounded another 17 individuals in two separate attacks on the same day.³ Although colleges and universities report significantly lower crime rates than national averages, gunmen have killed 30 people in mass campus shootings since the Virginia Tech massacre in 2007, highlighting the need for smarter gun violence prevention policies and response strategies.⁴

Institutions of higher education aim to provide valuable educational opportunities for individuals who wish to pursue them. They are expected to promote safe educational spaces that enhance one’s professional repertoire and fine-tune one’s ability to think critically, solve problems, and create concrete solutions. At the same time, institutions are tasked with keeping students safe.

This report will discuss the implications of gun violence on college campuses and universities while examining the roles that local and state governments, as well as the federal government, play in gun violence prevention. In addition, it will outline grassroots and grass-tops solutions that promote local-level organizing and work to significantly decrease gun violence on college campuses and universities across the country.

GUN VIOLENCE ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

Although gun violence disproportionately affects college-aged youth, it is less common on college and university campuses than in the rest of country.⁵ College campus homicide rates are reported at about one death per one million people (students), compared to 57 deaths per million around the country.⁶ Despite these seemingly low rates of campus shootings, targeted
violence (which refers to cases in which an attacker selects a specific victim or victims prior to the shooting) has substantially increased over the last two decades.

There were 40 incidents of targeted violence on college campuses in the 1980’s, compared to 79 in the 1990’s, and 83 between 2000 and 2010. When targeted violence does occur on college campuses, perpetrators often use a gun. Guns were used in approximately half of college campus homicides between 1989 and 2001, and guns were used in 54 percent of targeted violence incidents reported in compliance with the Clery Act between 2005 and 2008.

Thirty-six percent of college campus attacks between 2005 and 2008 took place in administrative, academic, or services buildings. 28 percent took place in residential buildings, while 27 percent took place in campus parking lots or on campus grounds. This implicates over 90 percent of college campus attacks and indicates a risk of gun violence at both on- and off-campus sites.

Additionally, research indicates that current or former students, or adults with employment or another relationship within the school, usually perpetrate gun violence on college campuses. According to “Campus Attacks: Targeted Violence Affecting Institutions of Higher Education,” subjects with no affiliation with the affected college or university committed only 9 percent of targeted assaults. With a trend clearly established, colleges and universities could be doing more to better support the needs of current students, faculty, administration, and other campus-affiliated persons.

While campus shootings are often the most visible and widely reported forms of on-campus violence, guns also pose a significant risk at colleges and universities in regards to student suicides. In 2010, homicide and suicide were the second and third leading causes of death for people aged 15 to 24.

Eighty-five percent of suicides attempted with guns are fatal and nearly 7 percent of individuals aged 18 to 25 have had serious thoughts of suicide, compared to 3.9 percent of individuals aged 26 to 49. 18 percent of undergraduate college students have considered suicide. Due to the fact that 24,000 college students attempt suicide each year and suicide attempts with firearms are significantly more likely to be fatal, it can be concluded that gun-aided suicides are more likely than any other type of suicide.

On December 10, 2014, advocacy groups Everytown for Gun Safety and
Moms Demand Action released a report, titled “Analysis of School Shootings,” highlighting at least 94 school shootings that have happened since the tragic school massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, CT in 2012. These 94 school shootings occurred in 33 states and included fatal and nonfatal assaults, suicides, and unintentional shootings at an average of nearly one shooting per week. They resulted in 45 deaths and 78 non-fatal gunshot injuries. In 32 percent of these shootings, at least one person died. In 68 percent of these incidents, the perpetrator(s) intentionally assaulted or killed another individual with a gun. Of these, 35 percent resulted in at least one homicide. In addition, the report found that of these 94 school shootings, 45 took place on a college or university campus. In more than one-third of all incidents, at least one person was shot after an argument or confrontation escalated and a gun was nearby.

While these shootings do not always make it to the front page of your newspaper, they are occurring at a greater rate than they have in the past and one cannot ignore that there has been an increase of gun violence on college campuses that needs to be addressed and dealt with carefully and effectively.

