



BEAR WITNESS



VIOLENCE IN MEDIA

FIREARM FRENZY

MEDIA

Dhatri Tummala/Special to the Bear Witness

Lauren Gernale/Bear Witness

Mass shootings call to attention the role of the media with firearm policy

AADYANT SURESH
Science & Health Editor

With 656 mass shootings in 2023, discussion of firearm regulation is a prominent topic in the United States. However, the popularization of firearms and weapons in media and modern culture has yet to see a decline.

In a Bear Witness poll, 71% of 156 respondents said they have consumed media that popularizes or heavily uses firearms or similar weapons. Similarly, 55% of 137 students said that the presence of firearms in the media has led to a greater normalization or use of such weapons.

Senior Christian Winzenread took a leading role in the national school walkout last year following the school shooting in Nashville, Tenn., supporting the cause of the organization Students Demand Action. Winzenread has seen an increase in the use of firearms in the media he has watched, yet he says that firearms have always been a major part of American cinema, starting from the early western movies like "The Great Train Robbery" in 1903 during the silent film era, but that the role of firearms in media has changed today.

"Violence has always been inherent to what an American audience values in programming, but as firearms and global conflicts have evolved, their portrayal in media has shifted as less of a tool and more of an accessory," Winzenread said.

He sees this trend in video games as well, where the role of military weapons and situations is more prominent. Popular first person shooter games like "Call of Duty," "Counter-Strike 2" and "Valorant" rely heavily on guns and military-esque fighting situations. Winzenread noticed this type of games leads firearms to being considered more normal in everyday life due to a desensitization.

SEE VIOLENCE IN MEDIA • PAGE 14

630+
total mass shootings in 2023. Mass shootings are referred to where four or more people are killed.

120.5
estimated number of firearms per 100 residents in America, which is the highest in the world.

49
mass shootings in 2024 in America as of Feb. 15.

Source: BBC and ABC

“When the media reports on mass atrocities provided by guns to the extent that the reporting now it becomes a day to day occurrence. The fact that the media reports on it so much is simultaneously a good thing because it shows how prevalent it is, but it’s also a bad thing because it desensitizes the populace to this problem.”

Senior Christian Winzenread

DISCUSSIONS

Voicing opinions in classrooms

Students speak about the impact that discussing topics learned in class has on their understanding

YUJIN CHO
Staff Writer

Historical events are recorded not only in textbooks but in other forms as well. Students learn through literature, and English classes provide a comfortable setting in which students can freely express their opinions and dive deeper into different aspects of history.

Often widening student perspectives through books on politically sensitive topics read in class, these books serve as necessary learning opportunities but are often targets for banning in school districts across the country.

In English teacher Heather Amanatullah's English 2 Honors class, students this year have explored fraught historical topics of South African Apartheid, Taliban presence in Afghanistan, sexual assault in Afghanistan and the Holocaust, through reading comedian Trevor Noah's autobiography "Born a Crime," Khaled Hosseini's novel "The Kite Runner" and Art Spiegelman's graphic novel "Maus."



Heather Amanatullah teaches English 2 Honors that reads from a list of banned books and has discussions about it.

SEE DISCUSSIONS • PAGE 2

HOUSING COSTS

Prices on the rise

Increase in housing costs drives both teachers and students away, resulting in smaller classes

ALYX YOON
Staff Writer

With housing prices on the rise, families have been moving out of Silicon Valley, resulting in fewer incoming freshmen at Branham. The incoming class of 2028 is estimated to have 200 students less than the class of 2027.

According to Norada Real Estate Investments, San Jose housing prices have increased 12.1% over the last year and are 214% higher than the national average. Between 2020 and 2022, there was a 6.3% decrease in school enrollment due to the lack of affordable housing as well, according to San Jose Spotlight.

The increase in housing costs also affects teachers. Chemistry and AP biology teacher Juan Fernandez has been living in Silicon Valley for the past 36 years and has noticed a significant increase in rental prices.

"I have considered [moving]," Fernandez said. "[Renting] takes a big percentage of a teacher's salary especially if you are a new teacher."

SEE HOUSING COSTS • PAGE 3