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"Guns and Their Relation to Juvenile Crime"
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Introduction

When you hear the title of this paper, what comes to mind? "Guns and their relation to juvenile crime". What I think of is, of course, serious crime that I see on the news. Liquor store robberies, gang related violence, drug dealing, ect. The types of youth involved in these activities have not been raised around firearms. They have never been through a safety course, and have almost no prior experience around guns. They live in the city where hunting and target shooting is not practiced. The fact is, an extremely small percentage youths who have access to guns rob stores or do drugs. They are kids raised on good values and have had their shooting and hunting heritage passed on from their parents. They go shooting with their friends and family and would never think of using a gun in a violent crime. Such was my attitude until I was presented with a situation in which I made a hasty decision, and inadvertently committed a crime. I now know that what I did was wrong, and Nathan said that it scared him. I have since written an apology letter addressing my actions and the way they impacted him. I believe that Chris Reisdorph has since recovered from his assault, also.

This paper will address some of the concerns of society on juvenile crimes involving guns. From the point of view of a concerned citizen, I will make suggestions on sentencing and how to solve this problem. I will obtain some useful information from the internet, and will list my sources on my resource page. This paper will be mostly about my personal opinions. I will state my point

of view on the different types of crime I research. Juvenile gun crime can be a significant problem, and I hope that my point of view will help solve it somehow.

Types of Crime

As I said before, when I think of "gun crime" related to youths, I think of what I see on the news and on television. There are people shot down on the street for gang related activity, rare school shootings, drugs, and muggings. School shootings, though, are all we ever hear about in the national news out of all these types of crime. In the specific crime that I committed, it was an emergency situation. My alternatives had to have been considered and action taken in a split second. Under such pressure, my judgment was faulty. One of the alternatives I had was to do nothing. The alternative I should have selected was to call 911 and wait for the sheriff to come. But I believe that any long delay could have resulted in grave harm to a 13 year old boy at the hands of a much bigger, stronger 16 year old. In the future, if I am a witness to any violent situation my response will be to contact the proper authorities.

Victim Impact

Most violent gun related crimes usually end in death for the victim. If this victim is not in fact killed, the impact is usually severe. Paralysis and other disabilities can result from gun wounds. But the people who are shot are not the only victims. Their friends and family suffer, also. Take the so-called "Million Mom March" for example. These people were friends and family of youths killed by people using guns. They were obviously very hurt by what had happened to someone who they loved so much. It was their opinion that increased gun

control was the answer. While I disagree with this opinion, I can understand the way they feel. They are hurt and angry for their loved ones death, and some of their arguments about guns are respectable.

Further to address psychological impact, I refer to my case. Nathan told police that he was scared and worried that he was going to be shot. His fear and "worry" are legitimate psychological impacts on him, and though I had no intention to do anything of the sort to him, I do feel remorse for making him feel that way.

Other emotional problems can arise from things like muggings and other street crime. Victims of these crimes often feel scared and even paranoid if and when they go out on the street again, some cannot even go out for weeks after a traumatic incident like this happens.

Sentencing

I do not believe in mandatory sentencing for gun related crime. Such as if I was automatically required to serve 90 days in jail and probation until I was 21 for "aggravated assault" or "assault", just because it involved a gun. I do not believe that that would have been fair, or necessary to correct my actions. Each case is unique, and must be treated that way by the judge. I do believe that since gun related juvenile crime is a problem, sentencing should be harsher than with other violent crime. But I think that the judge should use his judgment to fairly deal with each case. Further, I think that youths should be educated beyond what they learn in hunters ed. They should learn about inappropriate ways to use a firearm in an emergency, and they must know the laws. If I knew

that what I was doing was illegal in trying to save Chris, I would never have done it that way.

Recommendations for Solving the Problem

Unlike many, I do not believe that gun control is the answer. When we make new laws, restrictions, regulations and gun bans, one must remember that only the honest citizen is the only one that follows these rules. I mean if I were a criminal I wouldn't really care, because I would already be breaking the law by using the weapons inappropriately in a crime. I believe that no convicted felon should own a gun.

Making snap legislation over rare youth shooting incidents is not the answer, either. Take, for example, the murder of six year old Kayla Rolland, the Michigan first grader shot by a classmate not long ago. Now keeping in mind how rare these incidents actually are, look at the case of Brianna Blackmond, a 23 month old Washington, D.C. girl who died from a blow to the head shortly after being returned to her mother from a foster home. But only Kayla's murder prompted President Clinton to call for trigger locks on all handguns. Brianna's death did not prompt him call for tougher child protecting laws against abuse. Brianna's incident is more statistically typical of young children killed in this country, but the President virtually ignored it.

Your chances of being killed in a public school is just under 1 in 1 million. In the case of Columbine, the juveniles who committed this act acquired their guns 100% illegally. They were bought from a dealer whose actions were near as reprehensible as the two high shooting itself, and I believe he gives gun

dealers a bad name and should be sentenced harshly.

And thus I come to my own opinions. I believe that nothing can replace growing up around firearms since a child, and learning safety and responsibility through the parents. I think that as long as we have poverty level neighborhoods, there will always be crime, even if we somehow take all the guns away. I however do not believe that guns make juveniles commit crimes. They may make an inexperienced kid feel powerful or something, but if the guns weren't there, a knife would replace it. As you know, Canada has a very stringent gun policy. Mandatory locked storage with ammo separate, almost no handguns, ect. I was talking to one of my Canadian friends not too long ago, and he says that he knows of people who pack around brass knuckles to school, and he even had a knife held to the back of his neck by a classmate to intimidate him.

Society is to blame, not an inanimate object like guns. I think that constant media attention and perhaps television desensitize youth to this crime and irresponsibility with guns. These kind of actions are even admired in "rap" culture. The solution to this problem is not easy, nor can it be just one solution. I don't think that I can come up with a solution to juvenile gun crime. My main opinion still stands, though. I think that there is no substitute for good parenting.

In Closing

I am sorry to admit that I will not likely ever choose to attempt to intervene in a violent situation to save any person because of my fear of the bad legal consequences.

Sources

<http://www.nra.com>

<http://www.millionmommarch.com>

<http://www.stats.org>

Direct Personal Experience