CAMPUS CARRY

Concealed carry (also known as carrying a concealed weapon) is generally the practice of carrying a weapon in a concealed manner while in public. Every state in the United States now allows concealed carry for citizens meeting specific requirements, although states vary widely on how the permit systems are administered. For example, four states—Alaska, Arizona, Vermont, and Wyoming—do not require a permit to carry a concealed gun in a public arena. In those states, any lawful gun owner may carry concealed, loaded firearms in public “without any oversight from local law enforcement to determine whether the individual has had appropriate firearms training or whether there is anything in their criminal or personal history to indicate they may pose a risk to public safety,” according to a Center for American Progress report.

Guns are generally prohibited on most college and university campuses. 20 states explicitly ban carrying concealed weapons on campuses (“campus carry”) while 23 leave the decision to individual institutions. Seven states have provisions in place that allow campus carry. These states include: Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Mississippi, Oregon, Utah, and Wisconsin.

In 2013, at least 19 states introduced campus carry legislation, and while
laws only passed in Arkansas and Kansas, the sheer number of states willing to entertain this conversation shows an increase in momentum from pro-gun activists. The Arkansas law has been deemed a compromise law because it allows institutions to opt out of allowing campus carry by creating their own gun policies. Since the passing of the law, every two- and four-year institution in the state has since opted out of campus carry, indicating that public colleges and universities in Arkansas do not want guns on their campuses.

University of Arkansas at Little Rock chancellor Joel Anderson stated in 2013 that, “none of the presidents and chancellors thought it would make their campuses safer,” adding that “If you’ve got more guns on campus…you create a much more complicated environment for law enforcement to function in, and then…you increase the odds…that a gun will be used…to wound or kill innocent people.” Calvin Johnson, chancellor of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff also noted in 2013 the results of an informal survey of faculty which found that the majority opposed campus carry.

In October 2014, Dr. Stephen K. Boss, one of the faculty leaders opposing campus carry at the University of Arkansas, stated that he was pleased that for the second consecutive year, every college in Arkansas chose to “continue the long-standing prohibition of lethal weapons on campus.” It shows our governing boards understand that our colleges are not magnets for murderers, but sanctuaries from them.

As of February 2015, lawmakers in 15 states are pushing bills to allow campus carry. Those states include: Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Montana, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming. Proponents of campus carry argue that policies that permit these kinds of laws make campuses safer due to their deterrent effect, while opponents argue that they increase the likelihood of gun violence and threaten educational environments. Increasing the number of guns at colleges and universities has the potential to create an unsafe living and learning environment and impose substantial monetary costs, both in increased security costs and insurance premiums.

The Costs Of Campus Carry
The increased costs facing institutions have most recently been displayed in Idaho. Five of Idaho’s universities and community colleges have thus far spent more than $1.5 million to enhance security on campuses after campus carry was approved by the state legislature in 2014. The schools will likely have to absorb the cost from existing allocations and they expect total costs to top $3.7 million for the year.
The five schools—Boise State University, Idaho State University, the University of Idaho, the College of Western Idaho, and North Idaho College—sought $1.55 million from the state for expenses already incurred, and an additional $2.7 million for the rest of the school year. The costs include expenses for personnel, training, and equipment. The institutions have had to hire new staff, pay for additional training, and purchase new equipment. Because the state’s governor did not include additional funding in the state’s budget and the legislature is not likely to add any, the schools will have to absorb the costs. This could mean less money being spent on students at a time when investment per student in Idaho by the state legislature has decreased per full-time student (per year) by $3,766 since 2007.

Additionally, according to fiscal analysis developed by Texas’ higher education systems, “campus carry would cost the University of Texas and University of Houston systems nearly $47 million combined over 6 years to update security systems, build gun storage facilities, and bolster campus police units,” according to reporting by the Houston Chronicle. The campus police departments would have to spend millions on the installation of gun safes and lockers, training for staff and on-campus security, and additional administrative personnel. Additionally, colleges and universities could see a rise in insurance costs if campus carry was implemented on their campuses. In 2011, the Houston Community College Board of Trustees estimated insurance costs rising as much as $900,000 per year if campus carry was passed. Campus carry would make administrations stretch budgets and force schools to spend more on overhead, rather than individualized education.

