

Overview

[The Global Health Education and Learning Incubator at Harvard University](#) (GHELI) supports interdisciplinary education about world health through the production, curation, and dissemination of educational public goods. This exemplar work was a final project for “World Health: Challenges and Opportunities,” a General Education course at Harvard College taught by GHELI Faculty Director Sue J. Goldie. For this creative assessment designed with support from GHELI, students systematically analyze a societal health challenge they care about and create a “real world” product intended to influence policy or motivate change.

Abstract

A satirical short story depicting a world where gun violence is accepted, and every person is armed.

Artist


Meera Nair (2023)

Caption

Gun violence is a public health threat in the United States, claiming nearly 50,000 lives each year. Mass shootings, in particular, arrest our national attention nearly every day on the news, with 636 mass shootings in 2022 alone (according to Everytown, which defines a mass shooting as an incident where 4 or more individuals are killed or wounded, excluding the shooter). The excess number of mass shootings and firearm deaths has spurred a number of proposed solutions for reducing gun violence. In particular, rather than supporting more gun control measures, the pro-gun American right has proposed solutions that are unlikely to improve safety, such as increasing gun ownership. This short story highlights the absurdity of such proposals by imagining a world in which guns are so embedded into culture that tragedy is not only normalized but also inevitable.

Artist Lens

I was inspired to write a satirical short story describing a random day in the life of members of a prospective American society in which gun violence was accepted as the norm, sometimes perhaps even glorified, and in which increasing gun ownership or else reducing the number of doors to buildings (as opposed to gun control measures) were pursued as the solutions to curbing mass shootings. My inspiration for this short story comes from Jonathan Swift’s *A Modest Proposal*, in which Swift critiqued the callousness of the wealthy elite in Irish society during the Irish famine to the conditions of the poor by putting forth a satirical suggestion to reduce the number of poor children by serving them up as food for the wealthy. I believe a short story is an effective medium for inspiring action because writing can help readers more clearly imagine the consequences of gun policies currently proposed by certain right-wing policymakers. Additionally, a short story can be shared with a broad audience through publication in a magazine such as *The New Yorker*, a similar forum, or online in a blog format. Unlike a long-form fiction piece, a short story can be read rather quickly, which further enhances the power of this medium since members of the general public will be more likely to take the time to read and glean the story’s message. The target audience for this short story is members of the American public, but most especially pro-gun, right-wing lawmakers who staunchly support the Second Amendment and gun rights and



who have avoided acknowledging the role of exceptional gun ownership in excess American mortality and morbidity due to mass shootings.

Media

Original Short Story

[Read the Short Story: A New Day in America PDF](#)