

It's somewhat strange that the place where high school students flock to for Advanced Placement exams is also the site of a quarterly gun show, where weapons that could erase their year of preparation, not to mention their lives, are sold.

The Del Mar Fairgrounds is a familiar spot for a large population of the students at Torrey Pines High School. In the summer, we go to the San Diego County Fair or the horse races. Our Winter Formal was held there last year.

We don't go to the gun shows.

Actually, I take that back. I went to the gun show this past March.

My friends and I are not 18 and were initially denied tickets to the Crossroads of the West Gun Show, but that problem was easily solved by asking a couple to escort us. The same worker who we had previously tried to purchase tickets from — who knew that we were unaccompanied minors — saw our “parents” and took our money without argument.

Inside the gun show, a maze of vendors with names like “American Pride” offer mostly guns and gun accessories, even AR-15 kits, but also a plethora of merchandise.

That's where we see the gun culture of the United States. Gun culture is a father lifting up one of his three small children from the ground to pick which shiny new weapon would be the best addition to their collection. Gun culture is the man who told me that his grandchildren have been members of the National Rifle Association since they were 12, and that I should join, too.

But gun culture, for the most part, is not Del Mar, Carmel Valley or adjacent areas; it makes its way to the Fairgrounds from East County and even farther places. When people bring their children to gun shows, they're helping to maintain the gun culture that is so deeply rooted in their own histories. Those children are raised to see the gun as a symbol of freedom and patriotism, and when that reverence and glorification is combined with anguish or loneliness or even an accidental pull of the trigger, lives are lost.

The Board of Directors has no obligation to provide people with a one-stop shop for all their gun needs, where gun sale rules are sometimes broken and minors are free to enter without parental accompaniment. With a simple vote, they could deny Crossroads of the West the ability to use the space, doing their part to prevent the next gun-related death and reduce the propagation of gun culture and its expansion to our community.

Especially after my school was forced to close last Thursday due to a shooting threat, the idea that the Fairgrounds would continue to host gun shows is a slap in the face. We've had our walkouts and our marches. They can restore safety in our classrooms by making it a little harder for people to purchase killing machines. In Del Mar, the gun show is the black sheep.

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