Lack Of Support Of Campus Carry
There is clear evidence showing higher education communities do not support campus carry. In a recent study by Ball State University, 95 percent of college presidents who responded to the study oppose campus carry. In addition, presidents of 370 colleges and universities in 41 states have signed a pledge to keep guns off their campuses. This includes 240 four-year colleges and universities and 130 community colleges. The American Association of State Colleges and Universities also opposes allowing campus carry. Additionally, in a 2013 poll of faculty members at 15 randomly selected colleges in Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin (three were chosen from each state), 94 percent opposed campus carry. “82 percent said they would feel less safe if faculty, students, and visitors were allowed to carry guns,” reported the Columbus Dispatch.

The movement against campus carry extends beyond administrations and associations. According to research by Ball State University, 78 percent of
midwestern college students oppose campus carry and would not obtain a campus carry license if they were permitted.61 66 percent of students surveyed stated that carrying a gun would not make them feel safer from attacks.62 In addition, the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators, Inc. (“IACLEA”) issued a statement in 2008 saying, “IACLEA Board of directors believes ‘conceal carry’ initiatives do not make campuses safer. There is no credible evidence to suggest that the presence of students carrying concealed weapons would reduce violence on our college campuses.”63 In a 2009 study at the University of Toledo, Ohio, research found that 86 percent of the police chiefs surveyed believed that allowing campus carry would not prevent some or all of campus killings.64

Students, survivors, and administrators have all gotten involved as the campus carry debate has erupted in the state of Texas, where hearings are being conducted to lift bans on campus carry in university campuses (SB 11).65 Colin Goddard, who was shot four times during the 2007 Virginia Tech shooting asked the Texas state legislature not to use the Virginia Tech tragedy to justify campus carry bills.66 He stated, “We survivors do not think that it is a good idea to have guns on campus…and there is no evidence that a bill like [this] would do anything to stop a mass shooting.”67 He also noted that the bill would likely make campus environments more dangerous than they already are—a sentiment that was echoed by University of Texas System Chancellor William McRaven.68

In a letter to the Texas state legislature, Chancellor McRaven, a retired four-star Admiral, mentioned a great concern regarding the presence of handguns on campus, noting that he has received calls from students, faculty, staff, law enforcement, and mental health professionals all raising concerns about campus carry.69 He also cited concern that the passing of SB 11 will potentially lead to an increase in both accidental shootings and self-inflicted wounds.70

More Guns Does Not Mean More Protection
The assumption that guns used defensively on college campuses would make the community safer is not necessarily true. A frequently cited study argued that millions of gun owners successfully use their weapons to defend themselves from criminals; however, recent research has proven this to be untrue.71 The study purported, for instance, that guns were used in self-defense in 845,000 burglaries; however, reliable victimization surveys show that there were fewer than 1.3 million burglaries where someone was in the home at the time of the crime and only 33 percent of these had occupants who were not sleeping.72 The survey also suggests that 42 percent of households owned firearms at the time of the survey, so even if burglars
only rob homes of gun owners, and those gun owners use their weapons in self-defense every single time they are awake, the 845,000 statistic is simply mathematically impossible.\(^73\)

Guns as a means of protection has also been brought up recently in relation to alarming campus sexual assault statistics that indicate that 1 in 5 women and 1 in 16 men are sexually assaulted during their time in college.\(^75\) Some lawmakers around the country are pushing to arm college students with firearms in order to protect them against sexual assault. An example of this would be House Bill 1143 in Indiana, where state legislators are urging individuals to support the bill in order to decrease campus sexual assault.\(^76\) The bill would allow licensed gun owners to carry their weapons on public university campuses.\(^77\) If passed, the bill would affect 29 public campuses in Indiana.\(^78\)

This piece of legislation has already received pushback from campus administrators around the state.\(^79\) A spokesperson for Indiana University Bloomington stated that “Indiana University has opposed allowing guns on campus in the past and our position has not changed.”\(^80\) Purdue University, which already bans weapons on campus, remains steadfastly against legislation that would allow for campus carry.\(^81\) Purdue’s police chief has spoken out against the legislation, noting that if passed, it would negatively impact the dynamics of the campus community and complicate the ability of police to respond to situations in which multiple people could be armed.\(^82\)

