

The Guardian

We Parkland students made history. And we're not going anywhere

We have been working relentlessly to make sure our voices get heard for the benefit of the men, women and children that we hope to save when our hard work comes to fruition in the halls of Congress

Rebecca Schneid, *co-editor of the Eagle Eye school newspaper*

Sun 25 Mar 2018 08:10 EDT

I woke up on Saturday morning, 24 March 2018, ready to report from the March For Our Lives alongside 12 of my colleagues from the Eagle Eye, the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School newspaper where I serve as co-editor in chief.

The day we had been thinking about for six weeks was finally here: we were going to make history, and we were also going to document it.

Since the shooting that killed 14 students and three staff members at our school in Parkland, Florida, on 14 February, my classmates and I have been working relentlessly, day and night, to make sure our voices get heard. We've gone on so many TV shows and been quoted in so many publications it's hard to remember sometimes what our lives were without it.

And it is not for our own benefit - it is for the benefit of the men, women, and children that we hope to save when our rhetoric and hard work comes to fruition in the halls of Congress. I've seen first-hand the toll it has taken on all of us, and the extraordinary amount of work required for it to happen. We are exhausted but we feel empowered, too.

We can feel it: change is within reach.



Hundreds of thousands of people attended the March for Our Lives rally in Washington, DC, filling Pennsylvania Avenue. Photograph: Evelyn Hockstein for the Guardian

But at the march, it didn't take me long to realize how many different ways American lives have been devastated by gun violence. It's not just Parkland, and it's not just mass shootings. It's the streets of cities all around the country, communities who are plagued by gun violence daily, yet do not have the same platform to speak about it as we do - whether that be because of their age, creed, color, or economic status.

In the crowd, I interviewed a mother who was carrying a sign that said "I survived gun violence, my daughter didn't." She told me she had been worried about her daughter's father's mental health, and had tried to report her worries to the police. Nothing was done. Two weeks later, he killed her daughter. I heard of so many stories similar to this one, each more moving and eye-opening than the last.

I also talked to many students from Thurgood Marshall High School in Washington DC. These students have dealt with gun violence on their porches, in their gas stations, on the streets right outside their houses, places of worship, and theatres. They live in fear daily - and yet no one in previous years has listened to their roars as they pleaded for change.

It was humbling; it was upsetting. But, most importantly, it reinvigorated my understanding of the importance - no, the necessity - of this movement. Gun violence disproportionately impacts people of color. It is our duty to help them tell their stories, and to share the platform we have received in our part due to our privilege.

A particularly touching encounter I had was with those that had travelled from Newtown, Connecticut, the site of the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting five years ago. When you talk to people who have been through the same trauma, you get one another because you've been through something no one truly understands until they have experienced it themselves.

The pain, the passion for justice - you recognize it in other people. The care is genuine, wholly personal and you can just feel it.



Jada Wright, 17, and her boyfriend Carl Payne, 18, from Eastern High School in Washington, DC, attend the March for Our Lives rally.

Photograph: Evelyn Hockstein for the Guardian

Our hope was that the march would be a show of unity between communities impacted by gun violence, and also those that pray they never have to be in the same way we have been in Parkland.

It has happened: we've seen the millions of people marching in the streets of DC, of Atlanta, of Chicago, New York, San Francisco - even abroad. They have rallied behind us in a fashion I could

never have even fathomed, and when the staff of the Eagle Eye newspaper arrived as the first Marjory Stoneman Douglas students on the scene, we immediately felt emotional as we saw the beginnings of a revolution form in this march.

I saw this diversity in the signs people brought to the march. I saw one that recited the names of the 17 fallen in my hometown, the 26 in Newtown, the 32 in Virginia Tech, and the 23 from Columbine. I saw another that read “Which one is next?” Arrows surrounded it, pointing to the children around the poster, all potential victims of gun violence if the laws of our country do not change. Others signs chose to embrace a more humorous side, one stating that “we cannot fix stupid, but we can vote it out” and “you know this is serious when the introverts show up.”

One, though, I thought encompassed what the rally was truly about. It read “The times they are a-changing.”

And from what I saw at this march? I believe they are.

We Parkland students have a platform never seen before. We plan to utilize this voice, because it is our own, and because it is our right. We will use it to advocate for legislation that will not only stop the mass shootings, but also the gun violence in cities like Baltimore, Chicago, and DC.

The movement to end gun violence has been active for a long time, and there’s always a breaking point - a moment which changes everything. I hope Saturday will prove to be one of those moments. I believe it can be it. This is just the beginning of the galvanization of a movement that will transform the culture of America, hopefully into a nation where gun violence is not normal, and not OK.

On Monday, I will be back in Parkland. I will continue to go to class and sports games, continue to write for my paper. But I will also continue to fight, and so will others.

We are articulate.

We have opinions.

We demand change.

And we are not going anywhere.

Rebecca Schneid is the co-editor in chief of the Eagle Eye, Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School’s newspaper in Parkland, Florida. You can contribute to the Stoneman Douglas Student Journalism program in Parkland by clicking here

Since you’re here...

... we have a small favour to ask. More people are reading the Guardian than ever but advertising revenues across the media are falling fast. And unlike many news organisations, we haven’t put up a paywall - we want to keep our journalism as open as we can. So you can see why we need to ask for your help. The Guardian’s independent, investigative journalism takes a lot of time, money and hard work to produce. But we do it because we believe our perspective matters - because it might well be your perspective, too.

The Guardian is editorially independent, meaning we set our own agenda. Our journalism is free from commercial bias and not influenced by billionaire owners, politicians or shareholders. No one edits our Editor. No one steers our opinion. This is important because it enables us to give a

voice to the voiceless, challenge the powerful and hold them to account. It's what makes us different to so many others in the media, at a time when factual, honest reporting is critical.

If everyone who reads our reporting, who likes it, helps to support it, our future would be much more secure. **For as little as \$1, you can support the Guardian - and it only takes a minute. Thank you.**

Support The Guardian



Topics

- US gun control
- Parkland students guest-edit Guardian US
- March for Our Lives
- features