

Student 4: High Achieved

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A description of the issue from different points of view, values and perspectives

In the USA guns are becoming an increasing problem. They are increasing in size, amount and power. More people own guns per resident, at around .89 per person, than any other nation in the world. There are approximately 270 million citizens with guns. In 1999, 28, 874 people died in the USA from guns. In 2011, 12 years later, it was 32,163. In 2012 alone there were 7 mass shootings which left 80 people dead and over 60 people wounded.

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The gun laws in the USA differ considerably from state to state. Some states like New York have gun laws that are very strict, whilst in others like Texas the laws are less restrictive. These differing laws means that there is little consensus on the best way forward in terms of curbing the gun issue in the USA. Many federal (the whole country), legislators have continued to block laws imposing federal legislation. However, because guns are becoming an increasing problem in the USA many people think that the policies surrounding gun laws should be more restrictive at a federal level including Barack Obama. Obama would like to introduce these policies on a country wide basis.

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These policies include:

1. Closing background check loopholes to keep guns out of dangerous hands;
2. Banning military-style assault weapons and high-capacity magazines, and taking other common-sense steps to reduce gun violence;
3. Making schools safer; and
4. Increasing access to mental health services.

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Nicole Hockley a mother of two boys whose youngest was shot by Adam Lanza in the Sandy Hook massacre, supports Barack Obama's ideas of changing the policy on gun laws. She has a viewpoint on the issue of guns in America. She believes that there should be stricter gun control in America so that massacres like Sandy Hook do not happen. She believes there should be common sense changes to make it harder for criminals and people with mental illness to obtain guns, compulsory background checks for gun sales and a crackdown on illegal trafficking of guns. She said "If these sensible steps can help save lives, why wouldn't we take them?" (2).

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She values the right of everyone to feel safe and secure in their community and the rights of parents to be able to send their children to school and know they will return.

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Her point of view and values are shaped by a human rights ideology. She does not want other parents to go through the trauma she has been through and therefore want the rights of others acknowledged and measures put in place to make these rights a reality.

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There has been a lack of consensus at a federal level to impose stricter gun laws on the nation at a federal, level due to three significant issues. Firstly, the government system is very complex in America. It has been designed so that no one person is able to control the county. The system was put together in opposition to British governance of America. It was felt by many that the new system should not allow any one person or group to be able to make decisions for the nation. Hence why they have a three tiered approach to the government system. This means that any law is hard to get through as it depends on many people's viewpoints at different levels.

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Secondly the constitution is the laws and requirements that the government has to follow. The constitution in America is complicated by the bill of rights which was designed to make sure that the government did not take away the rights of its citizens. The bill of rights is a set of guidelines, but many believe the bill of rights are laws that must be followed also. The second amendment in the Bill of Rights states "A well-regulated militia, being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed." (8). Many gun rights advocates say the Second Amendment protects an individual's rights to own guns and therefore stricter gun policies are not OK.

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Bryan Du Bois a key leader in the Tea Party, a right wing political organisation is strongly against more gun laws in America. He thinks that every person has a right to have a gun as the founding fathers believed that the second amendment was there in case the people needed to rise up against the government if they were out of line. He believes that gun laws are strict enough and the government

should not introduce any more (2). He values the second amendment rights, freedom of the individual and less governmental control (3). His viewpoint and values are shaped by an extreme right wing ideology, which is conservative and traditionalist(4).

A description of the aims of the campaign

Mom's Demand Action is a social action campaign founded on December 15th 2012 the day after the Sandy Hook Massacre by Shannon Watts.

They are a non-profit organisation whose aims are trying to make people more responsible for their community by imposing restrictions on guns and thereby making sure that people are given their right to feel safe and secure in their environment.

The campaign is asking to:

- Educate people about America on gun sense
- Demand legislators at state and federal levels to introduce common sense stricter gun laws like a ban on assault weapons and ammunitions of more than 10 rounds, report the sale of large quantities of ammunition to the ATF and limit the scope of concealed weapons laws at the state level.
- Demand companies cease allowing people take weapons into their businesses.

They have recently joined with Mayors Against Illegal Guns which is a coalition of over 1,000 mayors that supports gun control. Both groups have been recently been focusing their efforts on requiring expanded background checks on firearms purchases.

An explanation of the differing reasons for individuals' and/or groups' involvement in the campaign

Shannon Watts is the founder of Mom's Demand Action. She founded the campaign for a variety of reasons. Firstly she is a mother and she want to make sure that she protected them from shootings like Newton and Sandy Hook. Secondly, her 12 year old son started asking questions about the Newton shooting. She wasn't sure what to tell him and then the Sandy Hook shooting occurred. She decided that something needed to be done to protect her son and make sure he understood that people can make a stand and change things. The third reason she started this campaign is to make sure that people are aware that stricter laws does not mean they are betraying the rights stated in the second amendment. She said "This is not an either/or conversation. Americans can own guns and be responsible... and we can enact gun control laws and honour our forefathers."

Senator Katherine Clark a democratic senator got involved in the campaign because she did not want to have to fear for her three son's safety and those of her states citizens.

She was involved as her citizens have the right to live in safety and harmony as stated in the Declaration of Human Rights, Article 3: Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person. She said "I am honoured to join this group as we come together to remember the children killed by gun violence...our best hope is to work together to develop, implement and demand sensible gun laws now."

An explanation of the individuals' and/or groups' reasons for selecting the actions within the campaign

Moms' Demand Action's first social action was to create a Facebook page, "One million Mom's for Gun Control" to raise awareness about the alarming facts and stories about guns in America. Shannon Watts the founder of the Facebook page said she wanted to use Facebook as a beginning to her social action as it was a common form of communication amongst people in today's society and would get the greatest exposure in the fastest possible way. She wanted to raise awareness about the issues and also inform others about the success of the campaign, where people could join in and what people could do to help the campaign and a social networking site like Facebook allows her to do this easily.

Another social action that Mom's Demand Action has been involved in is the writing of a petition demanding that stores like Staples and Starbucks change their policy around allowing guns in stores. Jennifer Hope the director of programs for Moms Demand Action said this social action is important as mums go into Staples for last minute supplies and Starbucks to catch up with other mums often with children and when they are confronted by guns or the idea that people may have guns that are concealed they are concerned about the safety of their children.

She said "An accidental shooting in Staples earlier in the year demonstrated how dangerous the presence of guns can be." She wanted Staples and Starbucks to immediately enact a policy to ban guns from all stores nationwide.