More importantly, legislation such as this would not necessarily stop a perpetrator from committing sexual violence on campus.\(^83\) In an American Journal of Public Health study, researchers interviewed 417 women, and only 7 percent had used a gun successfully in self-defense.\(^84\) Know Your IX, a national survivor-run, student-driven campaign to end campus sexual violence made it clear that gun lobbyists and lawmakers have built legislation based on the classic rape myth that a woman’s greatest threat is a stranger lurking in the bushes late at night.\(^85\) In actuality, women (and individuals of other genders) are most in danger while with someone they know.\(^86\) Know Your IX’s Dana Bolger and Alexandra Brodsky explain, “studies demonstrate that the vast majority of campus victims were raped by a partner, friend, or close acquaintance” and guns are the most commonly used weapon in the murders of intimate partners.\(^87\) More often than not, when a gun is in a home, the threat of violence against women by intimate partners appear to be more common than self-defense uses of guns by women.\(^88\)
UNIVERSAL BACKGROUND CHECKS

Universal background checks would ensure that every individual in the United States who attempts to purchase a gun would have to go through a thorough and vetted background analysis before they were allowed to purchase said gun. Current federal law only requires licensed gun dealers to conduct background checks prior to completing a gun sale.\textsuperscript{89} This requirement, however, does not apply to private individuals selling guns who are not dealers.\textsuperscript{90} If universal background checks were federal law, they would provide a solid and in-depth foundational protection against gun violence.

Currently, 17 states and the District of Columbia have extended background check requirements beyond federal laws to at least some private sales; however, Congress has failed to act in this matter on the federal level.\textsuperscript{91} A survey by the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that 84 percent of criminals who had used a gun in a crime reported that they were prohibited from using them at the time of their gun crime.\textsuperscript{92} This indicates that these individuals would not have been able to legally pass a background check, which would have prohibited them from obtaining the guns they used to conduct their crimes.

Between 80 and 90 percent of Americans, including most gun owners, support expanding background checks.\textsuperscript{93} A universal background check law might have prevented one of the deadliest campus shootings of all time—Virginia Tech. The president of the National Rifle Association (“NRA”) even stated, “The one shooter that might have been prevented by background checks and was not was the Virginia Tech shooter because he had, in fact, been adjudicated to be potentially violent.” Seung-Hui Cho, who killed 32 people and injured another 17 in 2007 was deemed mentally ill by a judge, which is one of the criteria used to disqualify certain individuals from legally purchasing guns.\textsuperscript{95} Cho apparently slipped through the cracks, as he was able to purchase two weapons.\textsuperscript{96} A strict universal background check law could have stopped his purchase before he was able to commit his crimes.\textsuperscript{97}

MILITARIZATION OF CAMPUS POLICE

As instances of gun violence on campuses increase, some have called to further arm campus police to respond to violent attacks, just as others have called for campus carry. Since 1998, the Department of Defense has transferred hundreds of pieces of military equipment (weaponry included) to at least 124 colleges and universities across the United States.\textsuperscript{98} The federal program, known as the 1033 Program, transfers military surplus to law enforcement agencies.
enforcement agencies, and this has included campuses across the nation.\textsuperscript{99} Some of the equipment delivered includes: assault rifles, grenade launchers, and ambush-protected vehicles.\textsuperscript{100}

The 1033 Program aims to assist departments (particularly those with limited budgets) obtain “necessary” equipment at low costs. But, this begs the question, what is necessary equipment to keep college and university communities safe? Are college campuses any place for military-level equipment? Proponents argue that there are very specific instances in which the equipment would be utilized, such as active shooter scenarios, like the incident at Virginia Tech.\textsuperscript{101} Ohio State University spokesman Dan Hedman has stated that the 1033 program “is a valuable supplement to campus safety efforts.”\textsuperscript{102} Florida International University’s police chief Alexander Casas said that the program helps the police better address community needs.\textsuperscript{103} However, in response to the active shooter defense, these types of dangerous weapons would likely not have been necessary to contain the shooter at Virginia Tech. In that instance, and those like it, violence occurs within minutes and by the time police arrive with any form of weaponry, the incident will likely be over.\textsuperscript{104}

Furthermore, the proliferation of these types of weapons will not combat the types of crimes that occur on a daily basis at colleges and universities.\textsuperscript{105} College campuses have high instances of alcohol-related crimes and sexual assault, and dangerous military equipment is not required to combat or contain these sorts of crimes.\textsuperscript{106}

