

Hello. My name is Jake Arft-Guatelli, and I'm a high school student at Pacific Ridge. I've never fired a gun in my life. Never even held one. When I was a child, I was taught that a gun was something police officers had, something that was there to protect me. I went to a safe, private elementary school in La Jolla. I remember, one day in Spanish class, the Principal came onto a loudspeaker and told us we were having a lockdown. Not a drill. The teacher ushered into the closet, where we huddled for half an hour. I later learned the lockdown was because of a man in a nearby neighborhood who *might* have had a gun. There was a *possibility*. There shouldn't have been even the slightest possibility. Yet that is the society we live in. I have friends who've been terrified to even go to school because of a gun threat posted on social media. The drills we do in school consist of fire, earthquake, and lockdown drills. Ever since I first went to *preschool*, it's been that way. Gun threats have been normalized, accepted as a basic part of daily life. They shouldn't be. This summer, I participated for the second time in a program called Hands of Peace, where American, Israeli, and Palestinian students come together for the purposes of dialogue and conflict resolution. This year, I hosted an Israeli student named Nimrod, who for had trained and been a part of the National Sharpshooting team for years. He'd go to a gun range, get his pistol, practice, and return his pistol to a secure place at the gun range. That is a common story in places around the world. Places where guns are regulated, and where mass shootings are far less common. Yet that is far from the case here. Guns have facilitated some of the most horrible atrocities we've recently experienced, and countless guns are sold at gun shows. You have the opportunity today to end that. To to take a step against continued gun violence and towards a better future. Thank you.