In response to questions as to why the University of Central Florida needs a grenade launcher, campus police have stated for “security and crowd control.”\textsuperscript{107} But students across the country have been in uproar about the militarization of campus police and many argue that the presence of such weaponry promotes violence and leaves colleges and universities feeling uptight and under constant surveillance.\textsuperscript{108} Others have noted that they do not promote free expression.\textsuperscript{109} Police are already under intense scrutiny for unnecessary uses of force, a lack of accountability for the killing of unarmed black youth across the country, and the militarized response of certain police departments when demonstrators have taken to the streets.\textsuperscript{110} In Ferguson, MO, for example, images of police officers wearing camouflage uniforms, driving in armored vehicles, and carrying military-grade guns against largely peaceful demonstrators begged the question: what weaponry is necessary to ensure that citizens and college students are safe?\textsuperscript{111} The 1033 Program has also received newly infused

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scrutiny since these events.\footnote{112}

In Indiana, there is an ongoing debate raging on about the necessity of high-grade military weapons. At least five Indiana universities have armed their officers with military-style weapons.\footnote{113} Community and campus police in Indiana have obtained more than 4,400 items since 2010.\footnote{114} Campus police have obtained: body armor, military vehicles, and M-14 and M-16 rifles—akin to the kind that were used in the Vietnam War.\footnote{115} But opinions about the necessity of these types of weaponry may be changing. Purdue University Calumet police chief Anthony Martin has said, “Particularly after we have just read about Ferguson, I have been re-evaluating the need of an M-14, it’s a heavy weapon.”\footnote{116}

Weapons such as M-14 military rifles have blurred the lines between campus police and the military. Military forces are trained to fight the enemy and wreak havoc on them, while civilian police departments are dealing with individuals with constitutional rights.\footnote{117} The goal is to avoid using force (if possible) and to use the minimum required to bring a suspect to the court of law.\footnote{118} Purdue University Calumet Police Chief Martin stated, “On college campuses, police roles are even more narrowly defined: police are there to protect students and faculty.”\footnote{119}

Recently, Congressman Hank Johnson (D-GA), re-introduced the bipartisan “Stop Militarizing Law Enforcement Act of 2015” (H.R. 1232) in order to place restrictions and transparency measures on the 1033 Program.\footnote{120} This bill, if passed, would also place restrictions on the types of weapons that could be transferred to college and university campuses.\footnote{121}

Highly evolved military equipment used by the police are affecting police and community relations, and the increase of this military gear on college campuses can only lead to a more tense campus community.\footnote{122} While gun violence on campus has increased, the response should not be to further arm police with equipment used in war-inflicted combat zones.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

In light of the increases of gun violence on college and university communities around the country, the Obama administration, Congress, state legislatures, and campus administrations should consider the following actions.

**Ban Campus Carry**
Campus carry laws that permit students to carry weapons in a hidden manner while in public have no place on college and university campuses. Most states

“I have been re-evaluating the need of an M-14, it’s a heavy weapon.”

- Purdue University Calumet police chief Anthony Martin
require individuals to obtain permits in order to carry concealed weapons, indicating that there should be a system to check those individuals who make this choice. Guns are generally prohibited on college campuses, as 22 states ban campus carry; however, 23 states leave this decision up to individual institutions.

Access to guns on college campuses provides an avenue to inflict violence in a way that lack of access cannot. Once a gun is brought into the equation, an argument can transform from a simple verbal altercation to a nonsensical act of violence. Disallowing campus carry would decrease this possibility. The general public has also voiced their opinion on campus carry in some states. A January 2014 poll of Georgia voters found that 78 percent opposed campus carry legislation.

Students, college presidents, and various associations have made it clear that they do not want guns on their campuses. Guns used in self-defense are not proven to be a deterrence to crime and campus carry has increased the expenses of some colleges and universities, which could mean less money being spent on students. In order for colleges and universities to provide the safest possible environment for higher education learning, college administrations across the country should ban campus carry on their campuses.

Pass Universal Background Checks
Universal background checks would ultimately provide a safer campus environment for everyone involved. They would provide a thorough vetting process for anyone seeking a gun, which would put a stop to crime before it happens. If a universal background check law was instituted and properly administered, the Virginia Tech massacre may have been stopped when the perpetrator attempted to legally obtain his gun. He was deemed mentally ill—one of the categories that disqualifies one from purchasing firearms—and therefore would have been prohibited from purchasing guns.

Universal background checks would also make it easier to catch individuals attempting to obtain guns through illegal tactics and provide a strong deterrence to these same individuals. Data shows that a disproportionate number of individuals who are convicted for gun crimes were prohibited from using guns in the first place. These repeat offenders would likely be usurped from committing further crimes if universal background checks were in place. To effectively curb the increase of guns on college campuses, background checks should be required for all gun sales.
Universal background checks would lead to safer campuses and communities. In the simplest of terms, requiring background checks for all sales is the only way to prevent prohibited or dangerous individuals from buying guns, no questions asked. While this type of federal legislation may not have been able to prevent some of the most well-known campus shootings to date, universal background check legislation would have made it more difficult for some of the perpetrators of campus violence to obtain guns.

**Repeal 1033**
In the past few years, there has been a sudden increase in the amount of military-grade weaponry on college and university campuses. Most of these weapons have been transferred through the federal program known as 1033. Numerous institutions have cited budgetary concerns and campus safety issues as reasons for their interest in these weapons; however, a higher education institution of learning is no place for these kinds of weaponry.

Military-grade weapons promote an environment that is tense, untrustworthy, and rigid. They do not work to combat the day-to-day crimes that may occur on a college campus. They also are not fit to prevent active shooter situations, and in most instances, would arrive too late to make a difference if they were deployed. Military-grade weapons should be taken off college and university campuses.

**Gun Violence Prevention Policies**
The federal government will need to work in conjunction with state governments to create effective policies that combat gun violence on college campuses. This may even extend to local governments and college campus decision-making bodies, all of whom will need to prioritize gun violence prevention if there is going to be a decrease of such violence on campuses across the country.

Initiatives outlined by President Obama’s 2013 gun violence reduction plan, including actively promoting gun violence prevention research, providing school public safety officers with training for active shooter situations, and disseminating a model for developing and implementing reliable emergency plans and security assessments are examples of federal assistance that could spearhead a national gun violence prevention campaign.124

Regardless of federal and state legislation, colleges and universities should take every measure to implement policies and procedures that minimize the likelihood of gun violence on campus. Institutions of higher education are unique environments that necessitate different prevention and response
strategies from their K-12 counterparts. College and university campuses are often larger, with campuses spawning acres. They consist of larger classrooms, a separate faculty, varying student schedules, and more minimal student-faculty contact.

Colleges and universities are diverse in size, location, demographics, and governance, making it impossible to generate a singular model for security. Thus, focused research is necessary to create prevention and response strategies that properly address campus needs. An effective gun violence prevention model for a large state public institution in Pennsylvania will differ greatly from the model that will be most effective in a small yet sprawling private institution in New York. Both universities would offer unique challenges that have to be considered when determining gun violence prevention policies. Despite this, it is imperative that federal, state, and local governance work in tangent with individual collegiate administrative bodies for gun violence prevention policies to make substantial improvements.

CONCLUSION

Do guns have any place on college and university campuses? Should campus carry be permitted? Would universal background checks prevent campus shooters from going rogue? Are high-grade military weapons necessary to keep campuses safe?

A number of these questions have been analyzed, researched, and explored by those who want college students to obtain a degree in the safest possible environment. Guns being permitted in a concealed manner on campus does not make anyone on campuses feel safer and would not help in active shooter situations. Universal background checks would provide another checkpoint to curb the proliferation of guns on campuses. High-grade, military-styled weaponry makes campuses feel tense and rigid without improving safety.

In order to provide college students with the safest possible environments, federal and state governments need to put students’ safety and needs first. Satisfying pro-gun advocates that cite disproven defensive gun law theory in order to further promote their larger political agenda is no longer acceptable. Students deserve better. They deserve to study, live, and grow on safe campuses and young people will not sit silent as outside interests attempt to speak for them.
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Sheila E. Isong is the Policy Manager for Generation Progress, where her research focuses on higher education/student debt, voting rights, and gun violence prevention. She hails from the great state of Maryland and is a proud Nigerian-American. Prior to joining the Generation Progress team, she served as the legal and public policy advocate at the National Black Justice Coalition, where she proposed short- and long-range public policy initiatives that advanced civil rights enforcement inclusive of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, or LGBT, community. She provides a wealth of experiences that were cultivated through the National Black Law Students Association, AFL-CIO, Center for Community Change, and U.S. Student Association.

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